

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY MET  
AT THE DEVONPORT ENTERTAINMENT AND CONVENTION CENTRE,  
DEVONPORT ON TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2008.**

---

**Mr NIGEL BEEKE** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Wing) - Nigel, for the record would you please give your full name and occupation?

**Mr BEEKE** - My name is Nigel Beeke and I am a safety and environmental consultant.

**CHAIR** - When I read your submission I thought you were making it on behalf of the Australian Transport Council but you have said that it is a personal submission.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, it is a personal submission. I was just quoting from the Australian Transport Council's reports in one case. I notice now that I didn't make that clear.

**CHAIR** - Would you like to speak to your submission? We will then ask you some questions as you proceed.

**Mr BEEKE** - My submission is based on my practice these days - I am a trained engineer and mining engineer, with years of experience in engineering and health and safety management. Secondly, as someone who does a lot of driving each year - up to 50 000 kilometres on business and pleasure, including overseas - I have an interest in road safety.

In the submission I have included reports and evidence that is scientifically supported, so I am coming from a modern safety management approach to criticise and praise where necessary various issues relating to road safety in Tasmania - criticisms based upon issues where I see that modern safety practices aren't followed. For instance, various road safety strategies are published - by the National Road Safety Strategy, which you would be familiar with no doubt, and by the Australian Transport Council. Tasmania has the road safety strategy. I note, because often you don't see it publicised and you don't see it acknowledged in newspaper editorials et cetera, that the ATC recognise that the most potential for the saving of lives and the reduction in trauma will come from safer roads - a 19 per cent potential reduction in accident casualties. The second greatest factor is increased occupant protection and improved technology with 12 per cent, and road-user behaviour being of the third rank. That is a point I want to make. As you see in my submission, on various pointers such as the Transport Council's survey of road conditions et cetera, the potential for improving roads is a lot more than that, as you will see in my comments backed by scientific reports. If every road in an ideal world was a dual-lane road you would halve the number of fatalities. I make reference to the 'silver bullets'. That comes from the terminology used by road safety experts. They recognise that the introduction of seatbelts was one of the magic bullets which had a huge effect on reducing the number of fatalities, as was roadside breath-testing. Compulsory helmets for motorcyclists was another one of these road safety measures that had a huge impact on fatality numbers, which peaked in the 1970s.

**CHAIR** - You point out that the ATC didn't regard road-user behaviour as one of the top potential road trauma reduction strategies. To what percentage did they attribute road-user behaviour? Most people regard that as one of the biggest factors in causing crashes - driver behaviour, inattention and mistakes.

**Mr BEEKE** - It was 9 per cent. That is where they were planning the improvement to come from.

**CHAIR** - What do you think about that? Most authorities regard driver behaviour as the main factor in causing crashes.

**Mr BEEKE** - No, not at all. In my report I made reference to that. This is a good point to come upon that. The approach that is taken in industrial safety, supported by the Workplace Health and Safety Act, is that the employer has to provide a safe place of work. That is the primary focus. It is still recognised that individual behaviour is important but it is recognised, for instance - and I have that rather nice quote from Monash University - that one of the tenets of accident prevention in the twenty-first century is that you do not rely on human behaviour because humans make mistakes. Any safety system that relies on human behaviour is doomed to fail. I can back that up with new information. I am quoting from a Queensland Government document on general workplace health and safety:

'Human or worker error is not always the result of carelessness or negligence but follows from normal human characteristics.'

The problem is that if you emphasise and push for some huge change in human behaviour it won't work because humans make mistakes. When you think about it, on road safety the average driver does a pretty good job with the tools he is provided with. Each day in Tasmania tens of thousands of vehicles pass within one to two metres of disaster separated by a strip of paint. Accidents will happen. The other thing that you find in the research is that, as this Queensland document said, it is not always because people have been wilfully negligent, it is just that the human brain can only process so much information at one time. For instance, I have seen the figure but I cannot give the quote for it, on a repetitious act a human being can only repeat that 4 000 times without making a mistake. There are limitations to what the human mind can do.

That is not to denigrate work done over the years to modify behaviour - consciousness of excessive speed et cetera. You might notice in many road safety reports, the fall off in fatality numbers. The Australian Transport Commission report refers to that, the drop in fatalities has plateaued. Perhaps they have done enough that can be done feasibly on trying to change and modify improved human behaviour and that the next step - and you do find that in many road safety strategies published by government - is to eliminate the human error factor.

Eliminating the human error factor by such things as vehicle design - for instance, electronic stability control. The Victorian Government cites Swedish data that says you can reduce the instance of single vehicle accidents by 40 per cent because a number of computers can handle the inputs and what is going wrong with the car starting to skid, far

better perhaps than a handful of drivers in the world. Again, you are trying to eliminate the human error factor.

**CHAIR** - So would you not favour courses and instruction for learner drivers?

**Mr BEEKE** - I have seen conflicting information on that. Personally I would favour it, and I know John Bowe is a strong supporter. There has been criticism and evidence given that it can lead to overconfidence in young drivers. My personal belief is if you are trained to drive in a city, and it is certainly noticeable in big cities such as Sydney or Melbourne, you probably would never have drive above 60 kilometres an hour during your lessons or your road test. You would never have seen a cow on the road so you would not know what to do. You would never have driven on a dirt or gravel road or in mud or snow.

**CHAIR** - Or at night.

**Mr BEEKE** - Or at night indeed, although they are starting to push that in driver training in New South Wales where you have to fill out a logbook as a learner and I think there was a requirement for a certain number of hours at night when my son and daughter were doing it.

**Ms FORREST** - In Tasmania?

**Mr BEEKE** - In New South Wales.

**Ms FORREST** - In Tasmania you have a logbook and there is an optional section to fill in about the road conditions, like whether it is wet, dry, or day, but it is optional. You do not have to fill in that section.

**Mr BEEKE** - In New South Wales it is compulsory to fill in that column on road conditions, but I am not quite sure of the requirement for night driving.

Indeed, I think I would be in favour of improved driver training but I have not brought evidence with me at this stage.

**Mr DEAN** - What do you say in relation to learner drivers. Should they be given instruction or tuition or should somebody be there to look at them travelling up to 90 and 100 kilometres an hour to road limits in the learner driving phase?

**Mr BEEKE** - I would think so, but I do not have evidence with me. It is a personal opinion.

**CHAIR** - That is dealing with human behaviour isn't it.

**Mr BEEKE** - Or experience. It is more skill than human behaviour. My understanding is that a lot of the road safety campaigns emphasise human behaviour of not excessively speeding, not losing your temper and indulging in road rage et cetera. Let us take speeding, for example. I have seen research in which half the people who speed had been called innocent or inadvertent speeders - they do not know that they are going above the speed limit. Remember the campaign to drive to road conditions and also the speed limit - I would not say an arbitrary limit, but a limit imposed upon the section of road at which it is believed that the average driver can drive safety. On that length of road there will be

sections where perhaps you are not capable of sustaining that limit, where there are advisory signs to go around a corner. Indeed, there may be sections of the road where it is quite safe and other sections of road in different circumstances where the speed limit is higher but, of course, you cannot change the speed limit signs every 50 metres. An example may be, Steel Street/Don Road, that dip is a common spot for a speed camera -

**Mr DEAN** - I am glad you raised that. Everyone who lives in this area has been caught there.

**Mr BEEKE** - That stretch of road has a 60-kph limit. Perhaps elsewhere it would be a 70-kph limit because there is only one side road with tremendous visibility and a very wide length of road. If you start at 60 kph at the top, you are doing 70 kph at the bottom in an automatic car. Is someone who speeds there really driving irresponsibly? Perhaps not.

**Ms FORREST** - You could argue in that circumstance that the person has to watch the speedo rather than the road to maintain a speed of 60 and not get caught.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes. Then you again get into human error, capacity of understanding or information overload. I would be looking ahead to the crest wondering what is over that next crest. I would not necessarily be looking down at the speedo.

**Ms FORREST** - But if you are worried about being pinned by a speed camera, then your loyalties are divided, aren't they? This is the whole point of inadvertent speeders at times. Is that the point, that you can create a problem by forcing people to look at the speedo?

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, that would be my belief also.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you think that there is an answer for that? Should we not be penalising people in those circumstances? Is that the issue?

**Mr BEEKE** - I would tend towards that argument, yes. I want to be moderate here, but I think that would be a reasoned approach. Often I find individual police officers are better than an automatic machine. For example, I have done three-quarters of a million kilometres without a speeding ticket because I am thinking all the time and watching where I am. But I did get pulled over on the Bass Highway at one of the new speed restrictions on a roundabout. The police constable concerned gave me a little ticking off and asked how long since I had a ticket. I said, 'Fifteen years, three quarters of a million kilometres.' He did a very quick check and said, 'That is a pretty good record, on you go, be more careful next time.' The individual police officer often makes a good value judgment, I have found, where a machine just clicks over and that is it.

**CHAIR** - Probably had reached his quota for that day already.

*Laughter.*

**Mr BEEKE** - I am meant to be the cynical one here.

**CHAIR** - That experience you had is good to hear.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes and he was tremendously polite.

**Mr DEAN** - That probably has a greater deterrent effect really, than receiving a ticket, say, seven days later?

**Mr BEEKE** - That is correct because I tend, when I am in a bad mood, to mutter about revenue-raising when I see various things in the paper. After that incident with that policeman, I thought, 'I cannot really say that now.' It was a tremendous PR exercise and it was a deterrent to me because you think, 'I was lucky; perhaps he had a point.'

**Mr HARRISS** - Nigel, as I see it, that links to changing driving behaviour. The process of a policeman pulling you over or getting a speeding ticket in the mail after being caught on a camera and so on is all about changing driver behaviour. If you get pinged, you don't want to get done again, you want to keep your points - all that - so you have to change behaviour in order to achieve that.

If that is accurate, then back to the Chairman's challenges earlier to you about addressing driver behaviour and your responses. Can I put to you a position that a better regime of training and awareness issues for all of us is akin to a fence at the top of a cliff rather than an ambulance at the bottom? Why don't we build the fences at the top of the cliff by making a concerted effort to change driver behaviour? I hear what you say about human error and human behaviour, but if we don't do enough about addressing it, those human errors and human behaviours will be exacerbated and contribute, in a greater degree, to road trauma, won't they?

**Mr BEEKE** - I don't disagree with you. I am not saying that you should forget about road safety campaigns and individual responsibility. An article from *Quarry* magazine shows an improvement in the last 15 years in the fatality rate in the Australian mining industry, which is now plummeting towards zero. The thing they have, which is relevant to what I am saying, is the modern way of safety management. Individual accountability and competence are the last barriers before an accident. There are a lot of things that can come before that, such as road design and vehicle design. I am not saying you should forget about the campaigns stressing individual things, but you should recognise in your campaigns that a lot of other things also come into play.

**Mr HARRISS** - Yes, because I hear ringing in my ears Paul Hogan's constant response to the condition of the Midland Highway and, as I best recall - I might be misrepresenting him, I hope not - he says things to the effect that it is all about driver behaviour. If the road is wet and you drive within the conditions, you will not have a crash. If you are driving a reasonably safe vehicle - all the wheels are balanced and aligned and all that sort of stuff - and you drive within the conditions, whatever the road conditions are - gravel road, you won't slide if you are going slowly and all of that. Does he have a point?

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, he has a point but to overemphasise the unachievable, as Dr Wigglesworth said, it is also self-defeating because you are missing other opportunities to save lives.

For argument's sake, I will jump now to the world of industrial safety, which directly relates to what you are saying. I have picked a typical industrial accident where a person

had fingers amputated because a machine's guard had been removed. The person was wearing ill-fitted gloves so if I apply the Road Safety Taskforce's approach to this, the person obviously made a mistake because she had her fingers cut off. She was wearing ill-fitting gloves, that was her fault. If she had been concentrating, she wouldn't have put her hand in too far. If she had been more aware of this problem, it wouldn't have happened. If she had been more careful, it wouldn't have happened et cetera. What happens in the court of law is that the company gets taken to the industrial court for not providing a safe place of work, for not providing the guarding. So relating that conflict between how accidents are treated on the road and in the industry just highlights to me a bit of an issue in that the Government would prosecute an employer for not providing a safe place of work, yet in another workplace - on the road - it is totally the individual's fault and issue. That is the big conflict that I see.

**Ms FORREST** - I note your point about your interaction with a police officer at the roundabout. To achieve that sort of level of operations, I guess, you need to have more police on the roads rather than just having cameras established in places. Is that a fair comment?

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, that is a fair comment.

**Ms FORREST** - So do you think, from your experience of all the driving you have done, that we have enough of a physical and visible police presence on the roads?

**Mr BEEKE** - I drive a lot up and down the Midland Highway and I do not see a lot of marked vehicles travelling.

**Ms FORREST** - It is interesting, I drove back last week from Hobart and I reckon I saw at least six or eight marked police vehicles on the Midland Highway, and it was the first time in a long time that I have seen any. They were not stopped; they were all driving in the opposite direction to me -

**CHAIR** - How did they know you were travelling at that time?

**Ms FORREST** - I don't know - someone must have let them know.

*Laughter.*

**Ms FORREST** - Not that I was doing anything wrong, but they were just there. I think I did see one speed camera on the way but usually between Hobart and Burnie there is at least one.

**Mr DEAN** - I want to see if you have a view on this. In relation to learner drivers, the testing is done in city areas, the built-up areas. Do you believe there is a case for some of that testing to be done out on the open road in order to test the ability of learner drivers to understand line markings, open-road driving, and vehicles passing them? Do you believe there is an opportunity for that?

**Mr BEEKE** - I would believe so, Mr Dean, noting my daughter's reaction the first time on the open road when a truck passes her; I would like her to get accustomed to that with someone sitting next to her, and also the first time she has to pass a truck.

**Mr DEAN** - I witnessed an incident this morning and I got out of it pretty quickly because I thought I was going to have to referee a fight. Two vehicles came to the end of a lane and the inside vehicle tried to push ahead of the outside vehicle, and the outside vehicle then had to drive across double white lines for some distance to get back into the lane and there were horns blowing and shouting, screaming and goodness knows what else going on. It was clear that the inside vehicle did not understand what the line markings meant and what they were required to do.

**CHAIR** - Would you like to proceed and make any other comments?

**Mr BEEKE** - Okay. The other thing I wanted to discuss, which was not in my submission, was some points on causes of road accidents in Tasmania. I made reference in my submission to vehicle testing and the influence of compulsory safety checks on vehicles. I noted in my submission what I regard as a bit of a conflict or contradiction whereby old vehicles do not, as in New South Wales, undergo a compulsory check every year. I brought to Tasmania a vehicle which had undergone that check in New South Wales, yet now that it is in Tasmania, for the rest of its life - which may be 20 years - it will not have to undergo a check again.

I quoted one document from a road safety engineer who indicated that about one in 10 cars has serious surface brake faults. His belief is that the influence of vehicle defects in all crashes is perhaps understated in official documents, but of course you must remember that when a vehicle has been involved in a crash often a lot of these defects can never be found. The 10-year-old brake fluid is lost; the tyres are deflated, so you do not know if they were at 15 PSI; and there are worn steering components. For instance, another document I obtained was from the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce. To my knowledge, certainly at the time, Victoria did not have regular vehicle checks, and they found that up to 50 per cent of vehicles would have failed a safety check.

The relevance to Tasmania is that we have the oldest vehicle fleet in Australia at 12½ years, compared to the Australian average age of 10 years, and that vehicle age of Australia, let alone Tasmania, is one of the oldest in the Western World. There is a chart published in the National Road Safety Strategy which shows a steady march of improvement in vehicle safety related to year of manufacture, so indeed the Tasmanian driver is missing out on that life-saving technology. For instance, the Victorian traffic authority said that if everyone drove vehicles with electronic stability control you would reduce single vehicle accidents by 40 per cent. In fact, if you are looking for a silver bullet and if by some magic way we could, in Tasmania, go from 12½-year-old cars to one-year-old cars, you could indeed virtually halve the road toll on those figures. It is an intriguing thought.

Referring to your terms of reference as to what actions have been done in other States, in Victoria - and I have a press release here from last year - the vehicle tax, the road stamp duty on cars, was slashed so that new cars dropped \$600 in price. Now, Tasmania has the lowest wages of any State, the oldest vehicle fleet and the equally most expensive stamp duty regime, so there is a conflict between one of the aims of the Australian

Transport Commission, of which Tasmania's DIER is a member, because one of their stated goals was to encourage the take-up of new vehicles, yet we have the most expensive sales tax regime. It appears to me to be a bit of a conflict.

**Ms FORREST** - You also comment on the Federal Government's luxury car tax.

**Mr BEEKE** - I do. The philosophy there is the same. The car I drive is a somewhat elderly BMW. When it was new it cost \$72 000. I did not purchase it then, but at the time - 1992 - it had one airbag and ABS brakes. The average Australian-made car in 1992, I think from memory, had none of those features, so you were relying on usually the premium brands being the pioneers and then by volume of sale, technology gets cheaper and cheaper, as we know from pocket calculators and VCRs. People get to hear about it, there is public demand for it, there is a greater take-up and suddenly prices drop, whereby these very fancy airbags and ABS brakes are now common on sub-\$20 000 cars. So again, you get that consequent improvement in safety.

**CHAIR** - What was the report you quoted from that said 50 per cent of the vehicles in Victoria would have failed a safety test.

**Mr BEEKE** - I can provide that evidence. It was from the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce - VACC 'Five-Point Safety Inspections Report' January 2005.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, we'll take that into evidence.

**Ms FORREST** - Nigel, I hear what you're saying about the safety inspections and the need to perhaps remove some cars from the road. How do you see that as being funded to initiate a check system like that and how often should it be? What do you do with the cars that don't pass, bearing in mind that age is not the only factor in roadworthiness and those issues?

**Mr BEEKE** - Correct. To be fair, I have done research on this issue. The evidence can be a bit confusing because other factors can swamp the improvements in vehicle safety from a safety-check regime. For instance, if you just compare States with road safety checks to States without, it is all over the place as regard accident history, fatalities per kilometre travelled et cetera. To be fair, that is a point to note. How it is done in New South Wales is that vehicles under five years old aren't done at all, which makes sense because of the average distance that a car travels.

**CHAIR** - In your submission you say under four years.

**Mr BEEKE** - It is five - I made a technical error. Vehicle inspections in New South Wales are done at an authorised inspection station where a person or a number of persons at that facility are ticketed and licensed to do those inspections. It is done there yearly. There is a form to fill out or it is done electronically. If the car fails, you have two weeks to remedy those faults at no further expense and then take it back to that inspection station.

