

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY MET
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON THURSDAY
26 MARCH 2009.**

Mr RALPH RALLINGS WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION,
AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thank you for coming.

Mr RALLINGS - Road surface conditions are relatively complicated technology. I just want to focus on two aspects of it: night-time visibility and skid resistance. It do not put myself down as an expert on skid resistance, but in an area of general ignorance I guess I am seen as that. I started in pavements in 1976 when I was in charge of the Materials and Research Division of the then Public Works Department. On and off over 20 or 30 years I have had regular but not really intense involvement. I have always kept up with the literature and have read the literature really from about 1976 onwards. Literature was always available at that time through the departmental library. I guess at times when you would go to an accident site and see that skid resistance had been an important factor in a fatality it does sort of sharpen your senses about it.

I just want to briefly talk about night-time visibility. What I said in the report is that when you drive around Hobart or anywhere sometimes you can see the lines very clearly, sometimes you cannot see them at all -

CHAIR - Particularly if wet.

Mr RALLINGS - in wet conditions. It doesn't have to be like that. It is a question of putting resources into it, and also in terms of improving some people's understanding. I quoted in the paper that I thought night-time accidents were about twice the rate of day-time accidents. The AASHTO strategic road safety plan, that is a big American one, says three times the number.

Mr DEAN - Are they Australian figures?

Mr RALLINGS - No, they are American.

Ms FORREST - When you say that some figures say two times greater at night, and this study says three, is that taking into consideration that there are less vehicles on the road at night?

Mr RALLINGS - Accident rates are normally expressed in terms of vehicle kilometres.

Ms FORREST - Right, so that has considered that then.

Mr RALLINGS - Yes. They are normally expressed in accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres. What they are saying is it is three times the rate of the day-time accidents.

Mr DEAN - But you don't have any statistical data on accidents within Australia?

Mr RALLINGS - No. My expertise is much more with respect to materials behaviour, pavement behaviour, and I really do not have a very detailed understanding of accident rates. One of the things I commented on is that pedestrian deaths are a lot higher than most people realise. The facts put out by Austroads indicate that pedestrian road deaths are 15 per cent of all deaths, and 25 per cent of urban road deaths.

Ms FORREST - Are you suggesting that is more at night too?

Mr RALLINGS - I think so, but I don't know that. It is interesting that pedestrians get killed a lot more than what is given normal publicity. I am just making that comment, and this is what I have read. You can do a lot more about night-time visibility. I guess the plea here is that there is a lot of focus on accident fatalities, but improved night-time visibility can make people feel safer at night. A lot of older people just don't want to go out at night in wet weather because of poor night-time visibility.

Mr DEAN - Particularly in wet weather where the lines are almost impossible to see unless you keep intense attention on them.

CHAIR - And there's no requirement for learner drivers to have experience of night driving conditions before they get their licence.

Mr RALLINGS - There is abundance evidence that the probability of a road accident in wet conditions sharply increases as skid resistance falls. There are some recent Tasmanian studies that show a tenfold variation in wet road accident rates across the skid-resistance spectrum. I do work for the department and I was asked to review this report a year ago. It's put out by WDM, who do the skid resistance measurements for the department. Their focus was on actually setting down what's called the investigatory levels. There is a lot of very interesting basic data in that and it really shows that the wet road accident rate increases by 10 times. Is it appropriate for me to give it to you?

CHAIR - Yes, certainly. We're happy to receive any information.

Mr RALLINGS - It is a little bit confidential because I work for DIER. I work mainly for the asset management branch. They've commissioned this study and have asked me to review it. I've been intensely interested in it. I've provided them with advice and then I've thought about it a bit more.

Ms FORREST - So, would you like this evidence presented in camera, in confidence?

Mr RALLINGS - I think if you ask the department for the report they'd give it to you.

CHAIR - What is it called?

Mr RALLINGS - Review of Investigatory Level used in Tasmania for Skid Resistance. I haven't seen the final report.

CHAIR - Is there a final one?

Mr RALLINGS - I'm not sure. I commented on the drafts over a year ago.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Rallings, would you be in any way compromised by DIER knowing that you are here at this hearing?

CHAIR - They're the next witness.

Mr RALLINGS - Yes, I might be but on the other hand I wouldn't like to see information that is saying there's a tenfold increase in accident rates not brought to the attention of people involved in road safety. One of the difficulties has been that basically from about the early 1980s the publication of almost anything on road safety on skid resistance wasn't really encouraged by the then NASRA and Austroads. It was just basic fear of litigation. It actually got really very quiet. People like myself and technical people just never got involved in anything further on road safety.

CHAIR - Over what period was the tenfold increase in accident rates?

Mr RALLINGS - Basically, what happens is that WDM carry out a skid-resistance survey of the State. You can go along and split up the road into sections of difference for skid resistance. They have then looked at the wet road accident rates. If the value is 0.3, they have found out how many accidents for 0.3, 0.4 or 0.5 and so on.

Ms FORREST - With 0.3 being the lower skid resistance?

Mr RALLINGS - Lowest, yes. They've got wet road accident rates up to about 60 times more and the best is when the skid resistance is higher - then it's down to about 5.

CHAIR - So, the tenfold increase is over what period?

Mr RALLINGS - It's not over a period. They did the study over, I think, two years of accidents.

CHAIR - So the tenfold increase relates to what then?

Mr RALLINGS - It happens when the skid resistance falls - the probability of an accident. It is shown on this figure here in both the blue and the red. You would also see that the accident rate - there is some English data. So our most severe accident rates - the highest ones - are about 10 times the British rate for the wet roads. I do not want to push this too far but what I am saying is that there is actually a real cause for concern about the skid resistance of Tasmanian roads.

Ms FORREST - So how do our surfaces differ from the UK roads? Because obviously that must be the factor here. Is it?

Mr RALLINGS - Yes, there are.

Ms FORREST - Can you explain what the difference is?

Mr RALLINGS - I went to a meeting in the early 1990s to try to set up an Austroads standard. The way Austroads work is by consensus. I think Tasmania is very happy to have a general standard. I think New South Wales and Victoria were. They definitely

were. But one of two States did not want it so nothing happened. Victoria and New South Wales did actually put together their own standard. But I think they made a mistake in it. Something that I have only just realised is that when the British do a skid-resistant survey they work out the skid resistance over a 100-metre length and then they multiply it by 0.78. So they actually reduce the value. That is what they have used for their standards. We have used the same number but have not multiplied it by this 0.78. So we are actually using a different standard.

CHAIR - How long have you been with the department?

Mr RALLINGS - I do not work with the department anymore.

CHAIR - I see.

Mr RALLINGS - I was with the department for 22 years from 1976 to 1998. I now work for Pitt & Sherry. I was part of the part that was sold off to Pitt & Sherry.

CHAIR - You are an engineer, are you?

Mr RALLINGS - I am an engineer.

CHAIR - I remember that there was a section of road just south of Epping on the Midland Highway. There was a right-hand bend as you travel north and in wet conditions that became slippery. The Department of Main Roads, as it was then, was trialling something with some liquid kerosene or methylated spirits or something in with the bitumen. It had the effect of being terribly slippery and there were a number of cars that slid off the road into the fence. Dr Abbott was Minister for Road Safety. It was drawn to his attention and a new surface was put on and it stopped the cars slipping off in wet conditions. Are you aware of that?

Mr RALLINGS - Not of that.

CHAIR - Before your time, I would imagine.

Mr RALLINGS - I do not know.

CHAIR - But I imagine it is something that would be of interest to you.

Mr RALLINGS - It shows that there is a very big difference and also, on the next pages, on these blocks here. You see that the red is the percentage of accidents that occur within the various little bands.

Ms FORREST - What does SFC stand for, down the bottom?

Mr RALLINGS - SFC: sideways force coefficient. That is the property that is measured. The lower that is, the lower the skid resistance. The higher it is, the higher the skid resistance. Now if you think that skid resistance is not important then you would find that those red lines would fit exactly underneath - the other dark line is the distribution of skid resistance throughout the road network.

CHAIR - The black line with the crosses?

Mr RALLINGS - Yes.

Essentially I will just say it is like the distribution of skid resistance throughout the road network. It is saying at the value of 60, 10 per cent of the road network has a skid resistance between really 58 and 62. And there is only a very small proportion. Five per cent of the road network has a skid resistance between about 35 and 37. Can you see that?

CHAIR - Is that generally in Tasmania, you mean?

Mr RALLINGS - This is for the single carriageways. They actually do it for all the different types of road systems.

CHAIR - This is averaging out, is it?

Mr RALLINGS - Well they actually carry out the survey and then they say well 10 per cent of the road within this skid resistance band of, say it is 30 or 35 or something like that then you look at the accident rates within that band. But the point with these is they are showing that the accident rates are much higher than the occurrence in a particular band and the low values. So it is really showing there is a four- or five-fold increase there in terms of that.

Ms FORREST - So the majority of roads are halfway between the least and the most skid resistance?

Mr RALLINGS - Yes.

Ms FORREST - The way I am interpreting this is that in areas, on this 40 per cent of roads that have a lower skid resistance you have a much higher rate of crashes.

Mr RALLINGS - Yes.

Ms FORREST - If you look at the next one - that is a single carriageway, the next one is a dual carriageway - the graph is a bit different. Is that because when it goes single carriageway you have got more traffic going over it and potentially wearing away the surface?

Mr RALLINGS - No, not because of that. The figure is better on the single carriageway because there is a lot more of it from a statistical point of view.

Ms FORREST - There are more single carriageways, there obviously are.

Mr RALLINGS - Yes, a lot more. There is about 25 as much.. Just to explain it to you - in my submission, if you have got it there and you go to page 4, there are two ways of looking at the road surface, or two parameters. One is called microtexture and that is really about the stone and if it polishes or not.

The other thing is called macrotexture and this is what we call texture depth - how far the stones are apart, how coarse the surface looks. They have separate roles and the macrotexture becomes very important at higher speeds.

If we go to the next page it is really just showing the relationship between - the top one is if you have got constant microtexture, in other words you have got the same stone but all you are doing is increasing the texture depth in terms of, you know the difference between like an asphalt surface and a sprayed seal. What you find is with increasing speed if you have got shallow microtexture the amount of skid resistance falls very, very sharply.

CHAIR - Can you usually tell by looking at surfaces? Does the rougher surface give more traction or not necessarily?

Mr RALLINGS - No, it depends. It is a relatively complex thing but it depends on the speed of the vehicle and I guess the nature of the tyres just how much adhesion you are going to get. But basically the rougher the texture causes the tyres to transfer energy to the road surface. If you do not have texture then there is no transfer of that energy except by surface friction.

CHAIR - Does that give more traction if you transfer the energy?

Mr RALLINGS - More traction.

CHAIR - So the rougher surface would normally be safer then?

Mr RALLINGS - Well, that all depends, on how polished the surface is. They measure the two things separately. They measure the micro-texture, by what is called SCRIM.