**Mr DEAN** - In a similar way to the defect notices.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes. I believe these are far superior to the random tests that are done in Tasmania. When I have had a random test done by a police officer it was a quick check



of lights, the outside of tyres - he didn't run his hand all the way across. One aspect of the New South Wales test is that a computer is used to test braking force, so there is a brake box in the car that is tested and the brakes have to provide a certain g-force and deceleration and the pedal also has to respond to a certain amount of pressure; there can't be too much pressure. The roadside checks that I have had done in Tasmania will never remotely consider those sorts of things under the regime of random roadside inspections at the moment.

**Ms FORREST** - How are they funded in New South Wales?

**Mr BEEKE** - It costs \$31, from memory, for the owner of that vehicle. If it fails and they don't fix it, you have a certain amount of time before you have to charge for another inspection. If you don't pass you don't pass, which might sound a bit callous but if we're talking about road safety we're talking about a vehicle with inefficient brakes. I know in the history of accidents in Tasmania in recent years there has been one example I remember where only one brake out of four on the car was working. It is an issue. Industry groups such as VACC that support a regular regime note that it is another method of improving the age of your vehicle fleet because people tend to retire the old vehicles sooner. If there's no testing, they just keep going on and on, therefore you don't get that improvement in vehicle safety by that method.

**Ms FORREST** - Should there be some sort of avenue for people, particularly low-income earners who tend to be the people who drive the cars without the safety features, and the young people who are buying their first vehicle? Unless the parents of these young people are very well off they are only able to afford to buy a car that is older and has fewer safety features. Should there be some sort of bounty or avenue for when the car gets to a point where it is starting to fail tests or it does fail a test where there can be some monetary reward, I guess, for handing in compliance plates and so on and disposing of the vehicle?

**Mr BEEKE** - I have not thought of that. I suppose I would have to think about that.

**Ms FORREST** - How do you get these old cars off the road otherwise? They are just sitting around in people's yards.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, it's a council problem too. But if you are looking brutally, I suppose, at safety, if it does not pass, if it is not safe you should not be there.

**Ms FORREST** - So how do you get rid of the vehicle and encourage people into the newer and roadworthy cars?

**Mr BEEKE** - Lower stamp duty, remembering that Tasmania has the equal-highest stamp duty regime. Western Australia has about the same fees, but a lot higher average income.

**Mr DEAN** - Do you believe that the lowering of stamp duty could apply in a similar way to the first home buyer's rebate and support? In other words, if you were in a certain category, financially and economically and so on, you would be able to get that stamp duty rebate?

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, that is an interesting thought.

**Ms FORREST** - Or should it be across the board, so that everyone is encouraged?

**Mr DEAN** - We are talking about the financial position as well as students, for instance, in that category.

**Mr BEEKE** - It comes to my mind that many States have a graduated stamp duty system. In other words, lower-priced vehicles could be totally exempt - up to \$1 500 or \$2 000 totally exempt. Many States have a graduated scale such that the dearer vehicles which will be bought by wealthier people - not that I am greatly in favour of it - could have a higher rate of stamp duty.

**Ms FORREST** - Wouldn't that defeat your purpose though?

**Mr BEEKE** - I am not totally in favour of it. I am responding on the run to your thoughts. But it is a balance.

**Ms FORREST** - If you make the cheaper vehicles exempt from stamp duty you would encourage the people on low incomes to buy the cheaper vehicles, the ones without the safety features.

**Mr BEEKE** - That is right. I am thinking on the run here, and responding to your question of how do you help the lower-income people. But, indeed, it is a bit self-defeating there.

**Ms FORREST** - Particularly when we look at the young people. We have had evidence that the day young drivers or any driver who gets their P-plates, their crash rate and risk of serious injury and fatality increases enormously. So, if we want to put those people into a safer vehicle it is going to come at a cost.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - The stamp duty money can be put into the road inspection ensuring the vehicle is right.

**CHAIR** - In your submission you referred to studies that suggest that vehicle factors, particularly defects, are possibly causal or contributory in at least 12 per cent of all crashes. Are you able to refer us to any of those studies?

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes. The study that I referred to then, and it is mentioned in here, there is, Michael Payne, of Vehicle Design and Research, which you will find on the previous page. I can refer you to a Monash University study, the Effect of Vehicle Roadworthiness on Crash Incidence and Severity.

**CHAIR** - What date is that?

**Mr BEEKE** - That is 2000. It was about 70 pages, of which I have a few here. They analysed all the studies that had been done - perhaps not all of them but a great majority of the studies that have been done on that. They came to the conclusion that the results of both studies suggest that preventive maintenance vehicle inspections improve the

conditions of vehicles on the road but they hedge their bets a bit about whether they have an impact on reducing accident rates. The VACC report comes to a stronger conclusion quoting more recent reports where the VACC is happy to state that it does have a clear effect -

**CHAIR** - But Monash queries that.

**Mr BEEKE** - Monash queries that, because there are a lot of factors influencing vehicle accidents and sometimes it is not as simple as people make out.

**CHAIR** - I think most authorities query or challenge that, and they don't regard it as a significant factor.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, again you will find in the VACC report why governments say that. I have seen a figure of a 2 per cent contribution of unroadworthy vehicles to crash incidents. This Michael Payne said 12 per cent. Again, do you have trained people investigating all accidents? Do they reconstruct the vehicle after an accident? To what extent are they looking for vehicle faults? As Michael Payne said, it might not have caused the accident but a vehicle with general sloppy steering, poor brakes et cetera, has to be a contributory factor to it.

**CHAIR** - The 12 per cent you refer to in your submission is from the Michael Payne report. Is it not the Monash one? They don't attribute 12 per cent of vehicle -

**Mr BEEKE** - No, what the Monash report is - I don't have it all here -

**CHAIR** - It doesn't matter, I just wanted to know where you got that 12 per cent figure from. That is the Michael Payne report.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes, you will find in the Monash report references to other reports which quote different interesting figures. For instance, quoting one report done in America on accident rates of vehicles before inspection and after, it was found that for vehicles which had just had an inspection, the accident rate decreased 5.3 per cent. There are a lot of figures you will see bandied about and Monash University does a critique of all these reports, trying to assess their validity and scientific method. The general consensus you get from looking that is that it tends to be under-reported by accident investigators.

**Mr DEAN** - You raised a very interesting issue about accidents not being investigated and you are right. For instance, if police investigate a rear-end accident - where a car runs into another vehicle - they don't have the time at that stage to investigate the real cause of the accident. All they look for is whether or not an offence has been committed.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - There is a huge difference there and maybe there ought to be some changes in regard to that. If police started looking for some cause - in other words, there could well be a defect in the brakes, or other defects of the vehicle such as windscreen covered with too much gear or there could be other reasons for it.

**Ms FORREST** - Fluffy dogs, dice or something.

**Mr DEAN** - Fluffy dogs and goodness knows, a good point. The only accidents where vehicle defects are noted and looked at normally are serious accidents where injury or death occurs. Other than that there is very little investigation done to identify the real cause.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes and I was, Mr Dean, ferreting around looking for the survey to support what you are saying. The Motorcycle Council of NSW, which is supported by NRMA and the Motor Accidents Authority in New South Wales, talks about police crash investigations and the limitations of those, as you say. They do not doubt or question the ability of the scientific police investigators but often they say for many accidents - and you would know better than I - it is general duty officers. They also say that in New South Wales - and I do not know if it is still the case - general duty officers do not have specific training in accident investigation.

**Mr DEAN** - Absolutely right.

**Mr BEEKE** - They say, in a reasoned fashion, that they tend to tick the box and look for an offence or a fault.

**Mr DEAN** - Therefore the next question is what should be the function or the duty of the police officer. Should they just look for an offence disregarding everything else, or should they look at the real reasons for the incident or the collision occurring? To me that is more important than looking whether or not there might be an offence disclosed.

**Mr BEEKE** - That would be my opinion, Mr Dean, bearing in mind economics comes into it - I understand that - and timing and manpower.

**Mr DEAN** - Sure.

**Mr BEEKE** - I will give another example from the Motorcycle Council of NSW - and I am talking about New South Wales because I could not find something similar for Tasmania on the Road Safety Taskforce web site; it may exist. For instance, we can look at the definition of excess speed when that is given as a causal factor of an accident. Having said that, in New South Wales general duties officers do not receive specific training in accident investigation. For statistical purposes the RTA in New South Wales considers speed to be a contributing factor in a road crash if the vehicles is described by police as travelling at excessive speed. In other words, I am perhaps being a bit rough here but I interpret that as saying it was described by someone without specific accident investigation training as travelling at an excessive speed.

There are a number of other factors. It could also be a vehicle performing a manoeuvre characteristic of excessive speed. Or it could be that the vehicle ran off the road while negotiating a bend, which could be due to 15 psi tyre pressure or flogged-out steering. Interestingly, there is research in Australia and overseas that a lot of single vehicle accidents involving young males running off the road or specifically running into the front of large trucks, is attempted suicide. That is a difficult subject to enter but the research does exist and I could table some of that evidence if you wish.

**Mr DEAN** - Should there be some system where there is a requirement that any person who is found or believed to be at fault to have their vehicle inspected to make sure its roadworthiness at the time of the accident? This would make sure it was roadworthy at the time of the accident.

**Mr BEEKE** - I will have to give some thought to that, Mr Dean. I think the problem is that in many serious accidents the vehicle is unable to be reconstructed.

**Mr DEAN** - In serious accidents it occurs.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - I am talking about the other accidents where there is probably \$1 000 or \$2 000 damage and there are no injuries.

**Mr BEEKE** - Not having thought about that before, I would say at first glance it is a good idea.

**Ms FORREST** - Further to that point we've been discussing, you talked about the economics of a full investigation. I put it to you that if we really are to understand what contributes to road crashes, wouldn't there be some benefit in conducting a full cost-benefit analysis of that approach? For example, like looking at how much it would cost to have fully-trained accident or crash investigators investigate every crash that results in injury or fatality and then looking at the potential benefits if you could identify that there are a high number of vehicle defects. I don't know how you'd do it but -

**Mr BEEKE** - I understand what you're saying and that is correct. Figures are well known for the cost of road trauma and the number - I can't recall it off the top of my head - of each road fatality or serious injury -

**Ms FORREST** - There is a figure attributed to those.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Surely we should look at the cost of implementing such a program to help us identify the causal factors, because I think a lot of it's guesswork, or seems to be.

**Mr BEEKE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for your interest and input, Mr Beeke, and for coming here to give your evidence today. We appreciate it.

**Mr BEEKE** - Thank you very much.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr PAUL BULLOCK**, TASMANIAN MOTORCYCLE COUNCIL WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Wing) - Welcome, Mr Bullock. Could you give your full name for the record, please?

**Mr BULLOCK** - My name is Peter John Bullock and I'm a retired TPI pensioner.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for your submission and the documents you have provided. Are you giving evidence on behalf of the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. I have an apology from Simon Hycyszyn who is unable to attend; he has been held up. Before I go into the points I put down, over the last couple of weeks there has been a lot of discussion about police on roads. I think there were several hundred people found to be speeding on the roads a fortnight ago. The Tasmanian Motorcycle Council has been asking the Government, DIER and MAIB from when we first started to have more police on the roads because speed cameras have never stopped an accident; police on the roads stop accidents. I wrote a letter to MAIB in May last year on concerns that the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council has regarding the police presence, or lack thereof, on Tasmanian roads:

'Over the Easter break, with the strong police presence on the roads, there were no serious or fatal accidents in Tasmania. Prior to and after this period there was carnage, which is a strong message to everyone that police patrolling our roads reduces accidents and saves lives. This in turn reduces costs to MAIB and the community.

The Tasmanian Motorcycle Council has stated previously to DIER and the minister that while speed cameras do have a minor effect, speed cameras have never stopped an accident. All it does is fine a speeding vehicle and the fine is sent at a later date.'

There is another couple of paragraphs after that. This year we sent a letter to the editor after Easter, which said:

'Transport authorities, from the minister, the police, and the Road Safety Council are passing the loss of life onto all road users when their own poor planning and lack of police on the roads are a major contributing factor.

In 2007 over the Easter break, when there was a strong police presence on the roads, there were no serious or fatal accidents in Tasmania. Prior to and after this period there was carnage, which is a strong message to everyone that police patrolling our roads reduces accidents and saves lives.

In 2008, extra police were recalled to work after three fatalities over the Easter weekend. With more police on the roads there were no more fatalities. When is the Police Minister going to have a higher police presence on Tasmanian roads to reduce accidents and fatalities?

In Western Australia double demerit points are used in conjunction with a 32 per cent increase in enforcement activity, which has had a 52 per cent reduction in speed-related fatal crashes, so double demerit points without a high police presence is not the answer. Highly visible police on the roads will, as proven in 2007, work.'

**Ms FORREST** - It is interesting that the double demerit points issue has raised its head in the media again in the last couple of days. There are varying views on it. If I hear you correctly you are saying it has some merit but only with an increased physical and visible police presence.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, you have to have the police out there otherwise you are not going to do anything. All you are doing is raising revenue and people get a fine in the mail a fortnight later.

**Mr DEAN** - So do you think if double demerit points were legislated for on public holidays and Easter and so on that that may well cause a false sense of security in some respects as far as policing goes? In other words, double demerit points might be seen as the be-all and end-all rather than having extra police out on the roads.

**Mr BULLOCK** - It doesn't work.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, that's what I mean.

**Mr BULLOCK** - There have been two years over the Easter period in Tasmania where when they had police out there there were no fatalities. When there were not enough police rostered on the road this year there were fatalities. They called the police back and there were no more fatalities.

**Ms FORREST** - Couldn't you argue, though, that as a road user you might have seen these terrible crashes and loss of life in the first few days of Easter so when you were driving home in the last few days of Easter you were much more aware because of those fatalities and it is not just the police presence?

**Mr BULLOCK** - No. You just have to look at 2007 when the police were out there all weekend there were no fatalities. When the police were not out there there were fatalities. Bring the police back and there are no more fatalities. There are two stark cases where police on the roads reduce fatalities.

**Ms FORREST** - So in 2007 there were more police out from the beginning of Easter.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, and there were no fatalities for the whole of Easter. This year, when there was no increase in the roster, there were three fatalities.

**Ms FORREST** - What evidence do you have about the police numbers there from 2007 to 2008 over Easter? Do you have evidence that can clearly show there was a greater police presence in 2007; there were more officers on duty and rostered and in 2008 there were fewer until after the crashes occurred?

**Mr BULLOCK** - It is fact. It was in the papers in 2007. It was even in the papers this year around Easter time and after Easter that when the police were out on the roads there were no fatalities.

**CHAIR** - It's certainly a deterrent, isn't it?

**Mr BULLOCK** - What I am going to do is hand these to the committee.

**CHAIR** - You would be happy for us to take that letter into evidence? Thank you.

Would you like to speak to any other documents or any other matters?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I have them all in order so I will pass them on to the committee to have a look. I'll just go through them - the cost of barriers. They've stated that wire rope barriers are cheaper. Wire rope barriers are actually cheaper to install but over 20 years they are dearer than cement and cement has a life span of 50 years. So over a 50-year period cement barriers are under half the price of having wire rope barriers.

**Mr HARRISS** - That is on a cost issue alone. What about the contention by road safety analysts who would say That the wire rope barriers contain a vehicle rather than throwing it back into the traffic stream and therefore are safer?

**Mr BULLOCK** - That is what people like people to believe and that is what is being passed across but in fact where the barriers have been placed is - and this is from Brifen Australia, the manufacturers of the wire rope - impacted by many trucks and other shapes and sizes 'while in a number of instances measured deflection had been up to 4 metres'. So if a car hits the median barrier it can go up to 4 metres before the rope brings it back so it will not just bring it back to where you hit it; you have a whip type of effect on it so it would be putting it over into the cars.

**Mr HARRISS** - Into the oncoming traffic by 4 metres?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes.

**Mr HARRISS** - There is a deflection factor of 4 metres?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, a big one and we are very disturbed by what the Federal Government and DIER are trying to put over, having wire rope barriers put down Constitution Hill with a 1.8 metre painted median. So you have 0.9 metre before it goes over into the oncoming traffic. From the manufacturers from New South Wales and from Victoria the minimum offset is 3 metres, the recommended offset is 4 metres.

**Mr HARRISS** - Because of that 4 metre deflection cap that you mentioned?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Because of that.

**Mr HARRISS** - Does that depend on the speed at which the barrier is struck?

**Mr BULLOCK** - No. The test that was done by Brifen measured Motor Industry and Research Association test criteria - impact angle, 20 per cent; weight of vehicle,



1.5 tonnes; speed, 113 kilometres an hour. So it would be like going on the Midland Highway or any highway in the State. When you have a look at the cars you will see the first photo, second and third from when they are going in to hit the barrier how far it goes in and before it comes back.

In Victoria there was a parliamentary inquiry in 2005 and a 219-page document was done by the Victorian Government on roadside objects - how far away they should be, distances of barriers et cetera.

After that in 2006 Vic Roads brought out that the desirable offset was 4 metres and the minimum offset was 3 metres and where the offset proposed is less than the offset required to unyielding hazards described in section 4.2, the offset in this road should only be adopted after an assessment that considers whether you use wire rope. They say you do not use wire rope, you put in a W-beam barrier or cement.

**CHAIR** - On the road from Geelong to Colac there are quite a few sections where there is wire rope and I think they would have been installed since 2005 in Victoria.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Here is a photo I got back last week from Victoria. They are putting wire rope barriers down the side of the road and on the corners they are putting Armco, the metal barriers. When we spoke to engineering in Hobart they have said that they are looking at doing similar here and they have the rub rail which is a panel which goes under the top one so that bikes and so on do not slide underneath and the motorcyclist does not hit them.

**CHAIR** - There are quite a lot of wire rope barriers on the Bass Highway between Devonport and Launceston.

**Mr BULLOCK** - And if you notice, they are too close to the road. A prime example is a brand-new bit of road at Fingal and they have the barriers right on the edge of the road. If I had a flat tyre or a breakdown in my car I could not change the tyre because I am on the road. Am I going to get out and change that tyre? No, I will be ringing the police to block the highway so that I can fix my flat tyre because otherwise I am going to get injured or there is a likelihood of being injured. At Symmons Plains, the new wire rope that they have put there is right on the road and going to Hobart, you come around the left hand, right hand and if I broke down there and a car or truck came around the corner, they would have to go onto the oncoming traffic lane to get past me or run into me if they could not stop in time.