SCRIM, Sideways force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine, is a vehicle used mostly throughout Australia, in Tasmania, to measure the skid resistance. It moves along at 50 kilometres an hour pouring water on the road and it measures the amount of pull that is generated. A result is obtained every 5 metres and that is used to assess the skid resistance. That is really microtexture because it is effectively moving at 17 kilometres an hour in terms of how fast it is sliding, sliding at 17 moving at 50.

There is a little diagram there, and I think that it is important that you understand, it shows the variation skid resistance during the year and considerably.

CHAIR - What causes the variation, the weather?

Mr RALLINGS - Basically the weather. The conventional view is that it is due to detritus. In the drier period the detritus is finer and it causes the surface to polish more and in the winter the detritus is coarser and it is not as polished.

When you look at some accidents there are more likely to be accidents in summer than winter.

CHAIR - Really?

Mr RALLINGS - Yes. This is in spite of the fact that you have more -

CHAIR - Is that because of oil on the road?

Mr RALLINGS - No, not oil, it is not oil, it is due to the wearing of the surface and the dry area on the traction of tyres.

CHAIR - That would be the same surface in winter, wouldn't it?

Mr RALLINGS - No, it is the way that the microtexture changes.

CHAIR - Changes according to the season?

Mr RALLINGS - In terms of just how polished the stone is. In British studies it shows that the accident rate in winter drops and in some ways it is surprising because there is more darkness in winter.

CHAIR - But there is more water on the road too.

Ms FORREST - Not recently, there has not been much rain in winter lately.

Mr RALLINGS - It surprises me at times that people talk about the accident rate going up and people are blaming lack of policing and all other sorts of things but to me the first thing you would look at is have you had a dry period or not.

CHAIR - I would have thought that the surface would be the same in winter and summer if it becomes shiny in summer once winter comes it would be the same surface, would it not?

Mr RALLINGS - It all depends on the stone. Some stones have more propensity to stay in a polished condition and some do not. The stronger the stone, the more it is welded, it is more likely that it will stay in a stronger and more polished condition.

CHAIR - If it is the same stone and it is not treated and the same condition, I do not understand why it is safer in summer than winter.

Mr RALLINGS - You see skid resistance against here is just going up considerably. And it is being measured by the same equipment. There are lots and lots of studies that show that the skid resistance is much lower, significantly lower in the summer than it is in winter and that has been shown to transfer into a lower accident rate.

Ms FORREST - Is that to do with the heat there as well, the high temperatures?

Mr RALLINGS - Yes.

Mr DEAN - And the type of tyre obviously.

Mr RALLINGS - The tyre makes a big difference. That is another issue. Truck tyres are different to car tyres; truck tyres probably will not respond as much to macrotexture as a car tyre will.

Ms FORREST - In a practical sense, and I don't know if you have been down the west coast recently on the Henty Anthony Road - have you been down there?

Mr RALLINGS - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Since they have been bringing out the log trucks from Strahan that road, what I would call in my inexperienced and non-engineers way, had a pretty strong macrotexture. It was quite a pebbly sort of road. With the log trucks on the corners particularly they have really cut up that surface. Now you are finding in the tracks it is quite smooth and a lot of the little stones have been displaced and pushed out to the side or into the middle.

Mr RALLINGS - Basically what happens with that, and what is of real concern, is that the high-speed skid resistance falls very markedly.

Ms FORREST - They are not usually going at high speed in this area because of the corners, it is not a particularly good road.

Mr RALLINGS - The next page shows some English data about risk and skid resistance. You can see that it varies significantly - from 400 down to about 5. Their MSSC means some are skid resistant. Because of the variation in skid resistance in terms of weather they measure it three times.

The next page is interesting, it is a graph showing the accident rates are higher than the occurrence of skid resistance at the low level and the changes -

Ms FORREST - The dotted line indicates where you think that should be -

Mr RALLINGS - The dotted line is the distribution of skid resistance throughout the network. What is interesting about the English data is they started very extensive studies in the late 1940s and it went all through the 1950s and 1960s. They introduced some national standards in 1976 and they have kept up to them. This study was done in terms of texture depth and they found that texture depth was a lot more important than skid resistance. The reason was that they had already done all the work in the 1990s but most of the road had reasonably better skid resistance. They also selected their sites so that they had the appropriate aggregate for the particular site.

Ms FORREST - So if you had a section of road that was normally travelled at higher speed they would have chosen the road surface particularly to suit that?

Mr RALLINGS - Absolutely.

Ms FORREST - And that is not happening in Tasmania, you think?

Mr RALLINGS - It does happen. Basically the selection of texture depth is really important but there is a legacy of finer textures and things such as that. If you have a high speed road with a fine asphalt it is particularly dangerous in wet weather.

Mr DEAN - Do you believe on all of the study, the skid resistance and all of those things, there is enough emphasis placed on that in the construction of roads in Tasmania?

Mr RALLINGS - Yes, I think so in construction. From my perspective the asset area is underfunded. It really has not been able to keep up with the maintenance. You just go out on the domain highway or the Tasman Highway -

CHAIR - Or the Midland Highway.

Mr RALLINGS - Yes.

Mr DEAN - So where skid resistance is quite obviously deteriorating, in other words there is not as much resistance, the maintenance is not being done to bring it back?

Mr RALLINGS - Well that is an extra impost. I guess for the assets people, their primary function would be to keep that surface covered so you do not get water and keep it structurally strong. I think there is a large legacy of sites that would not meet what you would call investigatory levels.

Mr DEAN - There would many drivers out there that would not have an awareness of this and I certainly did not have a great awareness of it. A lot of drivers out there would not understand skid resistance levels and all of that.

Mr RALLINGS - In putting this together I have a bit of plea in a way. New Zealand in particular has done a lot of work on skid resistance. When they did their first studies they came up with benefit costs of the order of 40 about improving their worst sites. I have shown you information saying that in Tasmania you could have a ten-times change in accident rates based on skid resistance. By improving skid resistance there are very strong flow-on benefits to the community. They relate to health, lost time, insurance. The costs of accidents are hundreds of millions of dollars.

Ms FORREST - So when you are looking at the safer roads strategy this falls into the improved infrastructure area, so you can reduce your risk of a crash because cars are less likely to skid. You are not trying to change driver behaviour here. You are not trying to change other things. You are trying to reduce the risk of a crash because of the infrastructure.

Mr RALLINGS - Yes. It would say the first and most important thing is to look at this area of skid resistance properties of the pavement surface. Austroads in the early 1990s were saying that 90 per cent of accidents are caused by human error but skid resistance contributes to 30 to 40 per cent, and 5 to 10 per cent by the car.

Mr DEAN - Just on that point, I do not know what knowledge you have in relation to the investigation of accidents and fatalities.

Mr RALLINGS - Not much.

Mr DEAN - Is there an emphasis placed in those investigations on the skid resistance surface of the roads where these accidents occur.

Mr RALLINGS - I am not sure. You would have to look at how it is actually measured. There are two factors. There is texture depth and polish. There was a very large study

done by PIARC back in the 1990s and they were trying to say how you measure low speeds, microtexture and macrotexture and put them together, and it really is the skid resistance available at the speed. Speed is so important because sometimes skid resistance will drop to about 20 per cent. At 100 kph it is about 20 per cent what it is at 20 kph. That is a huge reduction but the other point is that a car at 100 kph has 25 times the energy of a car at 20 kph or some lower speed, so you have a double whammy going on. You have a car going at higher speed so it has all this additional energy, and skid resistance is falling at the same time so texture becomes extremely important.

Ms FORREST - Would you recommend that, where there has been a significant crash, this becomes part of the investigation of that crash? The speed the vehicle is travelling at is obviously important but all the skid resistance would be measured and recorded. Should this be a major consideration when we are determining what the speed limit should be on the roads?

Mr RALLINGS - There is a British methodology called HD 28. The British publish all their quality systems, requirements for skid resistance and aggregate, and how you investigate an accident site.

My real plea to you is that when you are looking at funding for roads and also for setting what you might call 'intervention levels' a cost-benefit is undertaken. You need to stand back, look at the health costs, the lost-time costs and all these things and then look at how you can reduce accident rates by improving the skid resistance. You will find that there is a very strong case for a high focus on skid resistance and safety issues. I do not know how many people have been talking to you about skid resistance -

CHAIR - You're the first.

Mr RALLINGS - Some 43 000 people die each year in the United States due to road accidents, and 13 000 have contributions from skid resistance and surface condition. In about 30 per cent of road accidents there is a significant contributory fact from skid resistance. To me, it ought to be right up there. It is a thing you can do something about with money. You cannot change driver behaviour but you can do something about the road surface. The benefit cost is the thing. Talk to the New Zealanders. They have really done a lot and they know something about it.

CHAIR - Do you know what the results are? Do you have any statistics about the outcome?

Mr RALLINGS - They have published their results. There was an international conference in New Zealand in 1975 and their first published work was in 1989. They found they really had some very severe conditions. As I said, they had benefit costs of up to 40.

CHAIR - In general terms are you able to indicate how Tasmanian roads fare in relation to this, and more specifically the main highways?

Mr RALLINGS - I gave you this paper that shows the British road accident rate. They won't be exactly the same but the Tasmanian figures are in blue.

CHAIR - Expressing it in words, how would you regard our roads generally in Tasmania in terms of compliance laws?

Mr RALLINGS - I think you need to have an intense look at it. I understand there is a Road Safety Taskforce. I do not know how they operate but that should clearly be on their agenda to really have a very good look at it. I spent some time on this but you really need to have people working full time. People are getting killed or badly injured. It actually needs a lot of time, analysis. There are recent British studies that are really very useful. People need to look at those and analyse them, sort of full time, not what I do.

CHAIR - Would you like to make any closing comments, any additional ones? There is no obligation unless there is something you wanted to say in conclusion.

Mr RALLINGS - I guess there is a question for you really - who should really be involved in setting the standards for skid resistance? The cost of skid resistance inadequacies or improvements is actually transferred to other parts of government. That transfer is very, very significant.

Ms FORREST - You could use the same argument for divided roads and a range of other initiatives that could actually reduce your crashes, but I hear what you are saying.

Mr RALLINGS - Yes but I think you ought to do cost benefits on those as well and really determine if you are spending your money wisely. I would be very interested to know how you actually justify some infrastructure costs. The first thing to do is to improve the skid resistance. That is the first thing. People make mistakes on the road and the first thing they need is good skid resistance.

CHAIR - Thank you very much indeed for bringing this to our attention. Nobody else had and it was very interesting. We appreciate the time and trouble you have gone to in preparing this and coming today.

Mr RALLSTON - Thanks for listening. I would be very happy to put anything else together that you would like.

CHAIR - Thank you. We appreciate that.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr NORMAN McILFATRICK AND Mr RICHARD FOWLER, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

Ms ANGELA CONWAY, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, WAS RECALLED AND FURTHER EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thank you very much for coming. We look forward to having good discussions with you this morning. You realise that the oath still applies.

Ms CONWAY - I do, yes.

CHAIR - We received the bulk of material last week. Thank you very much for that and with the other commitments we have had we confess that we have not read it all but it is available. We sought that information so that we could read it in due course. I would say that you would have knowledge of the type of information that we are likely to be seeking and you would have that at your fingertips.

Mr McILFATRICK - Yesterday we released our update on the road safety levy. I know you won't have time to read that, but it is available to members if you want that.

CHAIR - Thank you, and I read something of that I think in the media.

Mr McILFATRICK - And I know there were some questions in relation to that last time, so this is really the progress report on the levy expenditure, and I could table that.

CHAIR - Would that be a convenient matter to start with?

Mr McILFATRICK - I was just aware that you wouldn't have had time to absorb it, but certainly we could outline it in brief, and then maybe you could ask some questions.

CHAIR - I think that would be helpful.

Mr McILFATRICK - I guess the other update which is sort of moving that may not have been covered fully last time was the progress of the novice driver reforms. Ones from the road safety levy Angela can cover that, and the novice, Richard can. So we could also for your reference table the two phases of a novice driver, and that might again be information we can come back to later or answer questions. I think they would be two good things to start discussions with.

CHAIR - Perhaps we could start with the road safety levy and then move on to the novice driver reforms.

Mr McILFATRICK - Maybe just an overview. Members would be aware that we have a road safety levy which is \$20 for licence-holders and \$12 for concession holders per annum, which started in December 2007 for a period that has been prescribed in legislation. The first year of the review we started collecting in 2007 and this report is a report for the calendar year, so it is across the two financial years. Probably it is safe to say in the first six months of the program we were in planning phase, and now in the

second six months of the program we are starting to see rubber on the road in terms of areas of priority.

Mr DEAN - Too much rubber on the road in some places.

Mr McILFATRICK - The most visible elements of the strategy have been the wire rope safety barrier initiatives and the start of the rollout of the electronic school signage, which is a three-year program. But maybe the committee would like me to just get Angela to walk through some of the significant areas.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr McILFATRICK - The other thing is that we collected about \$8.3 million to date. We have started the program and there are works still in progress. We are covering a calendar year rather than a financial year, so our total expenditure to December was \$4.3 million, but things like the Constitution Hill works, that people who travel the Midland Highway would have seen, are in progress. We expect to be expending all of the money collected, with perhaps a delay.

Ms FORREST - Just in relation to that, having travelled from Burnie to Hobart so many times these last few weeks, when you are driving down Constitution Hill you can drive at 80 kph, except where you get to the gravel now where it is 60.

Mr McILFATRICK - This is during the roadwork period.

Ms FORREST - Yes. The work being done near Ashgrove Cheese it is 60 kph all the way through there and there is nothing going on. They still have side lines to put on, so how is that determined?

Mr McILFATRICK - It is determined by a risk assessment process. The contract part of the road, the maintenance contract if it was a case of Ashgrove, or a construction contract in the case of Constitution Hill, is determined by a risk assessment, and a contractor has to put safety notices up to that risk assessment. In terms of why signages are often up when the work is not happening, it may be, for instance, because line-marking has not been completed, so there is still a speed restriction for safety reasons.

Ms FORREST - At 60, when you can drive down Constitutional Hill at 80.

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes. Again I would need to follow that up, but I certainly get the logic of that too.

Ms FORREST - That would be helpful because I think it is really strange. Having driven all the way, there are so many roadworks - it is great to have roadworks going on.

Mr McILFATRICK - I have driven on the Midland Highway a lot recently, and there are a lot of, I guess -

Ms FORREST - It just seems to be very inconsistent.

Mr McILFATRICK - I can assure you it is on a safety basis.

CHAIR - Just before we go on to another one, who makes the decision?

Mr McILFATRICK - It would be decided in the contract awarding, then in consultation with our asset managers and then the contractor manages the compliance -

CHAIR - But your department has an input on -

Mr McILFATRICK - Well, we are the asset owner, if you like, and in the case of, for example, Hazell Brothers -

Ms FORREST - You tick it off at the end of the day.

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, and we have a compliance monitoring. Our road network managers would supervise that those regimes are in place.

Mr DEAN - Exactly on that point, who makes the risk assessment to put in those speed limit signs and what training has that person gone through that determines that that should be the controlling limits, speeds and so on through these areas?

Mr McILFATRICK - They would be from our departmental expertise and that would be people that analyse the road networks and then, depending on the construction that was happening, there would be a standard.

Mr DEAN - It was raised within this committee at one stage, I think it was on our mainland visit, that the contractor must have somebody within their group that's been trained specifically -

Mr McILFATRICK - Oh yes, they have to be trained in traffic management.

Mr DEAN - In the area of risk management, risk control and all of that?

Mr McILFATRICK - If you think about the risk assessment we've done at the project evaluation and development stage, the implementation of the traffic management part of the contract would be done by - they would need to have traffic management expertise within the contract, yes.

Mr DEAN - Before they'll get a contract?

Mr McILFATRICK - Before they can get a contract.

Mr DEAN - So that's the letting of the contract?

Mr McILFATRICK - Part of the assessment of the letting of the contract would be their safety management capability; part of the conditions of the contract would be having that capability and implementing it.

CHAIR - What requirement is there for monitoring by representatives of your department of these temporary speed limit signs?

Mr McILFATRICK - Overall it would be part of the overall supervision of the contract. We would have a responsible person who was a contract manager for that project. If you

look at the work on Constitution Hill, which is quite an exposed area, there would be daily supervision on that site.

CHAIR - There were signs between Sassafras and the top of the hill leading down towards Latrobe on the Bass Highway about seven or eight weeks ago. I was down the north-west coast. Coming back, there was an 80 sign at the top of that hill and I slowed down to 80 kph, travelled right through to Sassafras; no road works; no reason for the sign. I had to wait until I went through Sassafras and then assumed I could travel faster, which I did. Then I had to go back the following Tuesday and that sign was still there.

Ms FORREST - And it's still there.

CHAIR - Is it? On the Friday I remembered that I should phone. I phoned somebody at the department. The lady was very helpful; she checked and said that the sign was being removed that day and that it had just been overlooked. So, the contractor and your department; there didn't seem to be any overseeing there. The concern is that if people find that the signs are inappropriately placed they lose respect for them and there's not the maximum observance of traffic signs similarly.

Mr McILFATRICK - I would agree that it needs constant vigilance. The amount of roadworks that are occurring at the moment is significant so all I can say is we use our best endeavours to apply the rules. In that case, if there's been an oversight, which we will look into, I will report back on what has been decided.

CHAIR - I have the details on my file but the lady we spoke to in the minister's office was very helpful. I was amazed that it hadn't been corrected because there must have been ministerial cars going past and government employees.

Mr McILFATRICK - We wanted people to enjoy the view at Sassafras.

Laughter.

Ms FORREST - To take that a bit further, has there been and will there be consideration given to a sign being put up with a phone number when there is road works in progress? Then the number can be called to report these things. It happens so often I get a bit frustrated by it. There was a sign saying 'Roadworks in progress, no line markings, speed limit 60 or 80' the lines were all there. There was not one section of that road that I travelled on for the next 5 kms that had any absent lines. So I thought, 'Why I am even bothering to read these signs?' So surely if we can have a number - that point of contact for people - like you do if you have the fox task force hunter to ring. Surely part of the process of road works is that there is a point of contact where people can ring up and say, 'This does not seem right'.

Mr McILFATRICK - I am certainly happy to look at that. I guess our overall thinking about road work signage is that as the technology is changing we may soon be able to use, particularly for large scale road works which involve segments of work, what I call programmable signage which would either be informative like the large scale signage or, for instance, a school sign type of thing where it would actually be remotely switched on for that component and switched off. Two things about the electronic signage, if they

can be - I guess our priority at the moment, to be clear, is on schools. So once we have that program -

Ms FORREST - You will have less schools soon to worry about.

Laughter.

Mr McILFATRICK - I am not in the Education department, but regarding what the natural progression from the current proving and implementation of that technology would be to use it more widely, we are already seeing an application of that electronic, remotely controlled technology as a strong way forward in traffic management generally.

Mr DEAN - The reason I asked the question on what training was required of a person within the contracting firms is that there are many examples also - and I think Mr Wing raised this as well and I have - about the incorrect signage that is put up.

Mr McILFATRICK - Temporary signs.

Mr DEAN - Yes, and that is very common. One sign on the Bass Highway had the 100 kilometre per hour limit which we know it is 110 - return to 100 and other increase signs as well.

Mr McILFATRICK - I can assure you that this is receiving our attention. I personally went to our quarterly meeting of our road contractors network. We bring all the road contractors and consultant representatives together and we talk about issues. This issue was discussed about better vigilance, recognising that particularly over the summer when we are doing line marking, roadworks which are weather dependent and the best time to do it. We will have peaks. I realise it is annoying. But a default to leave the sign up is better than not having the sign there in the first place. I recognise that we do not want to get into the situation where people ignore the signs because they are not relevant in that case.

CHAIR - I am not sure that I agree with what you just said. In the case of that 80 sign which was there for at least a week after when there was no work going on, I observed the speed limit both times I went through until I got to Sassafras but a lot of people would not have done and then they get into the habit of thinking, 'We are not going to take notice of this sign or that sign. It is probably not reliable anyway'. That creates a dangerous situation if people just start not observing the signs because they think they are invalid.

Mr McILFATRICK - I agree with that long term. I guess I was more thinking about maybe five o'clock in the evening when they forget to put a cover over the sign. That is a human error issue.

Ms FORREST - I have had cars passing me in that particular zone you are talking about, Mr Wing. When it is there they do not believe that it is a valid sign. I will slow down to the 80 or whatever it is and have cars passing you, overtaking you.

CHAIR - I cannot remember the circumstances - it may have been as outlined by Mr Dean - but when our road safety committee met in Devonport about November or December

there were road works near the forest area. There was something inappropriate about that. It might have been the 100 instead of 110.

Mr DEAN - It was the incorrect signs, because I remember you raising it with me, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR - We all observed that and raised it during the hearing, I think. It is a matter that does not happen just in isolation.

Mr McILFATRICK - No. I agree and we -

CHAIR - It's a regular type of pattern.

Mr McILFATRICK - We have it under vigilance and we'll certainly, I think, have a follow-up report back to the committee on our findings, perhaps after the summer work period. I think that would be worthwhile.

CHAIR - Thank you. Speaking of signs, I've observed at the top of the Southern Outlet in Launceston the electronic sign that comes on saying 'too fast' if people are going off the highway. I think that's excellent; that type of sign. More of those -

Mr McILFATRICK - That future trend, having proven the value of those signs, is to start thinking about the best placement of signs. We're also looking at technology as a substitute for human behaviour to emphasise this and make people more aware. Constitution Hill has a safety barrier improvement; there's also going to be a permanent weather station at Constitution Hill.

CHAIR - I saw that.

Mr McILFATRICK - That will be linked to the speed control and there'll be a warning. If it is foggy or icy weather, which has been prevalent in that area, the motorist will get an indication of that directly, dynamically, rather than having the old sign which would say 'slippery when wet' or 'take care during -

Ms FORREST - It used to flash. Are you suggesting this one will actually propose a different speed limit?