**Mr DEAN** - Regarding the Armco barrier being on the corner, they are saying, I take it, are they, that you are more likely to run off the road at the corner and that the Armco railing is more likely to give you greater protection if that occurs? Is that your understanding of the reasoning for it?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, and especially if they put the rub rail on the bottom, that is the panel on the bottom. I came up through Richmond, back to Launceston and they have kilometres and kilometres of the bottom panel on the W-beam barriers up there and they are putting them out. They are doing the foam couplings for the wire rope posts. I think they have done it on the Mornington off-ramp in Hobart and are going to put it on the Prospect off-ramp at Mount Pleasant.

**Mr DEAN** - The case that is cited a lot now in relation to wire ropes and motorcyclists is the Lilloco straight, not too far from here, as a matter of fact - very close to us. Are there any other examples in Tasmania, for instance, where a motorcyclist has been injured as a result of hitting a wire rope?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, there was an off-duty policewoman in Hobart who was killed. That is not out there in the public arena and that was a few years ago. That was well before this one here.

**Ms FORREST** - That one was reported in the media.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Those are two that I know of straight off-hand. I am not sure of any others.

**Mr DEAN** - In that case, I cannot remember, was that high speed?

**Mr BULLOCK** - The evidence was that it was not. It was done through the Coroner but there was no mention of the wire rope.

**Mr DEAN** - Was that a similar type of wire rope to what we now have?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, Brifen. There are two different types of the wire rope barriers. You have the T3, which is three strands of wire, and then you have the T4. In America, they will not use T3 anymore because SUVs and so on go over the top of them. So they use the T4 which is higher. Tasmania was using T4 but they have gone back to T3 because it is cheaper.

**Ms FORREST** - We do not have the big, high vehicles that Americans tend to drive. Is that another factor?

**Mr BULLOCK** - No, we are too.

**Ms FORREST** - But not as many, though?

**Mr BULLOCK** - There are a lot of Land Rovers out there.

**Ms FORREST** - Do Land Rovers go over the top of a T3?

**Mr BULLOCK** - No, I think the T3s are shorter and you have three wires, two interwoven and then you have the top wire sitting on top. That seems to help. You have T4s with the four in a row which is for the larger type of vehicles. But the wire ropes will not stop a truck. In 2005 in Queensland, a rubbish truck went through and killed a woman and hit six other cars. On 30 September this year in Victoria, a rubbish truck went through a wire rope barrier and fell over and rubbish was strewn everywhere.

**Ms FORREST** - Would an Armco railing have stopped the truck?

**Mr BULLOCK** - It is hard to say.

**Ms FORREST** - There is a lot more weight behind a truck than there is behind a car, obviously, particularly if it is loaded.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. There are all different types of cement ones, and coming in on the Southern Outlet in Hobart it is all cement down there.

**CHAIR** - For the record, would you please describe what T2 and T3 mean?

**Mr BULLOCK** - T3 is the wire rope barrier which is three strands of wire. The top one is single and the next two wires are woven in and out of the post. T4 are higher posts with four individual strands of wire.

**CHAIR** - And T2?

**Mr BULLOCK** - There is no T2, just T3 and T4.

**CHAIR** - May we take into evidence the documents that you've provided, together with any others that you provide?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, all the ones I have the committee can have. I'm not sure whether you've had a look at the Victorian inquiry; the Parliament web site and everything is on there for this committee to have a look at it if they would like it. It is a 219-page Safety Committee of Victoria document.

**CHAIR** - That's a road safety standing committee; it's a permanent committee of the Victorian Parliament, isn't it?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I am not sure. It was an inquiry into crashes involving road objects, a report of the Road Safety Committee on the Inquiry Into Crashes Involving Roadside Objects.

**CHAIR** - They have a permanent committee that inquires into different aspects of road safety?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. I have put the web site on there as well.

It is a hazard to motorcyclists. It has been proven in Europe. Monash University said:

'Barriers with a smooth, continuous surface represent less of a safety hazard to motorcyclists.'

It is the post that causes the damage. The chap who was killed on the Lillico straight up here, with the speed he was going, he would have been killed regardless of what barrier he hit. With the wire rope barrier he ended up in eight pieces; he was just cut to pieces.

**CHAIR** - What speed do you understand he was travelling it?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Around 200 kilometres an hour. It wouldn't have mattered what barrier he'd hit, he would not have been with us today, but if it hadn't been a wire barrier, he wouldn't have been in eight pieces. That is the terrible thing about it.

**Ms FORREST** - That is obviously traumatic - and this might sound very mercenary - but does it make a difference at the end of the day if that barrier is deemed to be more effective in stopping cars crashing? If that cyclist was going to die regardless, the outcome is the same, should we take that into consideration?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I will go back to what I said earlier about the offset of the barriers. The barrier he hit was probably under half a metre from the edge of the road.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, the side he was on, but if a car went into that barrier - and I have driven that road a lot - it would be at least 3 metres to the side where the other cars are coming head-on toward you, so from what you have said a car hitting that barrier would no doubt transgress some way toward the oncoming traffic but would have been pulled back because there is a separation in the road and that wire barrier is close to the side that you're driving on.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, I understand that. What engineers have been doing - and they understood our point of view when we gave them all the documentation - is that they are not going to have the big V in the middle of the roads now. They are looking at having it more flat and, instead of having a barrier on each side, all they need is a barrier down the middle. If people get into a bit of trouble, it gives them a bit of leeway and they may be able to get out of it without hitting anything.

**CHAIR** - Unless there are roadside obstructions and hazards, the barrier in the middle would not protect cars from crashing into trees or poles if they are close to the edge of the road.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Would it be better to cut the tree down and not have a hazard there at all?

**CHAIR** - It certainly would be, and to not have poles there.

**Ms FORREST** - Poles are there for lighting at times; major intersections and things like that.

**CHAIR** - Probably a solution you would say is have them both in the middle and on the edges if that could be afforded.

**Mr BULLOCK** - I will quote from 'The substantive law of roadside collisions: An analysis of the common law'. If you want to follow a -

**CHAIR** - Sorry, by whom?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I am not sure.

**CHAIR** - Anyway, you are adopting what you are about to read.

**Mr BULLOCK** - It has all the references for where they found the information, who did the studies et cetera. If a road authority or local council use a rigid pole alongside its roadway and a motorist collides with that pole causing death or more serious injury than would have occurred had a frangible pole been used, would a court hold the council or authority responsible for the damage caused? Our answer is, yes because you have

frangible poles that will break off at the ground. If they do not use things like that they can be liable. There have been two High Court decisions -

**CHAIR** - Do you mean electricity poles too? You would not want them breaking off, would you?

**Mr BULLOCK** - It goes into it. I think it comes back to the two High Court decisions in Australia. One was against Transport Commission of Tasmania in 1950 concerning non-feasance and misfeasance. Is that correct?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Rule: the decision of the High Court in Buckle versus Bayswater Road Board in 1936 and Gorrige versus Transport Commission (Tas) 1950 established in Australia the rule that a highway authority may owe an individual road user a duty of care when exercising its power but it cannot be liable in respect of a mere failure to act. In the Brodie versus Singleton Shire decision, a slim majority of the high court - Gaudron, McHugh, Gummow and Kirby - held that the distinction between misfeasance and non-feasance is illusory and ultimately unsustainable. The effect of the immunity is that an authority leaves itself open to a finding of misfeasance if it takes any positive but inadequate action in respect of a road, even if that action attempts to remove a danger already existing. While failure to attempt such repairs would be non-feasance, any claim would fall foul of the highway immunity.

**CHAIR** - Until then, as I understand it, if a local authority did not attempt to repair anything they were not liable and that was non-feasance. If they did and they did it incorrectly that is misfeasance and they left themselves open to liability which was not really very logical.

**Mr BULLOCK** - It was, again in 2002, found that they were actually liable. If you put wire rope barriers on the edge of the road, you may be liable if someone hits that whereas they would not have hit anything if there were no wire ropes.

**Mr DEAN** - Have any tests been done in relation to injuries sustained by motorbike riders hitting a wire fence at lower speeds? In other words, have tests been done on hitting a wire fence at 110 kilometres an hour, compared with hitting a wire fence at, say, 60 or 80 kilometres an hour?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Monash have done tests and -

**Mr DEAN** - We know what happens at very high speed but -

**Mr BULLOCK** - Even at 80 you can have amputations. What seems to happen is the bike wheel will be grabbed by the post or the wire and the rider gets catapulted forward onto the other post. That is where the problem is. Even with the Armco metal barriers they have done crash tests with loose dummies. What happens is that the dummy goes over the barrier and hits the post coming up, which is what actually kills them.

**Ms FORREST** - That is the post, not the wire. It seems to be a cheese-cutter effect

**Mr BULLOCK** - It is the actual posts.

**Ms FORREST** - It is the posts, not the wire that does the damage?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Is the post responsible for the limb-severing and other unfortunate events?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Isn't any system put in place going to have some sort of post in it, whether it be concrete?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, but you think about an Armco barrier and a motorcycle. You are riding up the road and there is the metal barrier. If you hit that, you are going slide along it. If you hit a wire rope one it grabs you. It grabs the foot-pegs, it'll grab the front wheel and throw you off - you don't have a chance. But if you hit a cement one, you will slide along it. You might have a broken leg, broken foot, but you will be a lot healthier than if you hit a wire rope barrier. The wire rope is not just for motorcyclists it is also bad for a low-slung sports-type car - it will go under it. If they are not tensioned properly and maintained to national standards then this causes likelihood of serious injury. I will pass around a picture of a Volvo that has gone under a wire rope barrier and had half its roof taken off. The Victorian Government sent out to ambulance operators et cetera that in cases like this, they should not touch that vehicle until they get a tow truck to take the pressure of the wire to slacken off the wire, because if they knock the wire they could be in serious trouble.

**CHAIR** - If they knocked the wire?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, if there is someone in the car or they move the car or anything like that, the tension that is on that wire when it releases can cause serious injury to themselves or others.

**Ms FORREST** - Are you talking about the person undertaking the rescue?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, they have to get a tow truck to take the tension of wire back before they touch the vehicle.

**Ms FORREST** - I wouldn't have thought a Volvo was a low-slung car.

**Mr BULLOCK** - If the wire is loose, it hasn't been tensioned properly, then that is where in Europe they have banned them, I think it was in the Netherlands.

**Ms FORREST** - Banned what?

**Mr BULLOCK** - There are astronomical costs for the maintenance of wire rope barriers and that is why they won't use them over there.

**CHAIR** - Because of the cost.

**Mr BULLOCK** - The cost.

**CHAIR** - Not the ineffectiveness.

**Mr BULLOCK** - No, the cost of them is astronomical if maintained how they should be.

**Ms FORREST** - How often would they need retensioning, do you know that?

**Mr BULLOCK** - They have to have a machine that takes up the tension of the ropes and then it is anchored - they have anchor bolts on the ends of them.

**Ms FORREST** - How often would that be required? Do you have any idea? It might not be a question you can answer.

**Mr BULLOCK** - If someone knocks it, someone hits, it would have to be retensioned and, I am afraid, the ones that I have seen aren't.

**Ms FORREST** - Again you might not be able to answer, but after being there for say five years, do they need checking?

**Mr BULLOCK** - DIER says they do it annually.

**Ms FORREST** - So it is already done annually.

**Mr BULLOCK** - It is supposed to be, but I am sure that the Chairman and Ivan saw in the *Examiner* that I had reported to DIER a problem and six months later they still hadn't fixed the wires that were reported. They were still sitting on top of the post. The car that had the accident with the 62 posts knocked down in the Derwent Valley.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes.

**Mr BULLOCK** - That wire still isn't tensioned.

**Mr DEAN** - Isn't it?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I was along there the other day. They have put the post back up.

**Mr DEAN** - That was a good two months ago.

**Mr BULLOCK** - The wire is still loose and that is where the cars will hit it. What is it going to do? It is going to rise and therefore it will take the top off the car.

**Mr DEAN** - I would like to change the subject to the more mature riders. The committee has been given evidence in relation to the possibility of retesting the more mature bike riders and also the fact that we have some riders - quite a few, as I understand it - who park their licences, in other words, they renew their licence every five years but don't ride a motorcycle and then all of a sudden they jump back on one and away they go. Do you have a position on that as to the ability to retest? Should we be retesting?

**Mr BULLOCK** - There are always arguments for and against. There are always figures et cetera for the number of accidents per the number of licensed riders. I know that there were 35 000 licensed motorcycle riders in Tasmania and there are 12 600 registered bikes in Tasmania but in a three-year period there were 5 000 brought into Tasmania but only 1 800 were road registered so there are a lot of off-road bikes out there. The people still have their licences and they may still ride.

This needs to get out to a lot of people who ride off road, that they still need to get MAIB insurance. You can get MAIB insurance without registering your bike and a lot of people do not realise that. The junior clubs and everything like that should push for parents to make sure that their children's bikes have MAIB cover.

**Ms FORREST** - It does not protect them if the child who is riding it is not licensed, and you cannot be licensed to ride a motorcycle until you are 16, I think.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Sixteen-and-a-half.

**Ms FORREST** - To claim MAIB -

**Mr BULLOCK** - But they join off-road clubs. They can be 11 and 12 and riding in these club events and everything and they can still get MAIB cover -

**Ms FORREST** - But don't they have to pass the two tests? One is to have the MAIB cover but the owner has to be a licensed rider.

**Mr BULLOCK** - There are two different things. I can get MAIB cover on my off-road bike; it is not registered on the road but it is still covered by MAIB.

**Ms FORREST** - And you also have a motorcycle licence?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Even if I do not have a motorcycle; I do not need -

**Ms FORREST** - I know that, but what I am saying is that for MAIB to pay out on a claim you need to -

**Mr BULLOCK** - No, I have spoken to Peter Roche, the chief executive officer of MAIB, and he said that they can get MAIB cover for riding off road.

**CHAIR** - Even without a licence?

**Ms FORREST** - I will clarify that with MAIB.

**Mr BULLOCK** - We have road skill refresher course training that has been pushed and got through and it is funded by MAIB. They subsidise the course by \$130 so for anyone who wants to refresh their skills it will only cost them \$50.

**Ms FORREST** - What has been the uptake of that initiative?

**Mr BULLOCK** - It has been very good. We were disappointed for a while. A lot of people who did it for a while but then it eased off. Then for the last 12 months we had it put in



with their motorcycle registration renewals. It went to anyone who was renewing a motorbike registration. In 2004 there were 8 797 registered bikes in Tasmania and in 2007 there were 12 620 so we have had an increase of 3 823. With the big increase in the registered bikes, percentage-wise the accidents have come down. In 2003 there were seven fatalities, in 2004 there were five, in 2005 there were four, in 2006 there were six and in 2007 there were six. Even though we have had a 3 800 increase in registered bikes on the roads we have not had a real increase in fatalities.

**CHAIR** - So there is still the course that learner motorcycle riders have to undertake before they can be given a licence?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Has that been effective all through?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Well, when you have a look at the figures, fatalities have not increased but the number of bikes on the road has, especially because of the price of fuel. Scooters now are really popular, especially on the mainland. A lot of people are turning to motorcycles because it is a cheap form of transport.

**CHAIR** - That course when our House had a committee on road safety some 20-odd years ago, was really highly regarded. Has it been consistently highly regarded ever since then?

**Mr BULLOCK** - The refresher courses?

**CHAIR** - No, the course for learner riders.

**Mr BULLOCK** - I think it has. It has improved. Stay Upright was doing it and now DECA has been doing it for 18 months, I think. Stay Upright was very good. DECA has been good. I haven't heard any bad reports about the training but you would need someone to go along and see what the training was.

**CHAIR** - We have heard some evidence that it is not readily accessible in some parts of Tasmania such as Scottsdale.

**Mr BULLOCK** - About the only thing I have heard is that people have tried to get in to do a course and there hasn't been one coming up for a while. Whether that was because of winter and they cut down because there wasn't the demand for it, I'm not sure, but if there were four or five people in an area DECA would go and do the courses there.

**Ms FORREST** - And you think that's not happening?

**Mr BULLOCK** - That's what needs to be raised with DIER, because it's supposed to happen.

European countries, banned or removed or modified - Netherlands, Norway, Britain, Austria, France, Germany and Portugal.

**Ms FORREST** - Banned what? The Brifen fencing?

**Mr BULLOCK** - The wire fences. Britain won't put in any more wire fences. When they come up for repair or replacement they are being replaced with metal or cement barriers. The Norway public roads administration has argued that cable barriers cost a lot less than other barrier designs. While it is true that cable barriers are cheaper to purchase, maintenance costs have proven to be astronomical and thus the total cost ends up comparable with other designs.

**CHAIR** - That's the point you made earlier, isn't it, and that is evidence of that?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you have any idea about the maintenance on the Armco railing, for example? We often see where someone has come to grief against it and it seems to be left with the dent in it. Potentially the posts could be undermined behind them because they would have taken a fair degree of force to get the dent in it.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Up around Launceston, coming from Richardson's Harley Davidson back towards Launceston, there is one piece where you come up towards the roundabout and then take the off route to go into Launceston. It is a narrow section and there are a lot of trucks around there and it has been hit so many times it is all dented, but it still works. Even though it hasn't been replaced, it is still stopping cars going over or whatever. If it had been a wire rope, it would be a total mess. I don't know how they are going to fix it. They shouldn't have put it where they did because it is too narrow with the trucks that turn onto it. It is continually hit so they don't fix it.

I went over the road skill refresher course. I'll pass on the Ride Tasmania safety pamphlets.

**CHAIR** - I don't think we have one of the refresher course pamphlets.

**Mr BULLOCK** - The Ride Tasmania pamphlet was put together probably three or four years ago. They are readily available at bike shops in Tasmania. They are on both *Spirits of Tasmania* and it was on the three *Spirits*. The response we have had from it has been fantastic. Richardson's Harley Davidson used to go down and pick up bikes on the west coast often. Since that has been out and people have been looking at it, the accidents have come down. They hardly go down the west coast to pick up bikes now.

**Ms FORREST** - They love to ride down there because it is a beautiful road for a bike to ride on.

**Mr BULLOCK** - On the back page of the Ride Tasmania Safely pamphlet they have the distances and people see that it is 160 kilometres and they think it is an hour and half. We have put down there that it will take you two to three hours, things like that. People from the mainland do not know about black ice. There are a lot of people who do not know that for mobile phones, the emergency number is 112, not 000.