Mr McILFATRICK - It could - the facility is there to impose a different speed limit. This is new technology; it can be enabled and this is the trend we're seeing. In fact, in discussions with Launceston City Council on treatments for intersections on the Dilston bypass, certainly we think that would be a large benefit too; a weather station, electronic speed control and even interception - no right turn type of intersection control in certain weather conditions. So it's a much more technology-led safety approach rather than relying on people reading the signs and maybe passing them every day and ignoring them. It's a bit like the school signs; pass it every day, it says drive carefully in the school zone at 40 whereas if there's a flash and a very strongly illuminated 40 kph sign that comes up in the right period it's much more noticeable.

CHAIR - It is indeed.

Ms FORREST - Can those weather stations detect visibility like fog and that sort of thing?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, they detect dew point, visibility -

Ms FORREST - And temperature, obviously.

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, temperature. The dew point is important because it will determine when ice must form.

CHAIR - If there is a sign saying 'too fast' it would make most motorists very self conscious and they would do their best -

Ms FORREST - Or challenge.

Laughter.

CHAIR - No. I think it would make them, perhaps, travel a bit slower than they even needed to, to avoid other motorists seeing that they are going too fast.

Mr McILFATRICK - The vision is that you've got the technology available to have controllable signs which are variable to the conditions either by weather or by the time of day. For instance, school signs that can be altered. So in the school sign issue if the school is having a sports day and it's not their normal time for the kids going to and from school it can be illuminated for a different period of time for that school.

CHAIR - Do the regulations need to be changed?

Mr McILFATRICK - No, because the regulation is that you have to adhere to the sign that appears on that day. So, if it's 40, it's 40; if it's in a street that would normally be 60 and the sign isn't illuminated then it's 60. So there's no need to - we don't have to change the regulations to say - at that time of day - those signs are legally binding.

CHAIR - With Constitution Hill, how many lanes will there be when the road is reconstructed?

Mr McILFATRICK - I'll have to check but it's to provide a barrier down the middle of the road and a second climbing lane one way -

CHAIR - It has been two lanes uphill.

Mr McILFATRICK - We're actually widening the profile of the road to allow two lanes and then to allow the barrier to be put into the middle.

CHAIR - Do you have any plans or policy for reconstruction work on the Midland Highway, that when any reconstruction is done - and I know it applies to the Brighton bypass - the road should be four-lane divided?

Mr McILFATRICK - The policy is not to have four-lane divided all the way. Any significant upgrade works that are either road safety generated or by-pass generated will take into account the volumes of traffic on the road and will certainly incorporate lane

barriers. Whether that is a two-lane, a three-lane with an overtaking lane, or a four-lane, will be determined by the volumes on the road. So we have Brighton, as you are aware, Bagdad bypass is in the planning phase -

CHAIR - That will be four lanes?

Mr McILFATRICK - It is in the planning phase so we have to see. I guess in the initial concept, yes, four lanes - it would be surprising if it wasn't - but each one has to be looked at on its own merits.

CHAIR - So there is no overall policy that when there is any major reconstruction work on the Midland Highway that it should be four lanes.

Mr McILFATRICK - I think the logic would be that it would go in that direction. I think each significant part of the highway needs to be looked at on its merits, because there will be different traffic flows. There are much heavier traffic flows as we approach Launceston and as we approach Hobart than there is, say, in the midlands.

CHAIR - Yes. I was going to deal with speed limits in some particular areas, but I realise we have become distracted by roadworks as part of the levy, so we will go back to this report -

Mr McILFATRICK - Really we walked through it just to highlight what the report says, and there may be some question about individual projects.

Ms FORREST - Do you want us to ask questions related to each initiative when we come to them?

Mr McILFATRICK - I think it is just an opportunity to have it highlighted and then when you read it later or even during you might ask questions.

Ms CONWAY - Basically we have our road safety strategy which gives us our 10-year strategic direction, and under this we have four key areas of activity that we focus on. What we have developed is an action plan that sits under the strategy, which covers a three-year period at the moment. In that action plan are specific projects or initiatives that simply meet these strategic directions. We use the road safety levy to fund those initiatives in the action plan. I will just very briefly give you an overview of the kinds of projects under each of those key action areas. Primarily, we focused a lot of effort in the best practice infrastructure area looking at putting in flexible safety barriers on our high-volume roads where we have high crash numbers. Some of the locations that need to be tackled are the Tasman Highway, the Southern Outlet, the Brooker Highway and parts of the Bass Highway.

CHAIR - That has been quite dramatic over a short period, the Falmouth-Bass Highway.

Mr McILFATRICK - Page 3 I guess you are on.

Ms CONWAY - We have a dollar-for-dollar of shared funding program with local government. What that is trying to focus on is urban spaces and getting projects underway with councils, in partnership with councils that look at making the

environment safer for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users in that area. That would include a lot of traffic calming kind of measures in a little town centre, or on a shopping strip or those kinds of projects. That is an ongoing program. We have another call for submissions under way for next financial year.

Ms FORREST - In relation to that particular area of traffic calming treatments, has consideration been given by the department or councils - you might not be able to answer for the councils, but they may have approached you - about areas where hooning is a problem? It might not be in the middle of a town centre but in a residential area where you can potentially put traffic-calming treatments in to reduce this.

Ms CONWAY - I know there are often individual cases where local communities would primarily go to the local government first, and then if there is an issue that the local government wants assistance with they will come to the department. I do not believe those projects would be of that kind. I do not have that information.

Ms FORREST - It would be under a separate section, you are suggesting?

Ms CONWAY - Well, I think there is just a general process where councils look at those kind of measures as part of their own local works programs.

Ms FORREST - Would you see that as being an appropriate measure to try and address some of these issues in some areas?

Ms CONWAY - The road safety levy is trying to target things that are going to really reduce serious casualties. Hooning is very annoying and anti-social. It does not always necessarily flow onto a crash problem.

Ms FORREST - Can I ask Norm that question, then, as head of the department. Does the department see that as an option for dealing with these challenges? Because they happen in every town.

Mr McILFATRICK - Again it is because most of these would be local government roads. We would certainly listen to local government concern. We would have to take anti-hooning measures back to the committee because it is very formalised and good governance around how this money is spent on behalf of taxpayers.

There is a lot of thought going on between the department and the police at the moment about how hooning is monitored and what compliance regimes can be put in place. Because we are contributing to that we probably need to leave that to the Police minister or the commissioner, but I can assure you it is a high-level activity.

It is not just high annoyance to the community but it sends all the wrong signals if hooning is accepted. I would say if we got a groundswell of these issues coming up from councils we would certainly look at it, but we would have to take that as a separate question to the committee about whether this funding was what -

Ms FORREST - I am not suggesting that this funding should be used. The question I am asking is does the Department of Infrastructure, who has the responsibility for roads, they

are not necessarily local government roads but just generally, consider traffic calming treatments a potential method of dealing with this problem?

Mr McILFATRICK - We certainly do consider it but I guess my point is most of it is likely to be on council roads and if that is the case we would have to do that in liaison with councils. There are a number of ways that that can be funded as through agreement with the State, through application of maybe some of the Federal Government funding on nation-building funding et cetera. You may have read recently that every council has been given an extra allocation under the Building Australia Fund. That may be able to be applied.

Ms FORREST - I want to ask the question slightly differently then, I am not getting quite the information I want out of you.

Mr McILFATRICK - You want me to say yes?

Ms FORREST - No, I do not want you to say yes, well you can say whatever you like. Could traffic calming treatments be a way of reducing the incidence of hooning or could they present a whole range of other problems? Some traffic-calming devices, I imagine, could actually increase the risk of a crash, for example.

Mr McILFATRICK - The answer is I do not know. I think given you have raised it, it would be something that I would take up both with the police in our broader conversation about hooning and in our relationship with the Local Government Association to see whether there is that. It really needs to be thought through again from the balance.

Ms FORREST - I am asking you if you are suggesting this sort of treatment may actually present a whole range of other problems.

Mr McILFATRICK - It may do and until we look at it collectively I think we would not be able to answer that right now.

Ms CONWAY - I do know where there has been big rollouts of speed humps sometimes they have actually led to more noise complaints from the noise of the cars going over them. People do still go over them fairly quickly.

Mr McILFATRICK - Ski jumps.

Ms CONWAY - Yes, fairly fast.

Ms FORREST - And the revving and slowing down, revving and slowing down.

Ms CONWAY - Yes and so you actually create another set of problems sometimes with some of those.

Ms FORREST - That is why I asked the question.

Ms CONWAY - Yes. I think councils are probably looking to do other things. You are probably not going to see as many rows and rows and rows of speed humps put down any

more. I think they look at other things like narrowing and those kinds of treatments as a different option.

Probably one of the really big programs is our electronic speed limit signs at all the schools. We have rolled out a number of signs in the first highest risk schools. We have actually categorised all the schools based on their risk profile and we will do the highest risk ones first and then over the three years we will get to all the schools.

We are also looking at some specific initiatives around motorcycle safety primarily because we are rolling out quite a lot of wire rope. We are also looking at some initiatives where we can use stack cushions, which you might have seen - great big rubber cushions that go onto the actual poles which are the bit of the wire rope - another barrier that tends to be the highest risk to motorcyclists. We are also putting in rub rail on the standard W-beam barrier, which basically stops motorists going under and gives them something to slide against. So what we have done is picked locations in consultation with the motorcycling group, the TMC, to try and put those in places they know, on tight corners primarily or where motorcyclists tend to run into trouble.

Mr McILFATRICK - So far the feedback has been good on that in terms of seeing that as a definitive advantage for the cyclists. We are probably seeing some of that work going on as well. It is probably visible under the UMCO.

Ms FORREST - And those big yellow end bits - I do not know what I should call them. They have some name other than 'bits', I am sure.

Mr McILFATRICK - Bollards maybe.

Ms FORREST - No, not really bollards. The covers that used to have that square bit that motorcyclists were quite concerned about getting caught up in. Particularly in Elizabeth Town. There is a lot of them around there.

Mr DEAN - Can we expect to see that work being carried on in the areas that are considered to be dangerous to motorcyclists? We have had representatives from some groups saying there are a number of areas on the roads, on the highways, that are notoriously dangerous to motorcyclists. So can we see that, obviously, strategy being developed?

Mr McILFATRICK - We are reporting what we have done so far. Given the feedback we have had this will be continuing. So we are continuing to install an amount of wire rope barriers and then continuing to look at existing infrastructure that might require the other treatment. Generally it will be where they are on corners, particular where the camber takes the motorcyclist into a potentially hazardous condition.

Mr DEAN - It probably will not stop some of these accidents that we saw yesterday and so on at Poatina, unfortunately. ?

Mr McILFATRICK - They are sort of the infrastructure, I think.

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

Mr McILFATRICK - Then there is the awareness thing, like speed et cetera.

Ms CONWAY - So we obviously have our demonstration projects underway in Kingborough and Tasman with our lower default speed limit system. We are going through an evaluation process with both of those. Tasman is quite new. That has only been in place since late last year. We are currently completing a 12-month evaluation of the Kingborough trial.

CHAIR - Lower default?

Ms CONWAY - A lower default rural speed limit. We have lowered the rural default from 100 to 90 on sealed roads and from 100 to 80 on gravel roads.

CHAIR - In certain areas?

Ms CONWAY - In two municipalities - Kingborough and Tasman.