**CHAIR** - Anywhere in the world.

**Ms FORREST** - But it does not help you down on the west coast anyway, in most places.

**Mr BULLOCK** - The theory is that 112 will open to any satellite that is there.

**CHAIR** - Even if there is no mobile phone signal?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yep.

**CHAIR** - Anywhere in the world?

**Ms FORREST** - I think that has been disputed, Mr Chairman, with all due respect, because there have been some cases in certain places on the west coast where you certainly do not get mobile coverage on a lot of places on the road down there. But it has been tested, I understand. I heard this discussed on ABC radio not so long ago and it's not the be-all and end-all.

**CHAIR** - So it's anywhere in the world, then, except the west coast?

*Laughter.*

**Mr BULLOCK** - What it tells you and what it means is that if there is an American satellite up there and you ring 112, it will go through there and put you in touch. So it does not have to be through Telstra or Optus.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for that. Just one thing, as Mr Hycyszyn's name is spelt in an unusual way, would mind spelling it?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, H-Y-C-Y-S-Z-Y-N.

**Mr HARRISS** - And I take it you don't like wire ropes?

**Mr BULLOCK** - It's not just motorcyclists, it's cars. When the Government keeps saying that it's the cheapest option, it's not. It's a fallacy. It's cheap to start with but after 20 years it's dearer.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very, Mr Bullock, for coming down here from Launceston and for the preparation you have done and the documents you have provided to us. We appreciate your assistance.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr GREGORY HYLAND**, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Please take your seat, Mr Hyland, and tell us your full name and your current occupation. We know about your past occupation.

**Mr HYLAND** - Gregory Terence Hyland, and I am a retired police officer and casual school bus driver.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for coming. We appreciate the fact that you have come at quite short notice and thank you for your submission. If you would like to address that then we will ask you questions.

**Mr HYLAND** - I will read from my letter that I sent through to the committee, if you like.

**CHAIR** - There is no need to read it all. We have read it but if you would like to refer to any particular aspects or elaborate on any part of it you can, as well as any other comments that you may wish to make, even if they are not in your submission.

**Mr HYLAND** - As I put in the letter, mainly my interest is in the welfare of the motoring public and there are a lot more factors to the cause of crashes than just speed and hooning and that sort of thing. I have just made a few dot points on my letter including alcohol and the use of electronic equipment. As we all know, the use of mobile phones is widespread and I see that in the school bus; when you are looking down on people you see it all the time. I have actually seen drivers reading the newspaper while they have been driving along. Of course the main issues are alcohol and tiredness and I think there is a need for better driver training. That is one of the main things. I think inattention of drivers is the main cause but that is caused through other distractions.

**Mr DEAN** - Just on driver training, what do you think ought to be happening? For learner drivers or refresher courses, or where do you think the training should go?

**Mr HYLAND** - I have been watching, although not too closely, the John Bowe Driving School and I think those sorts of things are very important because they are making drivers aware of the dangers on the road, anticipating hazards and things like that, so they are able to control the vehicles they are in, knowing their own and the car's limitations.

**Mr DEAN** - So are you saying that that ought to be a compulsory thing or people should be channelled into doing that sort of course or further instruction?

**Mr HYLAND** - I don't know whether we need to make it compulsory but I think it should -

**CHAIR** - How else will it happen? How else would you ensure that learner drivers became aware of those pieces of advice?

**Mr HYLAND** - If we're going to make it compulsory I think it would have to be at a very minimal cost.

**CHAIR** - Or no cost.

**Mr HYLAND** - For the average family, I think it's \$300 or roughly that -

**Ms FORREST** - It's more than that.

**CHAIR** - It has been suggested in previous evidence that it should be paid for by the State which receives substantial amounts from road users in registration fees, speed camera and other fines, and fees payable for the change of ownership of vehicles. Very large amounts of money are collected from road users.

**Mr HYLAND** - That's right. It probably should be channelled into the training of young drivers.

**CHAIR** - If the cost of pre-licence holder courses were paid for by the State, would you favour them being compulsory?

**Mr HYLAND** - I would then, yes. I don't think there is any other way of training these young drivers. I hear stories that even the driver training people are not adequately training the people - private concerns mainly. I think it needs someone who has real credibility.

**Ms FORREST** - Some of the defensive driving courses - I am not talking about the advanced driving courses where they do the burn-outs and things such as that - where they are teaching them about safer driving, recognising hazards and that sort of thing that you refer to, there has been a comment made in some areas that that sort of information is best saved until after the learner has a provisional licence and is then honing those skills. When they're going through the learning process there is so much other information they have to learn. I take on board the comments you have made about the inadequacy of some of the driving instructors. Do you think that is a more valid argument or should it be during the learning stage?

**Mr HYLAND** - One comment my son made - and he is right on the verge of getting his licence - 'Why should I travel at 80 kph when everyone else is travelling at 100 kph?' I took that on as a good comment because I see him as quite capable of driving at 100 kph. He is a good driver. My daughter, on the other hand, is a different situation. I think she should be held back to 80 kph.

**Ms FORREST** - What's the difference?

**Mr HYLAND** - I think the person who is responsible for training - such as a father with his son - if they believe that the child is quite capable of handling the vehicle as well as they are at that early age, then things probably could be adjusted in a way.

**Ms FORREST** - You're saying that as the supervising driver you make that assessment?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - I have had three kids so far get licences and I have done most of their supervisory driving myself - the 50 hours - so I hear what you're saying. If they are

being supervised by a driver who has a lot of bad habits and is not a good driver - they might be able to drive a vehicle but they might not do it in a safe manner and they might not teach that person about hazard perception, awareness and all those things - is that person in a position to make such an assessment about their student's capacity?

**Mr HYLAND** - No, probably not. I have done a defensive driving course at the Police Academy so I suppose I am a bit more advanced in recognising a good driver from a bad one. I don't know where we would go with that, but I took on board what my son said. Whether or not there could be an advanced learner situation - I think 50 hours is a long time and it is very expensive for the parents. Maybe a shorter time, or even at 50 hours, they should be assessed whether or not they are capable of driving a vehicle at 100 k. They have to learn at some stage to drive at 100 k, you can't just give them a licence at the end of their learning stage and say, 'Right, you can do 100 k now'.

**Ms FORREST** - Are you suggesting that during their learning phase, when they are being supervised, they should have an opportunity after they are assessed or operating the vehicle to drive under supervision up to 100 k, or even 110 k? Should they then be dropped back to 80 k when they get their Ps? Where do you see that going?

**Mr HYLAND** - I think at the end of their learning stage they should be allowed to, if they have been assessed properly by the government testing officer who says, 'This person is capable of driving at the speed limit when they get their P-plates'. Maybe they could get a different colour P-plate or something like that.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you think the licence test they undertake now will be adequate to determine that as it currently is? When a kid goes for their licence now do you think that test would adequately assess a young person's capacity to drive safely on their own up to 110 kph?

**Mr HYLAND** - Probably not in the 40 minutes that the licensing testing officer takes them on, no.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you think that needs to change?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, I think it could because there are plenty examples of people exceeding the speed limit on their provisional licence. They do it anyway; they're not going to stop it.

**Ms FORREST** - So do you suggest we should give them the skills beforehand at least?

**Mr HYLAND** - Maybe put another stage in there somewhere where they have their learner's licence and then at the time they go for their test some sort of assessment, maybe, to see whether they are capable drivers. I think if you sit beside someone you can tell whether they are nervous or they fail to respond quickly or anything like that and they remain at that speed limit. Maybe they could do another assessment halfway through their provisional stage or something like that.

I have a daughter interstate. New South Wales has separate levels on their P-plates but I do not know whether that includes a speed limitation.

**Mr DEAN** - Can we move to another area?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - I was very interested in your comments in the second-last paragraph of your submission, the lane markings and so on. You raised a very good point there, that in wet conditions it is very difficult to pick up line direction, lane movements et cetera, and you are advocating that there ought to be the use of the shining lights - cats eyes as we call them - as a way of fixing that. The police say that a lot of accidents are caused by people confusing lane markings and so on at night, particularly in wet weather. Can you elaborate on that more? You raised a good issue.

**Mr HYLAND** - That is the whole thing. I am not sure whether they are adequate but there is always that possibility. I remember an accident in the St Peters Pass area a few years back involving some elderly people. I am not sure of the weather conditions but they went head on into a truck because they were in the wrong lane. I know what that area is like; it is very confusing and there are passing lanes, merging lanes and all sorts of things. In really adverse weather conditions it is very difficult, especially at night. There is light glare coming on them.

**Mr DEAN** - Even in built-up areas it is very difficult to see the road markings or the lane markings.

**Ms FORREST** - Going across the bridge in Devonport you have two lanes coming in, you have the East Devonport roads coming in and then you have the other side going off and you have other roads merging and if it is wet it is impossible to see the line markings.

**Mr HYLAND** - The white lines on a dark road on a wet night -

**Ms FORREST** - You can't see them at all.

**Mr HYLAND** - No, especially if they have worn away a little bit. Some of the markings are raised. I do not know what the product is, but it is like a plastic marking that is built up.

**Ms FORREST** - It flattens down after a while.

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, it is built up and they are a little bit easier. Sometimes interstate roads have yellow and I know overseas they use yellow instead of white.

**CHAIR** - So what do you see is the advantage of that?

**Mr HYLAND** - Just visual. Gold or yellow paint on the road rather than white.

**CHAIR** - And in wet conditions is it better?

**Mr HYLAND** - It's only my personal opinion, but I think it would be, yes.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any views about the effectiveness of having speed limits painted on the roadway as a reminder to motorists of what speed limit applies?

**Mr HYLAND** - I'm in favour of all sorts of signs. They're only going to help that much more, aren't they?

**CHAIR** - It happens in other States but it hasn't happened in Tasmania.

**Mr HYLAND** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - I think there have been some concerns about the slipperiness of the surface when you put paint on the road, particularly for motorcyclists. Have you noticed that at all?

**Mr HYLAND** - I am not really aware of that but I presume that some of the products they use have been tested for slipperiness. I am not quite on the line where we are working, but I did print out a couple of photos.

**CHAIR** - Feel free to raise any subject in relation to road safety.

**Mr HYLAND** - This is on advisory signs on corners. These two were only examples of where the actual corner is. It is not prior to the corner.

**CHAIR** - Were they taken in New Zealand?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, and those signs are half a metre high. They are huge and there are signs very similar to that prior to the corner as well. You can see the type of road. There is one there next to a cliff and that is pretty -

**Mr HARRISS** - Scary?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, it was. You can see by the speed limit on there how scary it is. There are some of those types of signs here, and I noticed out at the airport turn-off, coming onto the highway, there are some big signs but they are on their own. These ones are actually in one big board and they point to the direction of the corner. But the ones on there are probably a waste of time because the first one appears as you are going into the corner and the others are further around. When you are already going around, you know you are going around a corner, so why have them?

**CHAIR** - I assume that is a one-way road?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, it is.

**Mr DEAN** - Are you saying that the roads over there are signposted in a better and more effective way, and that we ought to be emulating or at least looking at that signage?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, I think so, because I was new to the area and had only been over there 30 years ago, but you were made well aware before you even reached any of those corners. They have lots of signage, hundreds of situations like that.

**CHAIR** - Would you like these back? Can we take into evidence the two photographs?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes.



**CHAIR** - You say that passing lanes are in ample supply in New Zealand - to a much greater extent than here?

**Mr HYLAND** - I think so, and in better situations. I have travelled Tasmania a fair bit and there are the passing lanes from here to Launceston but there are other examples on other minor roads. Take the Franklin Highway, there are hardly any situated along there and that is a very busy road.

**Ms FORREST** - Also on the Bass Highway between Burnie and Flowerdale there is nothing.

**CHAIR** - Also the Murchison?

**Mr HYLAND** - Burnie-Flowerdale?

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, that is the Bass Highway. This is a major highway with all the trucks on it.

**Mr HYLAND** - That is right, Flowerdale was probably the first one -

**Ms FORREST** - The Murchison, too, has that one little 'Slow Vehicles Keep Left' lane that lasts about 100-200 metres and it finishes on the crest of a hill. It perhaps gives you a chance to get past one truck, but not if you have two campervans and they decide to go up beside each other.

**Mr HYLAND** - That's right. I think that's that main issue that I had and I noticed them because there are so many of them. New Zealand is very much like Tasmania terrain-wise, although much higher, but wherever there is an opportunity for an overtaking lane, they supply it.

**Ms FORREST** - Are some of them quite short in distance?

**Mr HYLAND** - They would vary. I did not find any of them too short. There is just enough to get around trucks mainly, because on some of those roads you can see that there is not a lot of area there to increase speed.

**Ms FORREST** - What is the open road limit in New Zealand?

**Mr HYLAND** - 100 kph.

**Ms FORREST** - That is the maximum.

**Mr HYLAND** - I do not recall seeing any 110kph signs or higher.

**CHAIR** - What is your view about what it should be here?

**Mr HYLAND** - The speed limit?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Do you have any particular view on that?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, I may as well take the opportunity. I would like the speed limit to be 100kph, not 110kph, if I could do it all the way to Hobart, but obviously you cannot. You are up and down and through towns and areas and you have to slow down. I do not think it makes much difference to make it 110 kph. I do have another idea as far as speed limits are concerned and that is the road type. I think your major roads and freeways should be 110kph, but your Bass Highway, where there are only the two lanes, should not be any more than 100kph. Decrease the speed limit as you go down the road. Out through Forthside - what is it, a C road or a B road? - it should only be 90kph. As the road decreases in size, so should the speed limit.

**Mr DEAN** - I think it is 100kph through there; it is open country road.

**Mr HYLAND** - Oh, yes, that's right. It's too fast.

**Mr DEAN** - It's only fit for 80kph.

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, too fast.

**CHAIR** - Are you familiar with the northern section of Campbell Town, which is now 60kph and used to be 80kph?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, that is correct.

**CHAIR** - Do you think it was justified, bringing it down to 60kph?

**Mr HYLAND** - No, I don't think so. It is not a built-up section. Why not just reduce it?

**CHAIR** - Wide nature strips.

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes. Open-area roads, in my view, should not have a 60kph zone where you have no chance of anything happening without you noticing well in advance.

**CHAIR** - That is right. I have been travelling that road regularly for about 25 years and I have seen about four pedestrians on that section of road in that whole 25 years.

**Mr DEAN** - That is four more than I have seen.

**Ms FORREST** - You could ask whether you should reduce it 50kph along that main stretch there where Banjos and Zeps are. I actually stopped in Zeps as I usually do the other day and one of the staff was talking about how many near misses they have with people parking and then backing out, because there is such a lot of traffic in and out with pedestrians and cars there.

**Mr HYLAND** - I do not like comparing us with New Zealand but when you have a good idea it does not matter where it comes from, and they have reduction speed limits. If you are doing 100kph then up ahead they will have an advisory sign saying '80kph ahead' or something like and you are down to 80kph and then down to 70kph and sometimes it might be just 80kph down to 60kph and then it is down to 50kph. So you are getting that pre-warning all the time. I know it is a lot more costly to put up signs but we are talking about lives, aren't we?

**CHAIR** - That is right. Cleveland was reduced from 110kph to 90kph a few years ago. I think there are about seven houses there. What do you think about that one?

**Mr HYLAND** - I don't have any qualms about that at all. There is always a chance that someone is turning into that big place there but it is not a huge reduction in speed. I think I would be saying something if it was 70kph or something like that.

**CHAIR** - Anything else on speed? Off-road situations?

**Mr DEAN** - You have identified here that there is a need for more barriers along the way and so on to prevent people going off and hitting roadside hazards or what have you. You say that it is the sudden stop that kills, it is not the speed, and you're right, it is.

**Mr HYLAND** - I did make that comment.

**Mr DEAN** - I know what you mean by that. What you are saying is that if you are speeding and are hit with a glancing blow and not head-on then you are reasonably safe. Are you saying that we don't have barriers or protection on road hazards?

**Mr HYLAND** - What I was suggesting is that it is something that should be looked at to make sure that those hazards aren't there in particular areas. It may be a black spot or something like that.

I have just been watching Bathurst and the crashes they have. They seem to come out unscathed but they have all the gear and protection, but they are glancing off walls or have the open area with the sand traps - even sand traps might be an idea - big open areas where there is nothing to hit. On a dangerous area where people can get up to higher speeds -

**CHAIR** - Poles and trees are the things that cause the serious injuries and often the fatalities.

**Mr HYLAND** - I have been in the same situation where if you lose control of a car and there is a pole there, you're looking at the pole and that's what you're going to hit. If you look at the gap between the two trees, it is possible that you are going to get through there and you won't hit anything.

**Ms FORREST** - That is what they teach at the defensive driving course and that is what young people need to know.

**Mr HYLAND** - Exactly.

**Ms FORREST** - They see the tree and think, 'I'm going to hit the tree' and they do.

**Mr HYLAND** - They panic about hitting the tree and that's what they do it.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, rather than looking at the gap.

**CHAIR** - You mentioned off-road situations in the last paragraph of your submission. Would you like to make comment on that?

**Mr HYLAND** - I haven't really thought about that.

**CHAIR** - Sorry, I thought you were thinking of the motorbikes.

**Mr HYLAND** - I have had the experience but not with bikes so much. It is a serious situation sometimes.

**CHAIR** - When you referred to this, what type of situation were you referring to?

**Mr HYLAND** - I was thinking about some of the fatalities that have occurred on motorbikes, off road. There are a lot of accidents with motorbikes on private properties. I do not know what we could do.

**CHAIR** - We have had some evidence on that.

**Mr HYLAND** - Apart from training and advice to these drivers.

**Mr DEAN** - Do you think we've got the alcohol situation right with drivers - in other words, do you think that 0.05 is reasonable? It has been suggested to us by some that it should be reduced to 0.03; some have indicated that it should be zero to drive a vehicle. Having being a police officer, do you have a position on what you believe to be the best position?

**Mr HYLAND** - I think it's adequate at the moment. I know there are a lot of countries that have zero tolerance. We have it for bus drivers, truck drivers and other passenger vehicle drivers.

**Mr DEAN** - That is not an issue, is it?

**Mr HYLAND** - No, you know you have to do that and that's it.

**Mr DEAN** - So if it were zero, say, for drivers of any vehicle people know exactly what it is. Currently you wrestle with the fact, 'Can I have one drink, or two or three?' If you knew it was zero, you would have none. Do you think that would be a benefit?