CHAIR - On a trial basis?

Ms CONWAY - Yes. And what we are doing is monitoring community attitudes, actual vehicles speeds and our crashes.

CHAIR - Did you consult the communities before starting the trial?

Ms CONWAY - We did. Both of these, I would say, have been driven from the community. We have community road safety partnership programs and through those local programs we got some feedback that they wanted to focus on the area of speed. This was something that was developed as a very important trial that we could look at and see how it was received by the community and also to see what it actually does to behaviour and the crash outcomes.

Mr DEAN - Are they enforceable limits?

Ms CONWAY - Yes, they are now. When we brought it in I think we had a one-month moratorium on the new limits but we enforce them at the new levels. There is no increased focus on enforcement, it is just business as usual.

Mr McILFATRICK - These are two communities where there is a strong local desire to see better road safety. You could not really do it without that. They are also two communities with a lot of rural roads in their network. If you think about Kingborough, for instance, right down the channel, and Tasman, they are the two we have at the moment. In fact Tasman were proactive after the Kingborough trial started in coming to say, 'Can we be next?' That was very much generated by them.

Ms CONWAY - We also have a very big project looking at reforming our novice driver licensing system. There is some information in front of you there. We brought in one phase already, which has some of what we call our 'aggression' where if you do the wrong thing you go back a licensing level. We also have a driving reward, an incentive. If you do the right thing in your provisional stage and do not commit a driving-related offence you get a refund of your provisional licence fees. So that is just trying to have a carrot and a stick.

CHAIR - How much is that?

Ms CONWAY - I think it is about \$50. It depends how long your licence is for.

CHAIR - Good. That is worthwhile.

Ms CONWAY - Yes. And we really are giving a very strong message that if you do the wrong thing you have to go back and do more time. You go back either a licensing level or back to the start of your current licensing period, which just basically means people who do the wrong thing are a higher risk and have to have limited conditions placed on them.

Mr DEAN - Can we expect to see the reward system being provided to those other drivers out there who have driven for 30, 40 and 50 years without incident?

Mr McILFATRICK - We could say we'll look at it. Are you one of those?

Ms FORREST - I don't reckon he is.

Laughter.

Mr DEAN - Well, you said that to me - well, not you, but the department said that to me when I was a commander of police and I put a submission to them in relation to that - they said that to me, 'We're looking at it'. That was eight years ago.

Mr McILFATRICK - I honestly don't know if we have looked at it. It's something we'd need to follow up.

CHAIR - Some insurance companies are doing that.

Mr McILFATRICK - There is certainly a good driver insurance benefit and an older driver insurance benefit in most cases.

Ms FORREST - The 50 hours; is that going to change, for supervised driving?

Ms CONWAY - In the second phase of the novice reforms which, if you turn to the second page of that diagram you'll see what we're doing, the big change is that there's going to be a second test introduced. So, you'll do a test half way through your learner period which will be a basic vehicle control test; then you'll have another test at the end of your learner period to get your provisional licence and that will test your higher order skills; the more complex parts of driving. The 50 hours will be required to be completed in the second of the L2 phase.

Ms FORREST - What's the time frame between L1 to L2 then?

Ms CONWAY - There's no - there isn't - the minimum -

Ms FORREST - At least three months?

Mr McILFATRICK - Three months.

Ms CONWAY - At least three months, but you'll need to obviously do a bit more driving in L1 to be able to pass the first test so we're not changing the mandatory requirement. I think you probably will need to do a little bit more driving than the 50 hours.

Mr DEAN - Why are you going to persist in the Learner 2 phase in particular of drivers being restricted to 80 kph? The reason I ask that is it has been raised through this committee on many occasions. What we do is we restrict these drivers to 80 kph; we restrict the P-plate drivers to 80 kph. Learners, in particular, are under supervision; they don't -

Ms FORREST - Safest drivers on the road.

Mr DEAN - They don't learn to overtake other vehicles; they don't learn to drive at a faster speed than 80 kph and then all of a sudden, coming off their Ps they can get in their vehicle, unsupervised and get up to 100 kph or 110 kph in certain areas and away they go; not supervised.

Mr McILFATRICK - However, it is acknowledged that in the P-program they are getting unsupervised experience so that it's a build up of experience level.

Mr DEAN - Wouldn't it be better under supervision, though? That's the suggestion and some States, I think, have that system.

Mr McILFATRICK - They do. I guess it would be very difficult to put a measure on when you change from 80. Is it the day that you start learning to drive or is it - which part of the program?

Ms FORREST - In the L2 perhaps.

CHAIR - Or in the provisional licence stage because they're restricted to 80.

Mr McILFATRICK - That's right.

CHAIR - Most of the evidence criticising this has related to, not so much the learner, but the provisional licence holders being restricted to 80 kph on the basis that they don't get the experience before they get their open licence and that it holds up traffic; it's an obstruction.

Mr McILFATRICK - I'd have to provide background as to why we've made that decision.

Ms CONWAY - It's primarily there - it's a balancing act, all of this; working out what restrictions to list and when. It's really because when you look at the risk per crashes the first six months of a provisional period are the highest risks at all time when you drive. Our thinking was that if you suddenly lift that speed restriction in that first six months when people are at highest risk you're potentially increasing the risk.

CHAIR - That's of provisional licence holders?

Ms CONWAY - Of provisional licence holders. I think that would be the reason we have left it in and we've kept that speed restriction because of their high risk at that period.

CHAIR - So if they're on a provisional licence for, how many years?

Ms CONWAY - Three.

CHAIR - Why not consider lifting it after the first year? You've got over that six-month period -

Ms CONWAY - That's what we do.

Mr McILFATRICK - That's what we're doing.

CHAIR - Are you proposing that?

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

CHAIR - I see.

Ms CONWAY - During the provisional period so, yes. That first 12 months is really the critical risk time. After that, gradually you'll see your list lift a few more restrictions in that second phase.

CHAIR - So what are the statistics for that first six months of the high risk? Do you have that or could you let us have those?

Ms CONWAY - I don't have them off the top of my head but I could easily provide them and I'd imagine they'd probably -

CHAIR - If you could provide them for the whole period of the provisional, from the learner and the entire provisional period that would be interesting. I don't mean now.

Ms CONWAY - No. There are some complexities in getting crash data on our provisionals, so I will give you the best I can pull up for you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr McILFATRICK - Just to be clear, there is a 12-month P period and a further period of provisional -

CHAIR - Two years, without having to display the P signs.

Mr FOWLER - of two. It would be a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of two years.

Mr McILFATRICK - What does carry through into that P2 period is the zero limit on blood alcohol, so again that is trying to give them the experience they need and build them up to a fully competent road user, I guess.

Ms FORREST - Potentially the L2 status will extend the amount of time young people need to have their licence before they can actually sit for their Ps. Has any consideration been given to dropping back the age at which they can get their L1 to 15 years and 9 months, for example, as happens in the ACT? Also in the ACT it is compulsory that they do a road-ready course, an in-class educational program that teaches them about the types of accidents they are most likely to have, basically what the risks are, hazard avoidance, hazard recognition, as well as passing the road rules test, and potentially that gives them an extra three months of driving experience, and then there is the full 12 months to accumulate the 50 hours, which can be a challenge for some young people.

Mr FOWLER - I do not know whether the outcome in the ACT was all that positive, though. We did look at that and did consider that. The model in place at the moment actually extends, as you just said, out to 12 months.

Ms FORREST - So which part of the model are you saying has not been successful?

Mr FOWLER - In the ACT, the actual pre-learner classroom component that you just talked about. We did look at that, but I don't think -

Ms FORREST - The only valuation that I have seen was done in 2004 fairly early in the program. It was pretty equivocal in its results because it was a bit early to make a full assessment, but the Government certainly persisted with it from that time. It still remains compulsory.

Mr FOWLER - Yes, it does.

Ms FORREST - There is a lot of positive feedback from the learners who undertake the course.

Mr FOWLER - We looked at various models around the world and in the other jurisdictions and we extended the learning period up to 12 months, which is the most vulnerable period of their Ps.

Ms FORREST - Are you suggesting that there is no value, then, in having an educational program for these people before they get their licence to talk about those sorts of things?

Mr FOWLER - No, I am not suggesting that. I am just saying that as part of the analysis we looked at all the various areas around, and considered what options we could put into the model.

Ms FORREST - So why wasn't an educational program for these people considered then?

Mr FOWLER - The educational program is also picked up in relation to our area of road safety operations. They have put in the curriculum of teachers an education component which will help those candidates coming through to get their licence.

Ms FORREST - No, it won't, because they have to do it. They either have to do it at school or through a weekend or an evening session. There is no option here. They have to do it in ACT.

Mr FOWLER - Correct.

Ms FORREST - If you are going to make it mandatory you probably need to provide it free of charge through the schools' educational system. I agree with that aspect of it, but why were we not considering that for Tasmanian drivers?

Mr FOWLER - It was considered. We considered a whole range of issues in terms of the period of the Ls and the Ps; there was a whole range of issues that we actually analysed and took on board. When the final analysis was done the outcomes from the ACT area were not that positive, and feedback from ACT was not that positive either when we spoke with them.

Ms FORREST - Who did you speak to at the ACT then?

Mr FOWLER - A chap called Rob Paul. He is on the Australian registration and licensing task force, and I talked with him about a range of issues, not just Ls and Ps but a whole range.

Ms FORREST - This has been going on for a number of years now. It was 2004 when the evaluation was conducted, which is five years ago. If it was not seen as valuable by people in his position, why would they continue it?

Mr FOWLER - There is a whole range of issues. For example, the computerised hazard perception test which is in Victoria and New South Wales. The evaluation of that was that it actually did not add on a lot of benefit to the candidates coming through because basically they were learning how to play a video game. There was evaluation for that but the bottom line is that Victoria and New South Wales still maintain that and so does Western Australia. There is a whole range of issues why they would not drop it or why they would not keep it going I suppose.

Ms FORREST - But if there is no detriment and a potential benefit - I mean, often the only people who get in the car with young people until they have their Ps is their supervising driver, which is often one of their parents who may or may not be a very good driver model.

I am not making a judgment about people there but if they have some habits that perhaps are best avoided, or if they do not even fully understand the road rules because things change and they are not kept up to date because there is no further testing once you have your licence, then is this a way of trying to help these people to understand things like the safe distance between you and the car in front of you, for example?

It appears that many experienced drivers understand that and if these are the people who are supervising young drivers, surely an opportunity for the young drivers themselves to be aware of that could only be a benefit. How could that be a detriment?

Mr FOWLER - I am not saying it is a detriment but there are other alternative strategies we have put in place and I think you have a copy of the supervisor driver handbook.

Ms FORREST - Yes, we have.

Mr FOWLER - It is an excellent publication. It is an incremental publication that shows mums and dads and friends how to coach, teach and educate. There are different strategies applied.

Ms FORREST - There is no requirement for anyone to actually read that?

Mr FOWLER - That is exactly right, yes.

Ms FORREST - In the ACT there is a requirement for these kids to undertake that course so you know they are at least going to get that information.

Mr McILFATRICK - There may not be any requirement for them to read it either.