**Mr HYLAND** - That is a good point because a lot of people don't know what their limit is.

**Ms FORREST** - Or don't know how many drinks will put them up to the limit.

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes. I won't mention any names but I had a situation the other day, an acquaintance, and the first time he was caught on a breathalyser he knew he had had adequate. He drove home - stupid boy - because he only had a few blocks to go and he went 0.15. He didn't realise he was that high because he had never been caught before. He never knew the reading. He is a regular drinker and is used to drinking.

**CHAIR** - You would think he would have had some idea.

**Mr HYLAND** - I think he should have realised. He should not have got behind the wheel.

**Ms FORREST** - Even if you established a zero tolerance for driving, as a bus driver you are responsible for your passengers but any driver still has responsibility to the other road users, and effectively could be a commercial driver. What about situations where you might have a sweet in a restaurant that has a liqueur in it and potentially that poses problems, particularly for some women who do not metabolise alcohol as quickly. The alcohol peaks two hours later and you go home an hour after you have eaten.

**Mr DEAN** - That is not likely to register.

**Mr HYLAND** - I hear what you are saying but I do not think there would be enough in a sweet to put you -

**Ms FORREST** - What about some of the medications that have an alcohol base?

**Mr HYLAND** - Yes, there is a problem. It would come down to the responsibility of the person.

**CHAIR** - Having had this discussion, do you still think 0.05 is reasonable? What is your overall view?

**Mr HYLAND** - It went from 0.08 to 0.05 and I think at the time I thought it might make things a bit difficult. But I think I agree with the present situation.

**Mr DEAN** - You have referred to the use of electronic equipment in vehicles, specifically mobile phones. Are you saying that the equipment in cars today is causing people to create dangerous situations because they are playing around with the equipment? Is that what is causing some of the accidents?

**Mr HYLAND** - I think so. This made me realise one other thing, the hi-fi equipment that they have in cars these days. You can hear them a block away coming at you. Boom, boom.

**Ms FORREST** - That is only the bass you can hear.

**Mr HYLAND** - It has to have some effect on the driver.

**CHAIR** - Often they want to share it with everybody else in the community.

**Mr DEAN** - You are right. It makes them oblivious to everything else going on around them while they are concentrating on their music.

**Mr HYLAND** - My son went for a drive the other day. When he started the car up the radio was up and I said, 'Off!'

**Ms FORREST** - Wait until he gets out of the driveway.

**Mr DEAN** - It is an issue that is creating difficulties.

**Ms FORREST** - Loud music in a car is nothing new.

**Mr HYLAND** - I think the equipment nowadays is getting a little bit more sophisticated, isn't it?

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, but I know when I was a young driver I could turn my radio up pretty loud. I think it was a cassette player then, not a DVD player. Now you can plug in an iPod to your car stereo and the temptation is to fiddle with your iPod, to change the channel.

**Mr HYLAND** - And putting plugs in your ears or whatever.

**Ms FORREST** - You can play it through the stereo of the car.

**Mr HYLAND** - It would be worse if you put plugs in your ears, because you are not going to hear a car horn or -

**Ms FORREST** - An ambulance.

**CHAIR** - Mr Hyland, if you think of anything you would like to add, just write a note and send it to us. Thanks very much for your participation and contribution. It is much appreciated.

**Mr HYLAND** - Thank you.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr GEOFFREY CARL KING**, FARMER AND WILDLIFE TOUR GUIDE, MARRAWAH, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**Mr KING** - I have maps that you may have noticed in my submission that focus on the area south of the land of Marrawah and the Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area. One of the reasons I am here is I have an interest in the management of the area. I sit on one of the management committees - the Arthur-Pieman Management Committee - but I also run a tourism business that involves walking people along foreshores. I am more than aware of the issues involved with off-road vehicle activity in this area and felt that I might be able to give you an insight into how it works and, perhaps, the knowledge I have of the area might help you with your inquiry.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for taking the time to do that and come here today.

**Mr KING** - The submission focuses on trying to deal with the causes and effects of road crashes and the measures that may be taken to reduce that, and I was specific in talking about off-road. In this area there are a number of issues relating to the management of off-road vehicle use that I thought lead to a situation where you have an unregulated situation and a higher likelihood of incidents, crashes et cetera.

I believe that your committee will have some influence over how areas like this are managed, that you will have advice, perhaps, that you will give. Although I am not a scientist or a professional, one of the main points about the activity down there is its isolation and perhaps the inability at the moment of the Parks and Wildlife Service and the police to manage it. I make an assumption that having figures of authority in landscapes modifies behaviour and the amount of activity happening with no cap, not just on the numbers that go there, but on the types of vehicles that operate there. There is no staffing over the period of time, for instance, the 24-hour period that people are down there, but it is quite likely to be adding to the problems that we have with road safety. That was about it. I really wanted to engage with you on this issue.

**Mr DEAN** - Are you saying that there ought to be some supervision, at least, if not control of what is happening in those areas?

**Mr KING** - Yes, control or at least a presence. I think, for the 10-day period over Christmas last year there was no authority figure down there. It is a difficult area to staff. There are some difficulties, as I acknowledged in my submission, with servicing those areas, such as occupational health and safety considerations. If you are going south you need two people in a vehicle to the beaches and in the main recreation area at Sandy Cape you need two vehicles. You will not find over-servicing in those areas but I think it is a consideration that should come into the promotion and management of those areas.

**Mr DEAN** - Are saying that the area between Temma and Sandy Cape is a much-used area for off-road vehicles and four-wheel drives?

**Mr KING** - I will give you some figures that were taken over the Christmas period. In my submission talking about the off-road permits that were issued I show that there were

314 road visits between 20 December and 31 December. This does not define whether they were motorbikes or four-wheel drives but it gives you a total figure. It may well be one of the things that need to happen with the area, that you are able to define what it is. There are also some figures for January.

To have a more recent example, on the Burnie Show weekend of 3 and 4 October - and I have checked with the staff at the Arthur River - there may have been around 20 permits given but there were no staff on duty that weekend. Daily permits are given and in addition to that there are long-term permits and there were people who visited the area without taking out permits.

**Mr DEAN** - Have you taken that up with the local government department to find out why they are not supervising or at least having people there with some control? Have you taken it up or not?

**Mr KING** - In the role I have with the Arthur-Pieman Management Committee we continually raise our resourcing of the area and certainly have done that in that forum but they are finding it very difficult even to get a senior ranger to occupy the position at the Arthur River at the moment. As part of that work with the Arthur-Pieman committee we are doing an assessment of tracks to bring in a permit system so that we have designated tracks and areas for people to ride on. I noticed in the job description of the ranger that 50 per cent of his work was to be the administration of that permit system, so obviously it has been taken on board to have some management but it still does not solve the issue of the peak periods and having not just Parks and Wildlife but police supervision in the area.

**Mr DEAN** - Are you saying from that there are a lot of unsafe practices occurring in those areas as a result of this?

**Mr KING** - I am but I am trying to make it clear that is anecdotal because there is no formal reporting process for accidents. I understand that there are unsafe practices taking place because of the reports that come through of injuries et cetera and of people who are visiting the area itself. I would protect my ability to tell the truth, the whole truth, in saying that I don't know what the figures are.

**Mr DEAN** - It seems to be like the situation that happened at Wynyard on the weekend and unless the accidents are fairly serious there is no reporting as you say - no recording of them at all.

**Mr KING** - No, it is worse than that. That is the newspaper reporting. There is no formal reporting process from the police to Parks and Wildlife. Parks do not know what has happened on their ground. If someone has an accident on a weekend where there are no Parks and Wildlife staff on duty, there is no formal way that comes back down so that they know what has happened on their territory. The call goes through to the police or the ambulance and does not necessarily come back to Parks.

**Mr DEAN** - It does not come back to you at all - the responsible authority?

**Mr KING** - That is my understanding of it, according to the staff at the Arthur River.



**Ms FORREST** - This area is pretty remote, as you have said, and particularly once you get down south of Temma there are no sealed roads any further that way -

**Mr KING** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you still think that it should be open for people to go down on their trail bikes, their four-wheel drives and their quad bikes seeing that medical help is a long way away?

**Mr KING** - I do because that is the nature of Australia, if you know what I mean. We have always gone to remote areas whether it has been on horseback, walking or in vehicles. But I think there is a duty of care to the people who are going down there that the area be managed more responsibly.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you think one of the things that need to be focused on is establishing the permit system, where everyone has to have a permit and there is someone who can check it? The reporting is the next step. Do we know the extent of injury and casualties?

**Mr KING** - Yes. I think in the last paragraph - properly staffed and resourced Parks and Wildlife Service operating the permit system. I say limit use to a manageable area and number. The reporting is another important part of it.

**Ms FORREST** - What do you see as a manageable number? How do you measure that?

**Mr KING** - That's not my field. It's just an idea I have. If you want to manage a crowd, you either keep the numbers in the crowd low and staff it with what you have or you increase the staff to manage whatever the crowd is. It is not my field of expertise.

**Ms FORREST** - So it comes back to resourcing?

**Mr KING** - Yes, it comes back to resourcing. In some ways we see caps put on some activities in Tasmania, such as the Overland Track where it seems they have come to the number of people they can manage. I think that is the sort of philosophy that should be applied here.

**Ms FORREST** - We have had some evidence about degradation of the area with all these new tracks being pushed in. Not necessarily in this area but in other parts of the State. In one part of the State where there was a closed-down area it forced more people into another area because it is not restricted. Do you see that when you are out and about, these new tracks being pushed where they perhaps shouldn't be? Is that an issue?

**Mr KING** - Yes, a very big issue. That is one of the reasons that a rationalisation of tracks has been so important. This is one of the richest archaeological sites in the world and one of the issues is the damage to the sites. It is not just becoming an area that is gaining popularity with Tasmanians - and once again this is an anecdotal observation from staff and myself - but there is also an increase of interstate off-roaders. For instance, when I asked one of the staff at the Arthur River yesterday what he thought were the common causes of accidents he said, 'Drowning in creeks' - not drowning of people, but vehicles going into a swollen river and becoming flooded. There were two Victorian vehicles in the last 12 months that went into the Thornton apparently and that happened.

**Ms FORREST** - They didn't drown?

**Mr KING** - No, the people didn't drown but the vehicles did. Once again, we do not have very good records of these sorts of accidents. Lives haven't been lost down there. I know they have in other parts of the State through people trying to cross flooded creeks. Without having a seasonal limitation of people going down there, you open up the opportunity for more accidents to happen when people are going in winter and the creeks are swollen. The Sandy Cape Beach is about eight miles long. It is a test of four-wheel driving ability, particularly when the seas are coming up and you have to get out of the soft sand, particularly in the wintertime when you have swollen creeks.

There are no worries on the off-road permit maps. The Parks have a disclaimer that you are going into a dangerous area. As I say, it is an under-resourced area with many accidents waiting to happen.

The track from Temma, or the first 4-8 kilometres of it, is narrow and sandy. Motorbikes run into vehicles but they are able to hit the bullbar and go underneath. The bikes get hurt but the people not so much.

**Mr DEAN** - If, say, 400 people rocked up and wanted to go there on Saturday, that would happen?

**Mr KING** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - So there is just no control?

**Mr KING** - If you want to watch it, the November long weekend has traditionally been one where you get several hundred bikes and vehicles going down there.

**CHAIR** - At Temma?

**Mr KING** - They go south of Temma. There is some recreation in the area between Arthur River and Temma. The main journey is to go south of Temma. You can get from the Arthur River down to Temma around the coast.

**Mr DEAN** - The loss of those three lives, that was in another area was it?

**Ms FORREST** - That was Granite Creek. It was the two young boys and their step-dad on the bridge.

**Mr DEAN** - One boy died?

**Ms FORREST** - No, two young boys and the step-dad.

**Mr KING** - That was a swollen creek, I saw photos of that

**Ms FORREST** - The bridge had washed away.

**Mr KING** - Yes. The day after it did not seem that high.

**Ms FORREST** - But I would think there was a sheer drop off into the water?

**Mr DEAN** - Are you saying that there would be no record really maintained, other than what Police or Ambulance services have, of the number of injuries that people have had attributed to them in these areas?

**Mr KING** - I am not aware of any coordinated record-keeping.

**Mr DEAN** - I find that interesting as to whether or not there has been any attempt made to get those figures or to ensure that figures are maintained because there is not a lot that you can do unless you have the statistical data to support it.

**Mr KING** - It is a matter of will, I think.

**Mr DEAN** - Are you saying that the answer is for rangers to be there, that they have assigned duties there, to take some responsibility over what is there?

**Mr KING** - Based in the areas that the activity takes place, which means having people down at Sandy Cape.

**Ms FORREST** - Effectively, there is probably not any one body that will come across all victims of off-road crashes in this area because there might be just a soft-tissue injury that could go to the GP, transported there by the family. It could be a serious casualty that ends up in hospital, going through the Department of Emergency Medicine, or fatalities that would end up in the morgue. So there is not necessarily any one point of call and the police might not be notified of an event where the person was just taken to the GP's surgery.

**Mr KING** - No, and I know of examples of that. There are some that are not reported because of the age of the people involved in the accident. I find it illuminating when I talk to GPs. I spoke to one some years ago when I was considering this and he was talking about a forum that he had been to that was discussing peripheral vision and core strength of children and what ages they can be to handle this type of equipment. I saw him last week to clarify a few things about whether they were still getting people through on accidents. The figures were not anything like what I have seen quoted from the Launceston General Hospital, but he said that they are aware that on most weekends, and long weekends in particular, they have a motorbike accident and it generally involves someone who is under age.

He had spoken to someone from a hospital in Seattle who was talking about how they have had this proliferation of quad bike injuries in her area and that the number that were happening was just astonishing. He said, 'Oh yes, that is all right, we have that down here too.' She was surprised. So it is not something that is common to us, if you know what I mean. It must be that these types of vehicles are causing the same problems in other parts of the world.

**Ms FORREST** - Is this the Smithton GP?

**Mr KING** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - I am assuming it is probably Vern. He would see a lot of these people if they came to the Smithton Hospital, wouldn't he?

**Mr KING** - Yes, I mentioned the GPs because they are a reference point of interest for your group. I noticed you can call or talk to whomever. One of my aims here was to highlight those issues and see whether you were able or wanted to pursue them.

**Ms FORREST** - It would be interesting to talk to Vern about this because he would have direct contact with the majority of the minor injuries.

**Mr KING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - You said that some of the accidents were not reported because of the age of the persons involved. Do you mean juveniles?

**Mr KING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - So, they would not be required to have a licence, would they, in these areas?

**Mr KING** - On public land they would. I was thinking of a couple of young girls who had a crash on the Arthur Beach. On public land they are, but on private land they are not. Once again, in talking about the issue in general and not just the off-road areas, when I went through the kids in the Marawah area I could think of who had had a motorbike crash and were under the age of 13, I quickly found half a dozen who had suffered injuries and minor injuries.

**CHAIR** - So you believe there are quite a lot of juveniles riding on public land in this area?

**Mr KING** - I think there is a percentage, yes, because of two things. Because it is an isolated areas they know there is no staff there and also the recreational riders do not keep normal office hours so when the Parks and Wildlife staff knock off at 5 p.m. you'll find that that's when the young kids will start riding about.

**Ms FORREST** - Like when the Waratah cop drives out of town.

**Mr KING** - Yes, it's that easy in a sense. It seems as though one of the impediments is dealing with juveniles. There are some enforcement issues that they have as well.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you think if there were some sort of opportunity for young kids to receive some training in how to handle a bike the appropriate size for their weight and age, the appropriate safety gear to be worn, and then provide some sort of licensing regime for these young kids in that area, would that be a way to go?

**Mr KING** - It is possible. I always felt that was the role of motocross clubs and that it was not something that happened on reserve land, on public land. My view is that I would not like perhaps to see that happening on reserve land. I would rather see it happening in designated recreational areas that were well away from this foreshore area that other people want to recreate in.

**Ms FORREST** - So you are suggesting that it is best to develop those sorts of activity areas separate to this.

**Mr KING** - Yes. I think you should come down into these areas when you are the appropriate age and you have the appropriate qualifications. I do not think you have to have any training to get a restricted vehicle quad bike licence, so that certainly may be one other thing that needs to be looked at. I am not really in favour of shifting the training to the juveniles and then letting them go, if you know what I mean. I think they should have training for sure. By the time someone applies for a permit to go into the Arthur-Pieman, for instance, or any of the recreational areas, they should be qualified to ride their bikes and understand not just physically how to do it but also be physically able to deal with situations that come up. People are going off into really remote areas and they are finding unusual things to deal with, such as wash-outs - even experienced riders have trouble with these conditions.

**Mr DEAN** - What are some of the other things that you believe we should be doing? I am talking about number six in our terms of reference, about reducing off-road motorcycle accidents and casualties et cetera. I think there was some difference in that licensing. I think we were given some information that you did not have to have a licence. You are saying they do have to have a licence.

**CHAIR** - I thought the same.

**Ms FORREST** - You asked that question in Parliament and I asked it again because I did not think they answered the question about public land. It is the same as on roads.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, so they do need a licence. So you are saying there ought to be policing of that currently to try to get control of this, from Tasmania Police quite obviously?

**Mr KING** - No, I think the Parks and Wildlife Service should do it. I think the presence of an authority figure filters out a lot of that sort of stuff. I think juveniles would not be as likely to take a risk on riding if there were an authority figure there. Once again, on that October weekend I went around to look at a fishing spot and two young kids and a guy were riding around without helmets because they'd probably assessed that there was no Parks and Wildlife person on duty. Smithton Police will not patrol the area unless there are a consistent number of complaints. They put their resources where the people are, in a sense.

**Mr DEAN** - I can understand that.

**Mr KING** - So, anyway, that was my point with that. I think if authority figures are in place then you filter out a bit of that juvenile activity.

**Mr DEAN** - The other point that was raised here this morning I think was the MAIB cover. If they are not licensed and so on then one could suspect that in a lot of instances there is no MAIB cover either, and that is obviously going to be another issue as well.

**Mr KING** - It even goes further than that with the restricted vehicle licence on a motorbike with an RV plate, if they breach their conditions - they have to carry their paperwork with them, they have to be wearing a helmet and they can't be double-dinking - I think

they are violating their insurance. I am not clear on that but I think there is an issue with the violation of conditions of your restricted vehicle permit. There are about six conditions that apply when you have a restricted vehicle, which is one of the most common forms of registration of vehicles in these areas.

**Ms FORREST** - Where do you apply for a permit?

**Mr KING** - You can get your RV from Service Tasmania and your permit from the Arthur River ranger station.

**Mr DEAN** - Is there a cost for that?

**Mr KING** - No, not at the moment. It is part of the problem with applying a permit system. We found that we had an authority and we couldn't charge. I think it was an issue to do with whether the tracks were legal in the sense of whether you were breaking the law by riding on them or whatever. The intention is that the permit system can't be far away to having a charge to it.

**Mr DEAN** - They are considering it?

**Mr KING** - Yes. There is a lot of working out to be done with the permit system. We have discussed the power of motorbikes going there on our Arthur-Pieman committee and that has gone through to Parks about not having the high-powered bikes. Bikes have changed so much over the last five to seven years; they have gone from a 300cc bike that you potter around on to a 700cc or whatever.

**Ms FORREST** - Should there also be some restrictions on the quality of the vehicles? We are hearing that some Chinese imports are coming in in the back of containers, basically, and are very poorly made.

**Mr KING** - I don't know of any problems that come from structural issues. Most of the problems I hear about come from people's ability to ride the bike.

**Ms FORREST** - Or lack of.

**Mr KING** - I have one other observation. After I had written to you I thought, 'I'll just make a note in my head as to how many people I see riding quad bikes without helmets on roads', and I've found that it's a common thing with dairy farmers now because they just go from the house to the shed or bring the cows in or whatever. I was thinking about what sort of example that gives to kids and I saw a classic example of it today where Forestry is building a bicycle track at what was formerly known as the Dismal Swamp.

**Ms FORREST** - The Tarkine Adventure at Dismal Swamp?

**Mr KING** - Yes. Two blokes were bringing their quad bikes on a little trailer back along the highway without their helmets on. I thought, 'There it is. The school bus went through an hour or so ago'. I think it is just snowballing, this business of taking a relaxed attitude to safety on motorbikes in general, so I think this committee is really timely.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. You have travelled a long way to be here if you were at the Tarkine this morning. That is very much appreciated.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr GEOFFREY ALAN LEWIS**, GENERAL MANAGER OF TASMANIAN BUS ASSOCIATION, READ THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Mr Lewis, are you representing the Tasmanian Bus Association here today?

**Mr LEWIS** - I am representing that association.

**CHAIR** - You will give verbal evidence rather than following up on a written submission, so we look forward to hearing from you.

**Mr LEWIS** - The Tasmanian Bus Association is an industry organisation and has been in existence for more than 60 years. You probably remember that the Tasmanian School Bus Association was the forerunner and eight years ago it became the Tasmanian Bus Association. We are the peak industry body for passenger transport in the State. In the last four or five years we have been very heavily involved in the passenger transport review process the Government have been undertaking. I suppose one of our primary responsibilities is cartage of children to and from school each school day. That is perhaps one of my biggest concerns and also the industry's. You may remember in the last four years unfortunately three children have died getting on or off a school bus. Unfortunately one was where a child pulled out of his mum's hand. The car was going very slowly but it still was fatal. The other two involved vehicles travelling at speeds in excess of 80 kilometres an hour around a school bus. Following on from that -

**Ms FORREST** - Were they on country roads or in the street?

**Mr LEWIS** - On country roads. One was at Lilydale, the other one I suppose you could call a country road. It was the old Bass Highway at Hadspen near Entally House. I suppose one of our big concerns is the lack of respect that drivers give to school buses, or any bus, with flashing lights indicating. We have the view that it is not only schoolchildren getting on and off, it could be you or me getting off the bus, and that we need to advise the public that there are people in the vicinity of the area. You might remember we had the two children walking and 18 months ago we changed to the round 40 kph speed limit sign when lights flash. Anecdotally it happened for a while, drivers slowed down but now they seem to be wondering whether they can get past the bus before it takes off and holds them up. That is literally what happens.

Flashing lights came in, from memory, in 1995 which is 13 years ago. Since that time it has been a question for new drivers getting a licence, 'Do you know what flashing lights mean?' We have a whole population from about 30 years on who do not have a clue really what a school bus with the lights flashing means. It is an education program and unfortunately we have not been through that. It is not only an education program for the general public, it is also an education program for children who are travelling on those buses. Most of us had the road transport inspector come around to our school and tell us to 'look left, look right and then look left again'. We do not do any of that now in the schools.

The schools have been sent a video but unfortunately it is up to the school, the principal and the teacher to use it; it is not a mandatory part of education. We wonder why we cannot jump on the bandwagon of what we have done in educating our children about



fire. Every child now knows what to do if there is a fire because the fire engines go around the schools. It would be good if we could ride on the back of that to educate the children about getting on and off the buses safely.

**Ms FORREST** - How do you educate the people aged 35-plus about what the flashing lights mean?

**Mr LEWIS** - I suppose there are two things; we need to educate the children that they don't get off the bus and run because that is the secondary cause of accidents. The primary cause is the car speeding past. The only way you are ever going to get that is a very expensive education program to get the general public to slow down.

I had a board directors' meeting today. One of the directors came up the highway and there was a bus with flashing lights, he slowed down and every car behind him honked the horn. Why they don't acknowledge it, I don't know although it says to slow down to 40 kph.

**Mr DEAN** - I am talking about rural roads at this stage because that is where we have had most of the problems. Kids in the city areas know, even the very young, that they cannot jump across the road but in the rural areas it is different. Do you think there is an argument that when the flashing lights are on a school bus on a rural road vehicles must stop on the side of the road where the bus is? Motorists on the other side of the road should proceed at 50 kilometres or 40 kilometres per hour but those travelling in the same direction as the bus ought to stop as they do in some other countries.

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes, like America.

**Mr DEAN** - America is the same - if a bus stops, you stop.

**Mr LEWIS** - A big arm goes out the side of the bus to show motorists they need to stop once the bus has stopped.

**Mr DEAN** - I noticed this when I was over there and I wondered what was going on when my son stopped and he said we could not go past.

**Mr LEWIS** - Coming back to your point about stopping vehicles on one way, if a child gets off the bus they will do one of two things. They will walk around the bus but if they run out from the side and you can stop the cars going behind the bus, you find that the ones coming the other way will collect them.

**Mr DEAN** - The opposite direction?

**Mr LEWIS** - The opposite direction so you cannot win. The other one, which is a real no-no, is to go around the front of the bus which means the bus can go out behind and collect them. I would love to go with your point -

**Mr DEAN** - No, I see.

**Mr LEWIS** - I suppose we should not be selfish from the child's point of view. I don't know what the average motorist's point of view would be about stopping on the Midland

Highway when a bus stops. But if you stop them there, you have to stop them everywhere.

**Mr DEAN** - The thing is that on some of those highways, such as the Midland Highway, there are some places - I have seen them - where they are able to get right off the road. There is a difference between getting them right off the road and being actually on the side of the road.

**Mr LEWIS** - That is right, and I think that comes to another point. We do not have facilities to pull off the road in most places. We all travel around and we know that there on a lot of country roads, the bus stops are at a T-junction of a road. That is the only place the bus can get off the road to let the children off because otherwise it is stopped and it is parked across the road. You could argue that the driver is breaking the law because he is parking across a road, but what else does he do, especially on narrow roads where there is very little room to get off the road?

**Ms FORREST** - It is still the same in the country?

**Mr LEWIS** - It is still the same.

**Mr HARRISS** - Geoff, Ivan has just discussed those matters with you about vehicles coming to a complete stop et cetera and you have indicated that the flashing lights have been in place since about 1995. I have never spoken to anybody who has complained or even commented about being booked for not obeying that law.

**Mr LEWIS** - To my knowledge I do not think there has been.

**Mr HARRISS** - Yet it is such an important issue with regards safety of kids. We all get traumatised when a student jumps off a bus and is killed. We know of circumstances in our own areas. If we have the law there, maybe it is about time we enforced it. As tough and inconvenient as it might be for some, we have to enforce the law.

**Mr LEWIS** - Another thing is the problem of getting it through the department. You would know Summerleas Road. Summerleas Road is an 80-kilometre zone with school buses -

**Mr HARRISS** - It is now.

**Mr LEWIS** - with flashing lights. The guy from the department and I went out there and we counted 26 vehicles that were definitely flying through. We made a request for the police to come out there and the day it all happened something else happened and we have never got anywhere. In Monday morning's paper I read that a driver had lost his licence for parking in a school bus zone.

**Ms FORREST** - I had a representation from a bus driver and I just read recently about this matter. Around the back of Wynyard and along the Bass Highway to Smithton there are a number of areas where they have to pull off. There is not a lot of room. They never see the police out enforcing that. So I rang the police, had a chat to them and said, 'Can we pay some attention here?' They only need to book a few people and the message starts to get out there. The police said they would. I have not spoken to the bus driver

again since - it is only a couple of weeks ago - to see if that has been happening. But it comes back to enforcement.

**CHAIR** - A year or 18 months ago that law was enforced in Prospect, near St Patrick's College.

**Ms FORREST** - Were people booked?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes, they tend to do it in school zones. Over here at East Devonport I can remember one day they got 15 in one morning.

**Ms FORREST** - They need to get out when the buses stop in the road. That is what I was talking to the police about - out on the roads.

**Mr LEWIS** - School zones, yes. I must commend the Government for what they are doing in the school zones by putting in the signs like the ones they have put in at Perth.

**Ms FORREST** - They are just not doing it quickly enough.

**Mr LEWIS** - We are all paying for it but it is not happening quickly enough.

**Ms FORREST** - That is right.

**Mr LEWIS** - But it must come in. It is a good start to do that. And coming back to your point, if we do not enforce it why have the law? That is really what it gets back to. I understand from the police's point of view it is very difficult. They may go out there, be there, and a car does not even go past on a rural road. But somewhere like the Midland Highway or Bass Highway or Summerleas Road, I guarantee that cars come through every time you are there. The thing is that the average driver going through is going to lose his licence.

**Ms FORREST** - The Boat Harbour Primary School is on the Bass Highway and there is an 80-kilometre zone around that area. The school buses have to pull in and out of that driveway, and parents and kids - everyone - walk out there too. Some of them, not many, will walk out to meet their parents out on the road. You have trucks coming through and I relate a situation where a school bus was parked waiting to come in, one was trying to come out and a car was going in between them.

**Mr LEWIS** - Anecdotally I have heard of a bus with flashing lights pulled over, one car went past that and another one went on the outside of that - not in that area but down south. You cannot get held up. Unfortunately we have that attitude, 'We have to get in front of the bus before he slows me down'. I think also, unfortunately - and we looked at this with the flashing lights - in one way we don't help ourselves in that the buses are set up so that when the door shuts the lights flash for about another 20 seconds. In an afternoon that's great because you've dropped the kids off, you're moving off, the lights are flashing which means there are children around. But the lights are still flashing because it's inherent that they stay for 20 seconds after the bus moves off. So we've got this attitude of, 'Well, there's no one around, what's it all about?'

**Ms FORREST** - Can that be adjusted; is that something that could be changed?

**Mr LEWIS** - It's very difficult to do because the driver would have to override it. But I suppose, with today's technology, it could be an a.m./p.m. setting or something like that which would satisfy that.

**Ms FORREST** - It's a bit like the issue of roadwork signs out when there are no roadworks going on and people think, 'Do I really need to obey this when there is no one around?'

**Mr LEWIS** - That's right.

**Ms FORREST** - Is it something that could be looked at so that it really is meaningful, that when the lights are flashing you know there are kids getting off or on the bus and as soon as they are off or on and secure the lights are off?

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - Just going back to my position of stopping it, if you are saying, 'Well, we don't think that's probably the right way to go, to overemphasise this do you think that the speed limit should be reduced even further, then, because if you reduce the speed limit to go past the bus with flashing lights to, say, 20 or 30 kilometres an hour, that probably registers more with motorists, doesn't it? If it's 20 kilometres an hour, they go, 'Gee, I'd better slow right down here', whereas if it is 40 kilometres an hour, they think, 'I'll do 60 and get away with it'. Do you think that's an option?

**Mr LEWIS** - It comes back to what Ms Forrest was saying about the roadworks. I think most people who saw a 40 kilometre an hour sign would go through at 60.

**Ms FORREST** - But if you go through at 60 you lose your licence if you get caught.

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes, I know, but that's what they tend to do.

**Ms FORREST** - Does it come back to enforcement?

**Mr LEWIS** - They do tend to go through at a higher speed.

**Mr DEAN** - With a bus and kids I think it is a bit easier to sell than roadworks signs. I think kids are easier to sell.

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - Do you think that's worth looking at?

**Mr LEWIS** - It comes back to what they keep telling us; every 5 kph you slow down your chances of children being injured is less.

**Ms FORREST** - Then you have the situation where a child was killed with a very slow-moving vehicle. It depends on how they are hit.

**Mr LEWIS** - It was a four-wheel drive with a big bull bar.

**Ms FORREST** - It depends on the injury.

**Mr LEWIS** - That's right, and the circumstance.

We have that, but then we have another side of it where in country areas, in particular, you have parents who park on the wrong side of the road.

**Ms FORREST** - No!

**Mr LEWIS** - Two years ago, in conjunction with Metro and with the department, we put out a code of behaviour and we asked parents to sign to say that they would pick their child up on the same side of the road they get dropped off and we had a few bus drivers that got told where to go; 'I'm not going over there, you have to sit here'.

**Ms FORREST** - The other argument to that, on a country road, is that there's not that much room for many cars and a bus.

**Mr LEWIS** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - So if the cars are all parked on that side of the road to pick up their kids and the bus has to park there as well, then you run out of room.

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes, because Mum can get out of the car and come over.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, but it's raining.

**Mr LEWIS** - Oh, yes, 'I'm running late'.

The other side of it, also, is the education of the child. I started in this position in 2000 and leading up to my time, there used to be school bus safety week in June every year. There hasn't been one in eight years. We have a generation of children coming through that have never really been taught the correct way to get on and off a bus. I don't just mean the child that travels every day and the younger ones that are vulnerable but you also have children going on school excursions and they should all be taught something about it.

**CHAIR** - Who organised that safety week, the Education department?

**Mr LEWIS** - No, through DIER, I think it was.

**Mr DEAN** - So if I have a young child in grade 1 - five or six years of age - that is catching a bus, going to school for the first time; there's no education package at all for that child delivered from the Education department or DIER -

**Mr LEWIS** - To my knowledge, no.

**Mr DEAN** - to drill into those children, even at that age, that when the bus puts you off you cannot move and you must stay until the bus moves off.

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Is that the Education department's job or is that the parents' job?

**Mr LEWIS** - A bit of both.

**Ms FORREST** - These kids have never attended school, they have just enrolled. Whose job is it?

**Mr LEWIS** - I would say, in that instance, it is the school's.

**Ms FORREST** - Even though they've never been to school?

**Mr LEWIS** - Because of the fact that we all see, coming back to my point, that mum stays on the other side of the road, so how are you going to educate the child when mum has that attitude?

**Ms FORREST** - But is it really the Education department's job?

**Mr LEWIS** - Well, it's road safety, isn't it?

**Ms FORREST** - So does the job then become DIER's in the interests of getting the message to everybody, including the parents and the kids before they start school, with perhaps a safety week where that message can go out at all levels so that the little kids can understand it, and maybe schools could have some educational program during that week and the parents could be ear-bashed with some sort of program. Do you think that could be effective?

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes, I think it would be. We could have somebody going around the schools. As I said earlier, we used to have a road safety officer; I remember his name was Bernard Mack and he used to -

**Mr DEAN** - Bernard Mack - he was there for ages, an ex-police officer.

**Mr LEWIS** - He had us all frightened. It was a few years ago now but he used to come to the school and drill into you, 'Look left, look right, look left again before you cross the road' - I always remember it.

**Ms FORREST** - They used to have TV ads along the same lines, didn't they, from my memory?

**Mr LEWIS** - There were some TV ads - it would be two years ago now - when Bryan Green was minister.

**Ms FORREST** - Doing the, 'Look left, look right', thing?

**CHAIR** - 'Look to the left and look to the right, and you'll never, never get run over.'

**Ms FORREST** - Can *Hansard* get the tune for that?

*Laughter.*

**Ms FORREST** - Obviously it has stuck in Mr Wing's mind so there is capacity for some little jingle to work.

**Mr LEWIS** - That's right. Queensland have done a lot of work on it - you know, 'Get on the bus, get off the bus'. Victoria had the singing bus with a really catchy tune done by the TWU, but it was felt it wasn't applicable to Tasmania. There is work out there. I know that Queensland, in particular, have done a huge amount of work. They actually have one person employed full-time in the Education department just to look after road safety on school buses.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you know why that little jingle, or whatever it was, wasn't deemed acceptable for Tasmanian use?

**Mr LEWIS** - No, this wasn't a jingle, this was a catchy little tune saying something like, 'While you are on the bus look after friends and do all these things' - it was a catchy little tune, it wasn't the same as the jingle the Chair was singing but it could come into the same vein.

**Ms FORREST** - Obviously these things incur some cost to produce. Do you know if the Road Safety Council or any of these other organisations have looked at this and what has been done in the other States that might be applicable? Or the Education department, for that matter?

**Mr LEWIS** - I deal with DIER on their road safety and I would say the road safety branch would love to do more to help us but, unfortunately, they are hamstrung through the amount of dollars and cents they have to put to all the projects they have to get up to. The manager there would love to help us more and he has helped us quite a bit. Southern Cross did those 'little moments' or whatever they called them for a limited time about two years ago - eons ago.

**Ms FORREST** - A lot of the criticisms we have heard are about the campaigns that are run focusing on enforcement issues rather than driver behaviour and good driving attitudes and approaches. This would be of a similar vein.

**Mr LEWIS** - That's right.

**Ms FORREST** - So do you suggest that sort of thing should be focused on, 'How can I keep myself and my friend safe?' sort of stuff.

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes. It has to become, for want of a better word, personal, and I don't think that is happening at the moment. It comes back to the attitude of everybody thinking, 'It won't happen to me, it'll happen to somebody else', and unfortunately school bus travel is safe until you get off the bus. A total of 92 per cent of all incidents nationwide happen after a passenger gets off a bus; only 7 to 8 per cent of incidents happen on a bus.

**Ms FORREST** - So rather than saying, 'You will get booked if you drive over 40kph past a bus with flashing lights on it', the campaign should be something along the lines of, 'This is how you get off and on the bus safely'?