Ms FORREST - No, but if they undertake the course they have to hear it. Unless they have their iPod in - in which case they will not pass the course - they are going to hear that message.

Mr McILFATRICK - Let me summarise. In coming up with these reforms we have looked at all of the issues being implemented around Australia in particular and some internationally.

We believe we have come up with a process here that covers as much as possible getting people more experienced, more informed, and having a two-stage approach to it where they get tested along the way of getting that experience and then have a further period of compulsory supervised driving and hopefully building the supervisor's knowledge as well along the way because if you say that the supervisor does not have to read it that would be quickly found out at their first test, the L1 test.

Ms FORREST - So, for example, if a learner driver undertaking their test to get their L2 was following too closely behind a car they would fail?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes.

Mr FOWLER - Part of the assessment deals with a whole range of criteria - flow, movement, path et cetera, so it is a competency-based assessment, not a cross and a tick, so to speak. It does not necessarily mean that, for example, if a competency is that you have to indicate, say, 15 times, if they indicate 14 times well they are not going to fail.

Mr McILFATRICK - If they are driving dangerously -

Mr FOWLER - Absolutely.

Mr McILFATRICK - or without due attention during the test -

CHAIR - We have heard evidence that in Hobart some testing officers go out of their way to trick quite unfairly applicants for licences and there was an example given of something that happens quite regularly, vehicles coming down -

Ms FORREST - Was it Molle Street?

Mr HARRISS - Coming down Macquarie, turning left into Molle.

CHAIR - Coming down Macquarie, left into Molle, where there is a change of speed limit but there is no sign there.

Mr HARRISS - The sign is further up Molle Street, Mr Chair, between Davey and Macquarie.

CHAIR - Yes, if there is no indication to them when they are asked to turn at that intersection that there is a change of speed limit and if they fail to observe the new speed limit they are failed. Are you aware of that happening?

Mr FOWLER - Yes, Mr Chairman, I heard of a particular incident and on occasions I have heard of other comments where the driving assessors are unfairly assessing the candidates and each one of those is followed up. The one incident you are talking about was probably 12 months ago, if I remember rightly.

CHAIR - It was put to us that it was happening on some sort of regular basis and that that was an example of the way some testing officers were unfairly testing and failing people.

Mr FOWLER - I can assure you that it does not happen. We hear all sorts of stories from the candidates when they come back. Then when they take the assessment sheet back home to Mum or Dad or whatever they actually ring us up or we follow up with the issue. The story that was actually passed on to Mum or Dad is quite dissimilar to in actual fact the truth. It was happening probably a lot more a couple of years ago but now we have a number of new assessors. They are really on the ball. I have not heard of one of those instances for at least 12 months. I must say that we used to have a very high number of complaints about the assessing officers but that has virtually dropped down to nil.

CHAIR - We heard this from a very responsible person actively engaged in road safety and not from any disenchanted applicant who had experienced it. There have been considerable delays in some parts of Tasmania in having licence tests. Now that there is a requirement for two lots of testing are you intending to substantially increase the number of testing officers? I imagine you would require about double the number to have the tests available within a reasonable time.

Mr FOWLER - Mr Chairman, there has been a program of recruiting new driving assessors. Currently we have FTEs - off the top of my head - of around about 18 statewide. We will be increasing that in July by another three FTEs. At this point in time I am sure you are aware that the period to book and take an assessment can be one day to a week and probably one and a half weeks at the maximum. We have more driving assessors than we need at this point in time but the reason is to actually train them in this model and we will be doing the final recruitment in July.

CHAIR - So you have 18 currently.

Mr McILFATRICK - It is built up to 18. Twenty-one will be our target.

CHAIR - Twenty-one 0 2s?.

Mr FOWLER - There are more people than that but this is the full-time equivalent. There will be some part-time people; a number of instructors would be.

CHAIR - What is the current waiting time in Hobart and also in Launceston for testing applicants for licensing?

Mr FOWLER - It varies in the various urban areas where it would be between one day and one week. It extends out a bit in areas like Sorell where assessment is not so frequent. An assessing officer would go down there once every two weeks, I think. On the west coast we have employed a new assessing officer. At St Helens on the east coast we have employed somebody there. They are both 0.2s or 0.3s. The strategy there was to have somebody local so we do not waste the time travelling, sending an assessing officer from Launceston or from Burnie down to those particular areas.

Ms FORREST - You just need to sort out how they pay for their test.

Mr FOWLER - Sorry?

Ms FORREST - That is another matter: how they pay for their test. Anyway, that is another matter I am working on with the department. It is a challenge for the people on the west coast and possibly other areas. They cannot make on-line payment so they actually have to take a day off work to go and make a payment to do a test.

Mr FOWLER - I recall your letter.

Ms FORREST - I have another one in the mail.

CHAIR - So if the proposal is to have three more 0.2 FTEs, I am not sure how you expect to handle double the number of tests with only an increase of about three employees.

Mr FOWLER - Yes. As I mentioned we actually have 18 FTEs at the moment and that equates to probably 25 people around the State. We have actually increased those numbers. The benchmark to book and take an assessment is three weeks, which is a reasonable time. As I have just mentioned, you can get an assessment in some urban centres and particularly Launceston within one or two days. We have more assessing officers than we actually need at this point in time but we will be building up again with some more in early July.

CHAIR - What are the qualifications needed for somebody to be appointed as a testing officer?

Mr FOWLER - The Certificate IV. There are three units within that; one of them is plan, one of them is assess, and I can't remember the other one. They are the three components of the Certificate IV -

Mr McILFATRICK - At TAFE.

Mr FOWLER - Some of the driving assessors actually do have degrees but obviously not in road safety.

Mr McILFATRICK - They have that mandatory requirement of doing those three modules.

CHAIR - Yes, thank you.

Ms FORREST - I think, Norm, you might have mentioned it; the first practical test is a competency-based assessment. Is the second one a competency-based assessment as well?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes.

Ms FORREST - So it's not a tick and flick anymore?

Mr McILFATRICK - No.

Ms FORREST - That has changed then?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes. Just recently; we had a meeting of all the testing officers from around the State and they are retraining, as Richard mentioned, in this methodology because it's an improvement. I guess it's a more observational and competency-based standard and they need to be brought up to speed on those competencies as well so there's a lot of work going into it and discussion, in terms of having the scheme trialled and then the testing officers feeding back into what the trial has meant; what learnings have been put in, what might need to be fed back into the program. It's a fairly significant change in the way things are done. From all accounts it will give us a better outcome in that early danger period for people when they first drive alone on the road.

Mr DEAN - It brings me to the question of what statistical data do we have to show that the practice that we have in place for novice drivers and P-plate drivers is better than that operating in other States? Do you have statistical data to show the number of accidents per population in that group and salary? Is it available?

Ms CONWAY - We can pull something out of our data. I'm not sure what we can get easily from other jurisdictions because people do record and collect information slightly differently. I can look into that. I don't have it.

Mr DEAN - That would give some indication of whether or not our practices are best practice.

Mr FOWLER - Also, we'll be doing an evaluation after this is implemented around about six months after the second phase.

Mr McILFATRICK - I guess that, from my point of view looking forward, it would be better to assess the impact of this over, say, a three-year period and then review that against -

Mr DEAN - However, it's not a significant deviation from what we've previously had in place over the last few years, is it really? There are changes -

Ms CONWAY - I think the second test is pretty significant because that test is going to be quite different to the current test in that it's going to be harder, basically. It's going to try to look at different skills that we don't currently assess, which are those what we call the higher-order skills; the hazard-perception skills, the ability of people when they're driving to know what's happening around them. That's the area where provisional drivers in that first six months probably fall down quite substantially because of their lack of experience. That will be different; I think that's quite a big change for people.

Mr DEAN - Well, to have changed to where we are going, and I am not saying it's wrong, at all, surely there must have been some data available to demonstrate clearly that our current practices were not achieving the results that we were wanting from them so therefore there was a need to change it. That statistical data would be available, I would have thought; you wouldn't sail off to make these changes -

Mr McILFATRICK - We've been looking to make improvements from the current data to the future data so certainly looking at that data now would be beneficial but we would be aiming to improve performance in the future.

Ms CONWAY - Mr Chairman, the novice driver crash problem probably has a number of solutions to it. The licensing framework is one part of that problem. We're hoping some of the other actions we've taken in other areas like the safest speed and better practice infrastructure are going to work together with this reform to actually help reduce our involvement of novice drivers in serious casualties. It's one prong of the overall approach.

CHAIR - It concerns me to hear that the second test would be stricter when there's no requirement for any course of instruction or information for learner drivers. We've had quite a body of evidence in support of this. The only areas where we do not see support for this are in government departmental officers. With people who have had extensive experience in road safety there is a consistency coming through which is not evident among government departmental officers in any State or Territory that we visited except the ACT, so I invite your comments on that. As Ms Forrest said, a lot of learner drivers are taught by relatives, family and friends, whose driving efforts may be unacceptable.

Ms FORREST - They are not aware of the need to teach hazard perception and hazard identification. That is the point, Mr Chairman, that I was making myself.

CHAIR - It seems natural, if people are undertaking examinations and tests for all sorts of things, that they have a course of instruction; it is a basic thing, except in driver licensing.

Ms FORREST - Expect them to pick it up by osmosis.

Mr McILFATRICK - I don't think that is the case. There are classroom studies, and there is instruction both web-based and handbook-based, combined with the supervised driving process, so we are probably talking about how instruction is delivered rather than whether instruction is given.

Ms FORREST - But it is not compulsory for someone to go on line and do - except for their road rules test. That is the only thing that is compulsory.

Mr McILFATRICK - It is compulsory before they get to the practical on-road test that they have actually acquired skills and absorbed information and been supervised in doing that. I think the supervisory approach, whether that is a learner driving school or a parent or whatever, is a competency-based process.

Ms FORREST - You are assuming that all parents are competent, then, to teach their children?

Mr McILFATRICK - I am assuming that they will be supervised on the road certainly through the two phases, and in that process will need to have a practical test and a knowledge test on two occasions, so I guess it is a matter of whether we believe they would learn more in the classroom or more in a practical sense on the road and with -

Ms FORREST - Can't you have it both, though?

CHAIR - Yes, why not both? I would have thought both were essential.

Mr McILFATRICK - Our information is that the mix of things we have done at the moment is going to achieve the results we are aiming for.

Mr FOWLER - It is not to say, though, that this is a line in the sand, that we are not going to review it, because we are continually reviewing the licensing, the other strategies for these novices who actually have an attitude issue when they get their Ps. There is a plethora of information and, yes, you can't make them do it, but again simply in a classroom just by making somebody go from a 9 o'clock to a 10 o'clock seminar does not actually mean they are going to absorb that information. A lot of it is their behaviour and their attitude.

CHAIR - That is the whole thing.

Mr FOWLER - You can teach them how to pass, and this is just like passing anything at uni or wherever. You end up with a certificate, but that is when you actually start your real learning, and that is a fact of life.

CHAIR - But how can you be confident that they are going to have the best possible attitude when they are not even required to have any course of instruction to be advised about the essentials of driving?