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes, I think so; maybe it has to be both. It has to be firstly the education and then the -

**Ms FORREST** - If you start booking a few people that is probably all the publicity you need?

**Mr LEWIS** - As we said earlier, if their names went in the paper every Monday morning, it would soon slow them down because they would be losing their licences. If we could get that, it would help a lot.

**CHAIR** - So your association deals only with school buses?

**Mr LEWIS** - No, we deal with everything. Metro is a member of our association. Naturally Metro can supply sufficient resources to look after but they are a valuable member. But the coaches you see around are members - Redline, Tassielink Fentons -

**Ms FORREST** - So it is the companies that are members as opposed to individual drivers?

**Mr LEWIS** - That is right, it is companies.

**Ms FORREST** - How many members do you have?

**Mr LEWIS** - About 200. If you take Metro in, we are representing about 600 to 700 buses.

**CHAIR** - With school buses, how would you describe the condition of them generally and the age?

**Mr LEWIS** - If you had asked me that 12 months ago I would have said the average age of the school bus was 25 years. As I mentioned earlier, in the last four to five years we have been working with the department on the new Core Passenger Services Review. The rural school bus contracts went out in February of this year. There were 272 contracts that went out. Through the association, we have a separate arm; when the Department of Infrastructure outsourced the vehicle inspections, we took on that role for our members and we have an ex-transport inspector looking at all that. We have inspected more than 120 newer vehicles that have come into the State in the last 12 months into that 272. On top of that, there have been about 14 brand-new small buses with seat belts, the Mitsubishi Rosas. One has been brought into Devonport which is a brand-new Rosa with a wheelchair for the disabled and there are two with the new urban fringe, student-only contracts which come into Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport. There are two brand-new buses, one in Penguin and one in Beaconsfield, and there are more being ordered in Hobart and all around the coast which are dedicated to bringing the children to school. So there has been a dramatic change and that has all come about through the new model that we put together that you hear criticism of, to the point that the Government have found that the uptake of it was greater than they ever expected.



**CHAIR** - That is the charging of fees?

**Mr LEWIS** - No, these are free to users. The charging of fees is only just coming in now. Contracts for those are being settled at the moment. So these are all free to users.

**CHAIR** - It is good to hear about all the new buses. On how many buses would children have a seat each, rather than three being in two seats?

**Mr LEWIS** - The department's aim is that every child should have a separate seat. Unfortunately, with demographics moving and those sorts of things, you end up with three for two and standees in some instances. But we must also remember that is probably only for perhaps 10 per cent of the journey because it is that very end bit of a morning and the very early bit of a night going home. It is not a great distance. When we went from the old Passenger Transport Act to the 1997 act, there used to be a restriction that standees were allowed only in a less than 80kph zone; it is now unlimited, which is unfortunate, but I must say that the department would like to work towards a seat for every child and in most instances that is the case.

**CHAIR** - What is your association's attitude and policy towards seatbelts in school buses?

**Mr LEWIS** - Our attitude - and this is nationally because we have a national body that we report to each day - is that any bus under 27 seats should have seatbelts. For buses over 27 seats there are arguments for and against as to whether seatbelts should be there. If you do not have the right type of seats and you have what you call a Metro-style seat - a low seat with a bar across the top - there is evidence that no seatbelts create less damage than a lapbelt. There has to be a lapbelt and your head will hit the seat in front and you will cause more damage than you would by just going forward. One of the other problems is that if there is an accident and you have 40 kids hanging upside down in the air in seatbelts, how do you get them out?

**Ms FORREST** - Undo the seatbelts.

**Mr LEWIS** - It is already undone because of all the pressure on it. The biggest thing we have and are using now is that from 1992, ADR58/00 came into effect and any bus bought before 1992, if there was accident it would go down like a sardine can. Buses built since 1992 have to withstand a roll-over so therefore we are better going towards that at this time than for seat belts in large buses. Larger buses are very heavy objects. If a large bus and another large vehicle collide, it will be catastrophic whether there are seatbelts or not. We all remember the two-bus crash; they had seatbelts. That was at Kempsey in about 1987 or 1989.

Money should perhaps go to resourcing what we were talking about earlier on the safety of children off the bus. I totally agree that under 25-seaters should have seatbelts because they are a totally different vehicle. If one of those hits a car, it comes off nearly as badly as the car because they are built to a similar design. As soon as you go over 25 seats, you have a truck chassis coming at you.

Bus travel is well known as being seven times safer than mum taking the kids to school in a car. Then we come to another problem of parking around schools. Trying to get a bus into a school at the moment when cars are parked all around, it is nearly impossible.

It would be so much safer if we could tidy up this area around the bus and the speed for passing buses. If we could get the education of the driver and the children - they are the two areas.

**CHAIR** - So that is your main concern and the concern of your association dealing with school buses? You don't really have concerns about the other bus operators operating public transport?

**Mr LEWIS** - There are very few operators doing school bus work and other transport. There is the general access - Redline, TigerLines - that are doing school work as well as the others. The other people who are just doing coach work tend to not be dropping off on the sides of the road; they tend to be dropping off at attractions, where they are off the road.

**CHAIR** - With the others who also don't provide school bus services, you don't have issues as an association in terms of road safety?

**Mr LEWIS** - Not in terms of road safety as such, but I suppose we all have a concern about the lack of ability for the younger people to adhere to the speed limit when a bus is dropping off. A bus is slower and they don't seem able to recognise the fact they will be held up. They seem to have to pass it at all costs. I think Driver Safety Services, through their crash-free driving program, should be looking at this for the younger drivers on their P-plates. That is something that should be looked at as to the availability. What will that do to help? It is going to help all the way through. We have to educate them better than we are educating them now. I think that can also be put through to all the younger drivers because they're the vulnerable ones.

**Mr DEAN** - With the school buses, I keep thinking of the vehicles passing which is where children are at most risk. Do you think there is a case to apply to school buses as applies to Metro, and that is to give way when the vehicle is moving out? I see that as emphasising to motorists that school buses are critical areas of safety. To me, that would make it even stronger to the community generally, that you must support our school buses and give way et cetera. Do you think there is a case for that?

**Mr LEWIS** - I think there is a case for that. That would mean a regulation change.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes.

**Mr LEWIS** - At the moment wherever there is contiguous housing that applies. As soon as you get out of contiguous housing, a give way does not apply any more. Again, we have a law in the city and a law that does not apply in the country. It is a mixed message.

**Mr DEAN** - Do you think that might be reasonable?

**Mr LEWIS** - I think you are going to have the problem with the bus pulling out into traffic travelling at 80 kph. In the city it is travelling at 40, 50 or 60 kph.

**Ms FORREST** - Or coming through at 100 kph.

**Mr LEWIS** - They should only be doing 40 if the bus lights are flashing.

**Ms FORREST** - But if they have stopped flashing because they are pulling out.

**Mr LEWIS** - They do not stop flashing until 20 seconds after they have pulled out.

**Ms FORREST** - Currently.

**Mr LEWIS** - If we change it. Nobody will want to change it.

**CHAIR** - What training is required for drivers to qualify to be bus drivers?

**Mr LEWIS** - A bus driver has to have a medical, a national police check and an ancillary licence, which is additional to a normal driver's licence, to show that the driver can handle a vehicle of the size being driven. Every three years he has to have a further medical. At the age of 65 he has to have another driver test, at 70 another test, at 75 a test. If he keeps on driving, he has to have another test every year after 75. You can argue in one way that medically they are fairly well looked after. Also, at any time a doctor, if he feels the person is becoming slow in his movements, can refer the driver for testing. If somebody with only a car licence wants to become a driver of a bus, a car is up to 12 seats and anything over 12 seats is a light rigid and then a medium rigid. Most buses are medium rigids. He would have to go to a driver centre to have his licence endorsed up to that category before he could get his ancillary for that size.

**CHAIR** - Where would that driver training centre be?

**Mr LEWIS** - There are two or three. You have Driver Safety Services in Hobart, Launceston and on the coast. You have another company in Devonport and one that operates in Launceston and Hobart and there is a further one in Hobart. There are a few around. That is not only for a school bus, that is every bus with more than 12 seats. You must have an ancillary licence to drive a licensed public passenger vehicle.

**Ms FORREST** - I have heard complaints from parents particularly about kids on school buses saying that the bus drivers are often distracted by kids. Also that bus drivers will use mobile phones while they are driving the school buses. I have a photo from a kid's mobile phone showing the bus driver driving while talking on a phone and things like that. What sort of expectations are on the bus drivers and how do they cope with those? They should not use their mobile phone, but what about distractions from children on the bus? Is that a huge issue?

**Mr LEWIS** - That is a big issue. If two children are having a fight in the back of the bus while the driver is going around a winding section of the road, what can he do? He is going to keep glancing up. It comes back to the code of behaviour we spoke of earlier. We found that in passenger transport accreditation we told the operator what happened if the children played up, but we never really told the children what constituted behaviour that was unacceptable. That is how we went about that.

**Ms FORREST** - Has the code of behaviour been effective, do you think?

**Mr LEWIS** - I am going to say something now that will upset some people, sorry. It depends on the school. If the principal backs it, it works. If the principal does not back it, it does not work. You will also find that if the principal does not back it, they are the

children who normally play up at school as well. If you have the support we will fix it. If there is no support it will not get fixed.

**Ms FORREST** - In circumstances like that - and I am sure there must be some for you to have mentioned it - what do you do? How do you try to address that? Obviously all of those kids on that bus are at risk. If the driver is distracted to the point of blood being about to flow at the back of the bus and they are on a section of the road where they cannot safely pull over and deal with these kids, then do we need to have adult monitors on the bus? What do we need in the circumstance?

**Mr LEWIS** - There are situations where adult monitors have worked well. There are other situations where adult monitors do not work well. There are situations where bus drivers have no-one doing anything wrong. There are other buses where they are totally unruly. One operator had a bus where the children were nearly feral so he took one of his other drivers and put him on the bus and he fixed it. But the driver who went to the other bus had the same problem there. It is the person and how he treats the children.

**Ms FORREST** - It was the driver who was the issue?

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes, it is a driver issue and how he treats the students. If you treat them fairly and treat them as you would like to be treated, you don't have a problem. Some people tend to think, 'I'm the bus driver and I'll command my bus'.

**Ms FORREST** - Are you saying that you need a bus driver who has some interpersonal and kid-friendly skills?

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - And a principal who supports their code of behaviour for it to be effective?

**Mr LEWIS** - Yes. Last year, through a company here in Devonport, Trans Train, we received some money from one of the training organisations. They put a heap of bus drivers through training on those sorts of things to do with how to drive the bus, how to manage behaviour and how to handle it. Unfortunately the behaviour gets to a point where the student is put off and the parents are inconvenienced. The worst of it is that in most of these small country areas the bus driver is part of the community as well.

**Ms FORREST** - So kids are put off the bus, are they?

**Mr LEWIS** - They cannot be put off the bus going home the same night. If they play up it would be said at the end of the journey, 'You're not travelling tomorrow'. You can't put them off, like we were all put off when we travelled.

*Laughter.*

**Mr LEWIS** - As an industry we have a concern for the students and the general public and we would like to make it as safe as possible.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. We appreciate your input and the time you have given us.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr ROBERT EDWARD BENTLEY**, DRIVING INSTRUCTOR AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNER, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**Mr BENTLEY** - It was interesting to hear the reference to the Driver Safety Services Crash-Free Program, which is what I have been doing today for Forestry Tasmania and tomorrow in Devonport as well, Friday for Russell Smith Electrical and next Monday in Smithton and I have done quite a few P-plate action programs for the schools up around this way.

I wanted to come and speak with the committee and have some sort of input because I have stopped having any input into anything. I was so frustrated with the whole 'system' that we have for having young people driving on our roads that the system has pretty much come to a standstill. I have invested a lot of time and effort into having input into committees. I helped set up the original Australian Driver Trainers Association branch in Tasmania and was president of that for the first couple of years. I had input into the graduated licensing system that we are supposed to have in place now and I went through a lot of pain and anguish in that. I did not believe in it to start with and I do not know whether I do now, having been a fairly heavy proponent for competency-based training assessment.

To be honest, the last four years I have put my nose down, been doing programs for Driver Safety Services, running the RACT franchise in Burnie and doing rehabilitation driving for MAIB and a couple of occupational therapists in Hobart and Launceston. If anybody has anything to say about the licence testing system or anything like that I will give them truth with both barrels and then shut up and walk away and feel really frustrated about it again. I thought I had better have another crack and see if I cannot make somebody see a little bit of sense in what, in my humble opinion, we should be doing.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you want to tell us how you see it is now and what is wrong with it and how you think it should be?

**CHAIR** - We would like to have the double barrel.

**Mr BENTLEY** - You would like double barrel? Okay.

As I see it, we have young people in Tasmania getting their driver's licences in exactly the same way we got our driver's licences however many years ago. We can say that we have all the systems and all the other stuff in place. In fact it is still no different to when I did licence testing as a policeman in South Australia and how licence testing has been done in Tasmania for years and years. It is still seat-of-the-pants stuff, with maybe a few exceptions in amongst the testing fraternity; there is no objectivity in it. It is real, basic seat-of-the-pants stuff and that is really, really frustrating. Young people have this desire to drive safely on the road and they all want to do the right thing, but they get frustrated with this idea that they need to get a licence and when they get the licence they think they are absolutely bulletproof. They have their licence, they think it is great and in fact what they have is not too much at all.

**Ms FORREST** - So how should we do it?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I have done a lot of background work in the last few years and I am more convinced than ever that we should look at competency-based training and changing the system again in a proper way. Competency-based training system is used in South Australia, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory as a means of people getting their licence. New South Wales have what they call a graduated licensing system but if you get their logbook it is actually a competency-based training assessment system. You still have to go and do a vehicle on-road test. When the young people get their logbook, they get a set of competencies that they need to be competent at to pass their licence test, basically.

**CHAIR** - Can you tell us the difference between that, with some specific examples, and the present system which, as you point out, has been in existence for many years now?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Maybe I should go to how the present system should have operated in Tasmania. The present system - how it should have operated in Tasmania - relied on there being two licence tests. Two licence tests were to be before people started to log their 50 hours of driving and then there was to be an exit test after they logged their 50 hours of driving. The exit test has been written, it has been paid for, and as far as I know it is still sitting on a shelf in Hobart somewhere gathering copious amounts of dust, obviously - or maybe it has been cleaned. The Transport department will not let us see it. The guy who wrote it is not allowed to say what is in it. They have had it evaluated by Monash University Accident Research Centre and as far as I know, it is still sitting there. I have asked for it under freedom of information and was told it is not a public document so it is not allowed to be released. That is particularly frustrating. So at the moment we have the test that was never designed to be an exit test as the exit test, if you like.

**Ms FORREST** - Is that the test that was designed to be the one that you get after -

**Mr BENTLEY** - At the start of 50 hours.

**Ms FORREST** - And the start of the 50 hours. Then you get to 50 hours and you do the exit test that is gathering dust?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Who wrote that test?

**Mr BENTLEY** - The test was written by a company in Hobart called Driver Improvement Consultancy which is now owned by Road Transport Training which has now become Driver Safety Services. The Government paid millions of dollars for it and bought it off Western Australia. They have now spoken to the guy who wrote the program in Hobart but they did not for some number of years.

**Ms FORREST** - That fellow is in Hobart now?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes - an ex-police officer. He has not many friends around because unfortunately he tells it how it is as well.

**CHAIR** - Are you able to say who it is.

**Mr BENTLEY** - I guess so. His name is Alex Jerrim. He is a former police driver trainer. He is probably one of the world's leading exponents of driver training and road safety in general. He simply refused to speak to them.

**CHAIR** - He gave evidence to us with another witness in Hobart last week.

**Mr BENTLEY** - Excellent. I might say also that we do have a set of competencies in Tasmania for training for driving. They were originally set out in a document like this which was sent out to driver trainers as a training manual. You are more than welcome to have this.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We will take that into evidence.

**Mr BENTLEY** - But unfortunately what has happened is it has been put on a web site. To get put on the web site it was bastardised and broken down. If you can actually find it on the Transport web site you are a better man than I am - or a better woman than I am a man. It has just been broken down to its bare bones and it is pretty much meaningless. It is very, very difficult to find.

**CHAIR** - Is what you have given us the unexpurgated version?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - That is operative?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - But difficult to follow?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Difficult to find. The general public cannot find it. I was talking to a road safety consultant last week who did not know it existed and then she rang me back and she said, 'Are you sure this is on this web site?' She could not find it.

**CHAIR** - What do you think about the quality of it?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I think the quality of it is fine and the whole notion of what was tried to be done with the graduated licensing system is absolutely fine but we all know that 50 hours of supervised driving is about 100 hours too little, according to world standards - any opinion that you would like to ask. It is simply not enough. At least the way it was originally designed it would have put those hours out a little bit without adding to the hours. The whole idea of it was to set a standard and then for that standard in the 50 hours of driving to be built on and then for the exit test to be undertaken.

**Ms FORREST** - Robert, the way we are headed now with this new, two-tier provisional licence system, will that address some of the areas of concern and not be just a little bandaid solution test?

**Mr BENTLEY** - It is just a little bandaid solution, I believe. There is nothing in there at all to deal with the attitude concerning the way that people are tested, with the training for the testing officers. They are not trained at all in how to assess. You can be told how many times to tick a box and that sort of stuff, but that is all they are trained to do.

**Ms FORREST** - What sort of training do you believe the driving test assessors need?

**Mr BENTLEY** - We are really lucky up here. We have two testing officers now who are, I believe, really competent and who look at young people's driving particularly fairly and are looking at things. Since I have been involved with the Crash-Free Driving Program I have been teaching my students quite a lot differently to how I taught them before. They all get the same stuff; they all get the fact that they drive out on the road; they get to look five cars in front of them, beside and behind them; they get three seconds of crash-avoidance space; they get told to pull up a full vehicle length behind the white line. That is how I would expect them to drive before they go for their licence test. When that notion was put by one of the testing officers up here to the rest of the testing officers, there was hell to pay. 'You can't do that. That's not possible'. That would be a path error or a movement error, and you can see low path and movement set out in that document there. They are looking for errors all the time, not for ways of having people improve their driving. If we are going to stick with the graduated licensing system, we need to introduce the second licence as soon as we can and to give people some training in how to assess driving and not tick boxes.

**Mr DEAN** - On the point of looking for errors all the time, there has been evidence given to this committee that there are those in testing areas who deduct points when, for instance, it is 60 kilometre per hour zone and the learner driver drives at 50 kilometres per hour, or for some other event where they might take a very cautious action. That is the sort of thing you are talking about?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - When was Mr Jerrim's program devised? How long ago was that?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I think it was in 1999.