Mr FOWLER - In the first assessment, one of the requirements of the driving assessors is to actually walk through because, as Angela just said, it is a practical skills set assessment. They will also be advised: 'This is what you are going to be expected to be able to do in the second assessment. You're going to be actually expected to identify that that person there may be a person of hazard, actually will walk off the street, or the lights might change'. And there will be a number of those set, and so they will be advised how to actually learn more in terms of how they can drive more safely on the road.

Ms FORREST - Isn't it better teaching that up front so they can actually look at and develop those skills over time? If you take them through a driving sequence where they had to watch and identify the potential - they are not driving, they are just watching this on the

TV - and they see a person on the side of the road that might step out, they see a cyclist coming up the other side of the road, they see a truck about to pull out from a road further up, they see the traffic lights are green up ahead but they could go red, is it not better to give those people the idea of what sort of things they need to be looking out for and then when they go out there, supervised, they are looking for it but so is the supervising driver obviously.

That is why they are safer because you have the two sets of eyes looking at it. You go out with your supervising driver, who may or may not be good at hazard perception - I mean, they obviously have some experience themselves because you cannot have just anybody teaching or supervising there. They may be more thinking more about not wanting this kid to run into a car, than watching for that person there. You know what I am saying? If you do not actually give them some idea of what hazards are out there and get them to identify hazards - without saying, 'That person there is a hazard, that bike is a hazard, that truck is a hazard', you say instead, 'When we drive along this road' - on the TV - 'you tell me what the hazards are'. Is that not a way of actually helping them to get those skills and then refine them in that driving period right from when they get their first L licence?

Mr FOWLER - As I mentioned a while ago, some of the jurisdictions do have that computerised hazard perception. I mentioned the evaluation of that, having talked with colleagues on the mainland but whilst you hear what they say, the evaluation was that it was not as good as what is going to happen here in terms of having the candidates out on the road in real-life situations rather than in -

Ms FORREST - But they are not doing one or the other, they are doing that and then putting the learners out in the road.

CHAIR - One is not exclusive of the other.

Mr FOWLER - No. It is a complex equation. It is a complex environment.

Ms FORREST - The way you are putting it across it sounds like in some States they just do the training and say, 'Okay, now come for your licence test'. That is not what is happening. They are saying, 'Do this course of instruction', or whatever you want to call it, 'and then go and do your 50 hours'. I think in some States it is even more than that. It is 100 hours in some, before you can actually go for your provisional licence test. It is not saying that you do one or the other; you actually have to do both.

CHAIR - Did you or did anybody from Tasmania go and see what the procedure is in the ACT as Ms Forrest did?

Mr FOWLER - Not physically. I have visited there several times and I have been to some of their registries and seen how it works, but not specifically to talk one on one, but a range of research information was received from all of the jurisdictions. Every jurisdiction, without a doubt, is different in their novice reforms. That is one of the issues nationally that we need to face. For example, Western Australia only have 25 hours compulsory supervisor driving. Some others do not have the hazard-perception test. Some have an exit from their P to their full car licence. New Zealand is completely different as well.

Ms FORREST - The Federal Government are rolling out a project for 26 000 drivers, to mentor the P-plate drivers. That is a Federal-Government initiative, not just a State jurisdiction.

Mr FOWLER - Correct, yes.

CHAIR - In conjunction with Victoria and New South Wales, I think.

Mr FOWLER - That is right.

Ms FORREST - Yes.

CHAIR - You say that every jurisdiction is different but there is only one in Australia, I think, where there is a requirement for a course of instruction. I would have thought that, as you are bringing in new measures here, somebody from Tasmania would have gone to test that, to -

Ms FORREST - To experience it.

CHAIR - Yes, experience it and make an evaluation.

Mr FOWLER - All I can say, again, is that we did the analysis. I suppose only one jurisdiction out of eight has that. Probably there is another supporting factor in maybe it does not work because the ACT is the only jurisdiction that does it. None of the others do.

Ms FORREST - ACT learner licences are highly sought after. To get an ACT licence as a learner you have to prove your residency. If you live in New South Wales you cannot get one because they are highly sought after. I wonder why that is the case.

Mr FOWLER - We could probably talked about that off-line. There is another range of issues there that I have just come back from talking about with the chap in ACT. They are quite prepared to have people live in New South Wales and licence them in the ACT. There is a whole range of issues with the licensing, across-border issues there because of the very situation of the ACT.

CHAIR - There are tea and coffee facilities nearby. I think if everybody is agreeable we might adjourn until 11.35.

Short suspension.

CHAIR - We might start off and go back to the beginning of novice reform.

Laughter

CHAIR - No, I think we have covered that.

Ms FORREST - One other question in relation to that, one of you said you were going to evaluate it after these changes have been made. What are you actually going to evaluate?

How are you going to do that? What indicators are you looking for that will show it has been successful or otherwise?

Mr McILFATRICK - Feedback. The person evaluating will get feedback from participants which will be ongoing but then there will be a time required to see - as Mr Dean said - whether that had had an impact and really that would be an impact on the statistics of crash data et cetera so it will take some time.

Ms FORREST - Which does bring me to the question then, Norm, you are putting a number of other worthwhile projects as well to target all road users, not just your novice drivers, so how are you going to separate it out?

Ms CONWAY - That is the challenge of the evaluation. We will probably get someone who has experience in constructing the evaluation. You can model and you can make predictions of what impact other things have had. It is not a perfect science but it can be done.

Ms FORREST - How many learner drivers do we have each year roughly that come through the system? How many are we talking about over a two-year period, say?

Mr FOWLER - Around about 11 000 or 12 000, off the top of my head.

Ms FORREST - That many? I would not have thought there would have been quite that many young people coming through. Not all young, I guess.

CHAIR - No.

Ms FORREST - Some of them might be older.

Mr McILFATRICK - Some might be a renewal of licences from suspension and that sort of thing.

Ms FORREST - Oh, okay.

Mr McILFATRICK - Or are they all younger?

Mr FOWLER - All up annually there is around about 15 000, 16 000 assessments for the elderly, provisionals, overseas conversions, disqualified. There is a whole range.

Ms FORREST - When you are looking at people who are sitting for their provisional licence each year, how many would that be roughly?

Mr FOWLER - It works out roughly at about 12 000 as well so there is a flow through.

Ms FORREST - So it is that 12 000 figure?

Mr FOWLER - Yes.

Mr DEAN - I want to ask a question on people arriving here from other countries as to whether they have been taken into account in putting up these new programs and so on

for learner drivers and P-plate drivers - they do have some significant issues that they are not familiar with here and it does impact on them - and how that is brought into this whole thing with, I guess, translators in the vehicles. It has been raised with me as a problem, particularly with the Bhutanese people who are just coming in.

Mr FOWLER - We use interpreters quite a lot and we work with the Migrant Resource Centre. Part of the trials that Norm mentioned a while ago is trying to work out how best we can assess these people because they do have difficulty with some of the language and to be honest, we have some difficulty with some of the interpreters. It is not just language; also it is people who are partially deaf as well. We are putting through these issues through these trials as well to see if we can improve on what we do at the moment. We have that problem right at this point in time.

Mr DEAN - Is the cost of the translator that you use a cost against the learner driver or the P-plate holder?

Mr FOWLER - No, the Government pays it, at this point in time.

CHAIR - Has any consideration been given to the possibility of having a course for people whose licences are suspended, disqualified because of offences if the courts in their sentencing decided to require a course of instruction before these people are re-licensed?

Mr FOWLER - Yes, that is one of the issues that we looked at and other people - restrictions on their licences, conditions on their licences. It is a good point in terms of how we can try to get those potential recidivists back onto the road in a more safe environment. That is something we could probably look at further as well.

Ms CONWAY - Mr Chair, if I could add, I know that the Department of Justice is developing what they are calling a sober drivers program which will obviously be there for people who have had a suspension, a disqualification period for drink-driving. I know they were developing it last year, I am not sure whether it has actually started yet but I think the idea is that was going to be there as a sentencing or an option for not just magistrates but potentially also through the probation and parole system.

CHAIR - Good.

Ms CONWAY - They would be possibly best placed to give you more information about that but I do know that was being looked at.

Mr McILFATRICK - From our point of view based on feedback from Justice and police, if that was we would certainly take that on board on their advice and obviously it would be up to the justice system to apply. If that was seen to be something that we could incorporate we would certainly be positive about looking into that.

CHAIR - Good. Is there anything else on the novice licensing system before we go back to the levy report? All right, we can move on, thank you.

Mr McILFATRICK - I've already covered some of this but it's probably worth highlighting some of the actual projects. We've mentioned electronic speed signs so just to put that in context, this is about 750 actual installations over three years, which is quite significant.

We were trying to cover all schools that have potential hazards and I think all schools that are off non-thoroughfare streets, et cetera. This is a very significant change and we will monitor that to see where the application may be for other uses. If we combine this with the weather station trial at Constitution Hill I think that will lead us to many more opportunities for technology.

The feedback from the public has been hugely positive on those signs to date. There's been a slight hiccup, as there often is, in technology. You might have noticed that a lot of poles have been put up but we haven't installed all of the signage yet and that's because there was a potential manufacturing issue and we wanted to make sure we didn't install signs and then have them break down. That's only put a short hiatus in the project and we'll catch that up.

The other thing is that the traffic management people within DIER who look after our traffic lights and all of those, are getting new skills out of this whole program and we are essentially using them to project manage and do the installation with the manufacture is being done elsewhere. From my point of view, that's a great skill extension for our own people. They are already highly skilled in traffic light maintenance and this will take them into a new technology arena, which gives them a strong employment future with the department.

Ms FORREST - With regard to those signs, I notice the one at Boat Harbour, which I'm very pleased to see in place, is for 60 kph not for 40 kph. I appreciate we're on the Bass Highway there but when there are buses and cars coming in and out of that school, particularly buses coming from the east turning into the school, and having to cross to go out, cars trying to negotiate into the car park and that sort of thing as well, why was 60 kph chosen rather than 40 kph on that occasion?

Mr McILFATRICK - Again, that would have been based on risk assessment and the history. I think it was 60 kph previously.

Ms FORREST - No, it was 80 kph previously. It was 80 kph all the way through there.

Mr McILFATRICK - So it's been an improvement. I guess, again, through monitoring that there is the opportunity to change it later. All of them have been either replicating existing conditions or a new assessment has gone forward.

Ms FORREST - Clearly 80 kph was way too high in that sort of circumstance. What would need to happen for it to be reviewed downwards to 40 kph? It's only for a short space of time.

Ms CONWAY - Without knowing exactly what the speed environment is, I think the issue would be a dramatic drop from whatever the speed limit is down to 40 kph. For a whole range of safety and traffic-flow reasons, you usually have a gradual decrease down so I think there would have been issues around going from 100 -

Ms FORREST - You've had 100 coming to 80.

Ms CONWAY - Yes, and then going to 60 now. They usually drop down at about 20 kph so that would have to be looked at just in terms of the reduction.

Mr McILFATRICK - We'll get the rationale for that one.

Ms FORREST - There are a lot of trucks on that road as well, obviously.

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

Ms FORREST - They take longer to slow down to 40 kph.