In the last 12 months I have been talking with a fellow from Brisbane and I have brought part of a drive wise program that he has developed. At the moment that is being embedded into the national training framework. It has taken a lot of convincing for me to get to this point, but I believe that if this competency-based training and assessment program is embedded into the national training framework, people who go through this process of getting a certificate 2 in driver development can get their licence without having to do another licence assessment. This was already supposed to have been embedded; it was supposed to be embedded in June of this year. The transport bureaucrats all around Australia have held that embedding process up and they have now been told by DEEWR in Canberra - and I am not sure of all the acronyms I might add, but DEEWR is the overarching body handling the embedding processes in the national training framework. They have told the national transport councils to get on and they are to get the program embedded into the national training framework. I had a call yesterday to say that the embedding will be finished by 31 December. Hopefully that framework will come into being. It is designed to run from year 9 in Tasmanian schools right



through and there is a post-licence component as well. Even after they have their certificate there is another eight hours of training after they have their licence.

**CHAIR** - Is that defensive or advanced?

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, this is about driving skills on the road not advanced driving.

**CHAIR** - So not defensive?

**Mr BENTLEY** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - Do they get a certificate 2 at the end of that?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Who will teach this?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Driver trainers and teachers. The program is a certificate 2. I could be corrected on the hours involved, but I believe certificate 2 is a nominal 188 hours. Of those 188 hours in the certificate 2 in driver development, there are 150 hours of driving. The program comes with a log book and a driver trainer's manual and there is also a teacher's manual so that teachers in school can deliver part of the program.

**Ms FORREST** - If the Tasmania Tomorrow changes go ahead would this be something that would be in the polytechnic?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes, I have taken the course documents to Hellyer College and to Marist College and they are busting their boilers to get it.

**Ms FORREST** - Would you be the sort of person who would be taking that course?

**Mr BENTLEY** - My vision is to take it but by training the trainers. I will train the driver trainers to sign the trainees' log books and I will train the teachers as well.

**Ms FORREST** - With the 180 hours for a certificate 2, I am not sure how many hours that leaves for them to do another course. If you are looking at a kid from year 9 to effectively year 12 to finish a certificate 2, how much room does that leave for them to do a certificate 3 or certificates 1 and 2 in hospitality?

**Mr BENTLEY** - No problems at all because the actual contact time is only about 38 hours.

**Ms FORREST** - Who supervises the other time then? Could a parent do it?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes, a parent could do it but the parent cannot sign off on the competency.

**Ms FORREST** - But a parent could be engaged to follow up on the lessons learnt and that sort of thing?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes, and all the competencies are set out there. If you have the competencies set down anybody with some communication skills can teach them; it is not rocket science.

**Ms FORREST** - I should imagine that by far the majority of kids would want to do this but they would also want to do their other academy or polytechnic courses.

**Mr BENTLEY** - Over grade 9 and grade 10, grade 11 and grade 12 there are about 30 contact hours apart from with the driver trainer, which is the vast majority of it because it is 150 hours.

**Ms FORREST** - Each year?

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, no over four years. It is only about 10 hours a year.

**Ms FORREST** - Is it only 30 contact hours in total? Sorry.

**CHAIR** - What would the cost be?

**Mr BENTLEY** - It would depend on how much the driver trainer charges for his lessons; does the school deliver it; do they pay somebody to come in and deliver it? There are so many variables.

**CHAIR** - If they paid somebody to come in to lecture, what would you estimate it would cost per person?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I do not know. I deliver programs for both Marist and Hellyer colleges and generally charge them \$50 to \$55 an hour.

**Ms FORREST** - Who pays that? Does the student pay that?

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, MAIB fund that. I am doing an extensive program at Yolla District High School and they apply for funding from MAIB. Part of their funding is used to pay for me to go and do it. Effectively for them it is an extra teacher, although they sometimes have a teacher supervising the training.

**Ms FORREST** - If the people you train are employed by the polytechnic, effectively it could be part of the education?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes and there are teachers in the department who are really keen to do it and train to do it.

**CHAIR** - I take it that would involve the provision of a vehicle for practical training.

**Mr BENTLEY** - No.

**Mr BENTLEY** - It is not practical training. The teachers would do the in-classroom theory component of it using films or videos or any other programs that they want to set.

**CHAIR** - How important do you regard such courses for learner drivers, where they receive that type of information, advice and see films about what to do and what not to do?

**Mr BENTLEY** - We cannot do anything else. The only thing we can do is give young people the information. We know that when they get out on the road they will go from being the safest road users group to the most dangerous road users group and probably all the talking and training under the sun is not going to change that. We are talking about 17-year-olds, males and females. They are going to go out on the road and more likely than not, they are going to take risks at some stage.

**Ms FORREST** - It is called testosterone.

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes and what is the female version of that?

**Ms FORREST** - Oestrogen.

*Laughter.*

**Mr BENTLEY** - What I would like to see is that, once we have been able to get past that testosterone stage, the graph drops back down again really dramatically and becomes quite low quickly.

**CHAIR** - That is right.

**Mr BENTLEY** - We are not even testing them for the right information.

**Mr DEAN** - Do you not know of any program that is likely to get on top of that testosterone phase that they go through? A few penalties is one thing that we use to try to control it to some degree, along with other restrictions, the probationary period et cetera, the visual licence and so on. Do you think that there is anything else that we can change to help that?

**Mr BENTLEY** - We were all sensible 16- or 17-year-olds once and most of you can probably remember it. We have all done things that we are not all that proud of; I can remember doing a nice 360 and the middle of Mount Street.

**Mr DEAN** - Can I raise another issue while I am on that? It has been suggested to this committee by a number of people that the transition from driving at 80 kilometres an hour, when you are given a provisional licence, to 100 to 110 kilometres an hour without any training is a problem. Do you have a view on that?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I think the notion is ludicrous. I think it is crazy. As a driver trainer in Tasmania, I cannot even go out and teach a young person how to merge properly. How do you teach a person to merge, at 80 kilometres an hour? What do you merge with? The bikes? Then we are going to give them a licence that restricts them to 80 kilometres an hour and then 12 months later, all of a sudden, this magical wand flies around and then they can do 100 to 110 kph. Personally, I think that if you are going to drive on the road, display P-plates and travel 110 kilometres an hour or whatever the speed limit is then let us train people to do that. Let us show them what to do. Let us show them what the difference is.

**Mr DEAN** - I don't disagree with you.

**Mr BENTLEY** - Good.

**Mr DEAN** - Ex-police officer.

**Ms FORREST** - So, what change do we need to make in the assessors though? Do they need to adopt this program?

**Mr BENTLEY** - They all have it. They have all had it for yonks.

**Ms FORREST** - So we need to get those people doing some sort of Certificate IV in training and assessment before they are allowed out there with the people.

**Mr BENTLEY** - They were all supposed to have done it but, unfortunately, like a lot of other things in the transport department, it is probably like that document over there. The Certificate IV was cut down and strangled so much that I don't believe it was really a Certificate IV at all.

**Ms FORREST** - We are hearing from some people that these people are being trained up in no time flat. They are being pulled out of Service Tasmania offices and trained up, and to do a Certificate IV in assessment and training, you cannot do it in such a short time. So, clearly, that is not happening.

**Mr BENTLEY** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - So do we need to re-establish the rules?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes, sure.

**Ms FORREST** - So what is the benchmark then as you see it as to what qualifications a person conducting an assessment should have? Whether it be through this process, where we don't actually have to have a test, but someone who you can say is competent to assess a competency-based assessment.

**Mr BENTLEY** - It is Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, I believe.

**Ms FORREST** - And that is what people should have before they are let loose with these people?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - To test them?

**Mr BENTLEY** - To test them.

**CHAIR** - Certificate IV in -

**Mr BENTLEY** - In Assessment and Workplace Training.

**Ms FORREST** - I think that is what it is. But that takes a little while to complete.

**Mr BENTLEY** - It does, and all the driver trainers went through it - we all went through it.

**Ms FORREST** - But the not current ones, by the sound of it.

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, all the driver trainers.

**Ms FORREST** - I'm sorry, the trainers did but the testing officers haven't.

**Mr BENTLEY** - We all went off and did it, and we went through all this process.

**Ms FORREST** - The testing officers should also reach that same level?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, the testing officers need to undertake that same -

**Mr BENTLEY** - We all thought they were, except that it took a day and a half, I think, and that is not possible.

*Laughter.*

**Mr BENTLEY** - It is not possible, it is 250 or 300 hours of - goodness, I slogged even with a fair bit of -

**Ms FORREST** - So do we not pay our testing officers enough, Robert? If they have to undertake this level of education and training, which is significant -

**Mr BENTLEY** - Oh, it is.

**Ms FORREST** - So should they be more highly valued and paid more?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I don't know. As I say, I think having somebody front up to do one test to see whether they are going to be safe to drive for the rest of their lives on the road is probably as silly as having them drive at 80 kph for 12 months. What sort of message does that give young kids? They go along, they front up, they do their licence test, they are probably done in 20 minutes, 25 minutes, half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, an hour and a half - it doesn't matter - they do a really good job and then somebody says, 'Here you are, Freddie, here is your licence'. 'Gee, I must be really good'. I can still remember the day!

**Ms FORREST** - So can I.

**CHAIR** - So can I but I didn't feel very confident.

*Laughter.*

**Ms FORREST** - I got mine on my seventeenth birthday. So, Robert, if every student went through this program from year 9 to 12 and was awarded with their licence on a competency-based assessment and didn't get it if they weren't deemed competent, we wouldn't have a need for testing officers anymore.

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, not at all.

**Ms FORREST** - So we wouldn't have this backlog, there would just be something that the kids go through at school.

**Mr BENTLEY** - They would go through it, and it is a progressive, and they are signed off as competent as they go through so they're continually assessed as they go through.

We trained everybody else like it, for Heaven's sake - absolutely everyone else.

**Ms FORREST** - If they did then there shouldn't be a backlog.

**Mr BENTLEY** - There shouldn't be.

**Ms FORREST** - It is all part of their broader education. That is what you are proposing; it is something that is part of their broader education that they do through high school and then years 11 and 12, and if they are deemed competent at the end of it, they get their licence, pay the money and off they go, and they have driven at 110 kph.

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Good, fixed.

**Mr BENTLEY** - And they are deemed to be competent at it.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes.

**Mr BENTLEY** - Again, I received this from the ACT the other day, and you can have this as well, but you can see in the learner logbook that it goes back to moving-off procedure. So what do you actually need to do to move off in the car? Well, you need to follow this procedure and when you are competent at doing that, somebody signs it off. A person who is competent at assessing people signs it off to say that this person can move the car away from the kerb.

**Ms FORREST** - Is it beginning competencies, Robert, or is it competent but not yet competent?

**Mr BENTLEY** - It is competent and not yet competent and it goes through hill starts and give-way rules, and through those there are some assessment review periods as well.

**CHAIR** - Is that happening in South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT now?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes, and I know that in South Australia and the ACT, people can still opt to do a driver assessment in the traditional way. They do not necessarily need to go through this logbook process.

**CHAIR** - For how long has that been operating in those areas?

**Mr BENTLEY** - In South Australia I think it is about 11 years, maybe 12 years now.

**Ms FORREST** - Have they seen any reduction in young people's crash statistics in those States.

**Mr BENTLEY** - They have. I do not have the specific young people's statistics with me but I subscribe to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau's web site and I got this document the other day which has the statistics for September 2008. Part of the document is road deaths per 100 000 population, and in 2002 in Northern Territory it was 27.6 people per 100 000 people; and in 2007 it was 26.1 people per 100 000. In 2002 in Western Australia it was 9.3 per 100 000; and in 2007 it was 11.2. In 2002 in South Australia it was 10.1 per 100 000; and in 2007 it was 7.8. In Tasmania it was 7.8 in 2002 and it is now up 9.1 in 2007 per 100 000 people. In New South Wales it was 8.5 down to 6.3; and in Victoria, 8.2 down to 6.4, so most other States are going downwards except Tasmania and Western Australia.

**CHAIR** - That does not really show that that system is reducing the number of deaths in new drivers.

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, it doesn't; it is purely per 100 000 people.

**CHAIR** - Is there any evidence that there is an improvement compared to other States?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I believe in South Australia there has been a significant improvement. There was not for a long time and in fact, about four or five years when we talked about the graduated licensing system, one of the reasons that was given then for not going to a console-based training assessment was the fact that they had not seen any improvement in South Australia at all. It had not got any worse but they had not seen any improvement.

**CHAIR** - Are those statistics related to fatalities?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Road deaths, yes.

**CHAIR** - Are there any other statistics relating to serious injury?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Not that I know of. I believe this is just for road deaths.

**Ms FORREST** - In the logbook, are there requirements for competency in driving at night and in the wet and all that? .

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes, it covers off on all those sorts of things. It is done up in a nice little package and it talks about preparing your pre-learner for driving, supervising a learner driver and learning through practice. The other one is called 'Towards your Ps in the ACT', and it gives you lots of pathways and help. In Tasmania we sell a logbook for \$1.50. We have a 'Supervisory Driver's Handbook' which is I think \$5, but I believe in the whole State we have probably sold about five in four years. I think they're smothered

in dust with the other tests. Road Ready in ACT had said that, as soon as this Drivewise program is done, they're ditching this and they're going straight to that. They'll just change straight over.

**CHAIR** - To the Drivewise?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - It achieves the same end.

**Mr BENTLEY** - It achieves exactly the same.

**CHAIR** - That's in South Australia?

**Mr BENTLEY** - In ACT. You have to have a learner's licence so I managed to get the name of the manager and he was good enough to send it down to me. I didn't actually get what I really wanted, but -

**Ms FORREST** - In the package that they're moving to, that you'd like to see here in Tasmania, does that include a logbook?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Right, so records are kept and instructions for the learner as well as for the assessor?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - With testing of learner drivers, do they take them out onto the open road to test their skills and ability in reading signs on roads, road markings and things like that?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Not as a general rule.

**Mr DEAN** - That to confirms my position that it's really restricted to around built-up areas and so on. Because it's different

**Mr BENTLEY** - Of course it is - absolutely.

**Mr DEAN** - You're not required to do that?

**Mr BENTLEY** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - It takes too long to get out of town; by the time you go out there, you've got to come back.

**Mr BENTLEY** - And we've got to do these other manoeuvres. We've got to see whether they can actually manoeuvre the car around.

**CHAIR** - So, what evidence is there that those programs in the ACT, Northern Territory and South Australia, which sound to be quite ideal, are producing safer drivers than in the



States where those programs do not apply? Because those statistics on fatalities don't show any trend, do they?

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, only that the overall statistics have gone down in a couple of those instances.

**CHAIR** - Yes, as they have in other States except Western Australia and Tasmania.

**Mr BENTLEY** - I am sure that some statistical person could extrapolate them from somewhere.

**CHAIR** - I suppose there is a consistency that they've gone down in each of those and in Tasmania and Western Australia have not. We don't have the statistics for New South Wales there, do we?

**Mr BENTLEY** - New South Wales has gone down a little. Victoria is a special case because they don't get their Ps until they're 18 and they are now at 100 or 200 hours of driving, I think, between 16 and 18; I think they have gone to that. It's at least 150 anyway. I know that at one stage they were talking about 120 and then extending it.

**CHAIR** - Do you favour the extension of the driving hours?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I do, but it needs to be good supervised driving hours. There is supervision and supervision. There is a fair amount of anecdotal evidence about to say that people are fudging their logbooks but I don't know how you ever prove that. My anecdotal evidence is that most parents are keen to see their kids drive safely on the road. Since the introduction of this graduated licensing system some four years ago, probably a good percentage of my students now actually put their first mark in their logbook rather than taking them for their fiftieth hour and then it's 'Come on quickly; can we get my licence; when can I get my licence?' I have seen an improvement in that way, where people actually want their young people to be trained properly.

**CHAIR** - Would they still have that attitude if it were extended to 100?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I don't know. I did a presentation to the Country Women's Association a few weeks ago and one of the ladies there started talking about how she lived up in the north-east and she was isolated. I said, 'Well, if you called an electrician to your house up at Tomahawk or wherever it was, and you called another electrician to a place that you've got in Hobart, do you want the electrician to be able to do the same job in Tomahawk as they are doing in Hobart?' She said, 'Of course I do'. I said, 'The kid driving towards you on the road in Tomahawk, do you want him to be able to do the same thing as the kid driving toward you in Hobart?' What is the difference? We want people to be competent. Do not start me on the isolation of Tasmania because I will freak out because you can be isolated anywhere.

**CHAIR** - Was she saying that there should be a lower standard?

**Mr BENTLEY** - Yes. 'No, we could not possibly do 150 hours of driving in Tomahawk. It would be impossible'.

**Ms FORREST** - Wouldn't it be easier, though, because you have to go so far to get anywhere?

**Mr BENTLEY** - You would think so, wouldn't you?

**Mr DEAN** - Did you explain to them that wearing a big hat in cars is not necessary?

**Ms FORREST** - It is an issue for some people in lower socio-economic groups who perhaps cannot afford the petrol and, where they can, use public transport and things like that. It can be a challenge to get the hours, but it is not a reason to reduce the standard.

**Mr BENTLEY** - No, not at all. There are a couple more schemes that are starting up for helping young people in that regard. There is a scheme starting up in Launceston. One of the training companies is setting it up. Wheels for Work is what it is called. I know they are setting up a branch down in Burnie. MST had a really good set up down here in Burnie. They were supposed to have had a couple of driving lessons before they went and all that sort of thing. Some of the people that I saw driving around there with their parents were a damn sight better off than I am.

**Mr DEAN** - It has been put to us as a committee that a person can learn to drive in a sedan but immediately go into employment where they are required to drive a four-wheel drive. Do you have a position on what should happen, the training that is necessary to move from a sedan to a four-wheel drive, because there is vast difference? What is your position on how that can be improved?

**Mr BENTLEY** - I have actually conducted some programs for the Tasmania Institute of Agricultural Research, for example, where they have young people doing university courses who had only ever driven their little Ford Lasers and that sort of stuff and then all of a sudden they are thrown into a big four-wheel drive. How is it going to respond on the road and on tracks and stuff like that? There are companies around that are starting to wise up to things. Russell-Smith is one of those. Forestry is another; they have just started. Aurora put all their people through those sorts of programs.

**CHAIR** - Robert, thank you very much. That has been really very interesting and helpful.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**