Mr McILFATRICK - And there would be local consultation as well and with the school community and there will be some areas where simply having the road signage changed won't be enough; there will need to be other measures put in place. This is very much a step change in where we're heading, potentially leading to the speed trials in two southern councils that potentially might influence future decisions on statewide speed. The trials are done for a number of reasons but the essential one is to look at whether the impact is significant enough for Cabinet to make decisions further down the track on speed restrictions generally.

CHAIR - It's good that you are reviewing all of that.

Mr McILFATRICK - It's really action research.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr McILFATRICK - The physical road barrier work is probably most evident on the Midland Highway at the moment; at Constitution Hill. There have been a number of flexible barrier projects covering about 21 kilometres so far. We would probably be aiming for at least that amount in the next few years, so this is a continuum. The initial road safety should be built in to a new project, so if we are doing a new project the thinking will be done at that time. If we are doing any maintenance or major reconstruction as part of our normal program, that road safety thinking gets reapplied, through our understanding of road usage. This road safety levy is giving us the opportunity to do additional work that is not either in our construction or our maintenance program, so it is actually the next level of priority that probably under our normal program would not have been done in this time frame, so we are really trying to bring it forward.

Mr DEAN - I just want to go back to the comment that approximately three-quarters of the levy funds are used to implement important infrastructure improvement. Are we saying there that a part of that levy is going to administration and going in other areas, because I thought we were told during the discussion phases here that the whole of these funds would go into actual infrastructure for road safety.

Ms CONWAY - What that comment means is that primarily we know that infrastructure is one of the best things we can do, because it works for so many years. Once it is there it keeps working for a long time so we want to make sure we spend a lot of the levy on that. The remainder of the levy is spent on other kinds of initiatives which we call loosely the policy-based initiatives, like novice driver licensing reform, the safer speed demonstrations, like trialling alcohol interlocks and the technology trials. We put roughly 25 per cent into those kinds of projects that are also important, but infrastructure

is where we can make a big gain and a long-term gain, so we want to make sure we prioritise that.

Mr McILFATRICK - So, to make it clear, the department has overheads and a structure in place. We are not applying any overhead to this. This is an additional amount of expenditure and the vast majority of it goes directly into initiatives. If, for instance, there was a project manager that was brought on to specifically do, say, the traffic light project, and that was part of the cost of the project, of course, and that happened to be a DIER employee, that is in the project, but I am not claiming my management overhead or Angela's or anyone else's down there. I cannot say to you there are no DIER resources being used on this, because the people installing the traffic lights are, but the additional employment level of them is actually for the project rather than an overhead being applied. We have been very clear on that. If the Road Safety Council recommends a certain project, they are very strenuous on looking at how the moneys for that project are applied. There is no sort of pushing a little bit of administration funds into this that should be applied to the project rather than another area. The governance of this process is quite stringent and is supervised not just by me but by an independent body.

CHAIR - What amount do you expect to raise each year with the levy and for how long will that apply?

Ms CONWAY - Roughly we will expect around \$8.5 million per year. Obviously that will vary with vehicle registration numbers. The levy has been placed for five years from 1 December 2007.

Mr McILFATRICK - It has about four years to run and then if it was not extended beyond that you would probably see some expenditure continuing into the following year.

CHAIR - What other funds are available for road safety in this financial year?

Mr McILFATRICK - There is the Community Road Safety Partnership program. We would have to get the budget figure. That is a line item in the Budget. Generally, though, a significant element of the maintenance program in our forward construction program incorporates road safety measures. For instance, one that is not in a road safety element itself that would be of benefit would be the replacement of the traffic light systems with higher-intensity LED instead of a globe. That's essentially for energy efficiency but there's a safety benefit of that because it's more visible. It's like going from the old dull incandescent to a very bright light. We've got \$3.3 million worth of those traffic light replacements happening over the next two years, I think. It's a Tasmanian invention or adaptation so it's quite a good exercise and obviously when we build the Dilston bypass or the Brighton bypass there'll be wire rope barriers in there; so elements of road safety are built in. We're doing our maintenance program and there are elements of the maintenance program which would cover treatments of the road surface or even weather station installations that are identified as part of our risk assessment. So this is in addition to what we would routinely do and I think what it is, is using that level directly on something which will advance our road safety performance against our business as usual.

We know that budgets are not infinite so we have a program of works. We've got a very heavy capital works program coming up. This is in addition to that and I think it gives us

a great chance to accelerate and move in fairly large steps. \$8 million doesn't seem a lot but you can see how much you can achieve when you think about part of this program generating 750 school crossing signs, which is a lot for Tasmania.

CHAIR - What is the organisational structure for road safety?

Ms CONWAY - In our department, we have a land transport safety division and the road safety effort that's directly called road safety sits in that division. There is a road safety section in my area, which is land transport and safety policy which is the policy which oversees the development of the strategy and the action plans and putting them altogether. Then we have our road safety operations area; they are the ones that run the community road safety partnership program and work with the schools and teachers delivering the classroom resource.

CHAIR - How many are employed in each of these?

Ms CONWAY - My branch would have approximately 14 FTEs. The road safety operations is slightly problematic because we have the crossing guards in there too, the lollypop ladies, and there are a lot of them -

Ms FORREST - And men.

Ms CONWAY - And men, I beg your pardon.

Laughter.

Ms CONWAY - So I can't give you an exact figure. We can easily provide that.

Mr McILFATRICK - I think approximately eight road safety consultants are out there in the community right around the State.

Ms CONWAY - I have, off the top of my head, I think 11 full-time equivalents as crossing guards.

Mr McILFATRICK - I had 11 in my head as well.

Ms CONWAY - Obviously they work a very small amount of time. There are about 150, I think.

Mr McILFATRICK - That's the internal department and then there's the governance of it.

Ms CONWAY - Yes. We have a road safety council that is appointed by the Minister for Infrastructure. That includes stakeholder representatives like the RACT, the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council, community representatives; those kinds of bodies. My area provides executive support to the Road Safety Council. We also have a road safety task force which also sits within my area in terms of its day-to-day management. They report to an independent board, as I'm sure you are aware; Paul Hogan is the independent chair of the board and that also has other stakeholders are it.

Mr McILFATRICK - Those bodies are scrutinising both the priorities in particular and obviously the MAIB is an important stakeholder. We are trying to reduce their overheads as well by reducing our crashes so they are a key stakeholder in deciding, with others, how these priorities are assessed and how they're implemented.

Ms CONWAY - Another really important area of the department that has a very big influence on the outcome of safety is our road and traffic division and they have the traffic management area; they're the area that set the speed limits and monitor that. They actually develop and implement the infrastructure program that the levy funds. They analyse the crashes and work out where it is best to target the interventions on the road.

Mr McILFATRICK - A practical example of what that area would do is if, for instance, a local council or a member of the community said, 'I think the speed signs in this particular area are wrong or the speed signs are right and people are not complying with them'. The first instance would be to put some monitoring on that, so electronic monitoring where, maybe even without the community knowing, it was an 80 speed limit you would know what the trend was. What is the average speed that people are going through there? Is it 91? Yes, we have a compliance problem. Is it 71? No, we do not. Then monitoring crash data for that area, looking at incident reports from the police et cetera and then making a judgment based on evidence whether the speed limit needs to be changed or advising police that there is a non-compliance in this area.

So there is a scientific approach to it. The issue is we monitor on the basis of feedback either through the crash data management or through the public saying, 'We would like you to look at this'. Out of a couple of the most recent community forums we have had at Geeveston and at Richmond there has been significant community feedback on some of their issues which would immediately say to us we need to investigate that particular area and get the data.

Ms FORREST - 'We' being?

Mr McILFATRICK - The department. So when we the minister goes to a community forum I attend with him. In the Richmond case there has been quite a deal of community angst about heavy vehicle traffic through Richmond. About 50 per cent of the community forum interviews we had raised that in some way or other. So we now know we have a priority investigation to take on board in that area. So there is a feedback loop there.

CHAIR - Twenty years ago the average speed that most people would travel in an area was taken into account in determining what the appropriate speed limit would be. Is that a factor now?

Ms CONWAY - Yes, I still think it is looked at as part of a number of things that are looked at when setting a speed limit. If you are going to change it, say lower a speed limit, it might tell you what percentage of people are going to comply or not comply and whether you have a communication issue around that change.

CHAIR - In the light of that, does anybody know why the speed limit was lowered between Brighton and Pontville to 60 when most people would travel comfortably, safely, at 80 there being virtually no houses fronting onto that section of road and also why the speed

limit on the northern end of Campbell Town is 60 when it used to be 80? There are 27 houses there, hardly any pedestrians. I think I have only seen about two or three cars in 26 years entering the road along that stretch.

Mr McILFATRICK - There would have been a logical reason for it but I think with both of those we should follow up and give you that information.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr McILFATRICK - There is a small unit within the department that constantly measures road speeds and statistics. The manager of that area is Peter Hubble.

CHAIR - Both seem unreasonable to me and to many other people.

Mr McILFATRICK - I will ask Peter Hubble to follow up. Directly to the committee?

CHAIR - Yes, that is fine.

Mr FOWLER - There are two other areas in our division: the vehicle operations branch do a lot of compliance with heavy vehicles; and also my particular area of registration and licensing. There are a lot of compliance issues and there are also issues in terms of making sure people are licensed correctly and they are driving correctly.

CHAIR - If you had extra funding would there be other measures that you would be able to do and cope with?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes. There is no doubt that available funding for all programs needs to be balanced and not just against road safety but against health and education. We would like to see how the road safety levy works. It is very early days to be saying to you that it could be continued. Certainly the feedback we have to date is that this is a very well received levy by customers in that they can actually see something happening. No-one wants to put any additional imposts on the community but the general feedback is they are getting value for their \$20 so what we should do is evaluate and keep evaluating that so that we can come back to a future cabinet with a recommendation for how this levy might be applied in the future.

You are probably aware that there is a significant scale up in capital investment onto the road network over the next three years so, coupled with the current program, could we do more? It would be a matter of how we balanced the resources to do that.

CHAIR - There would be matters that it could be spent on effectively -

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, and what we do at the moment is put all of the prospective projects onto the table, particularly in those key areas, and then go in priority order. For instance, if we had more money would we do more in the school program? Possibly not. Would we do it quicker? Maybe, yes. I think each one would need to be looked at in terms of a cost benefit.

I heard your previous discussion about cost benefit and although it is an inexact science on cost benefit we are trying to do things which are at the serious end of the spectrum

which is about protecting children, reducing severity of crashes, reducing crashes if we can.

CHAIR - If the whole or a reasonable percentage of the money derived from the speed camera fines were made available to your department would you be able to absorb that?

Mr McILFATRICK - It would be a very happy department.

Mr DEAN - Can we expect to see in the near future some of those electronic signs on the Midland Highway? I think there is one on a gantry on the highway from Victoria to Bathurst, which says, 'You are now travelling at' whatever speed. I have raised it many times in Parliament. I would see that as a great road safety strategy. Is it being considered?

Mr McILFATRICK - It is actually being considered actively now. I spoke to our roads and traffic division. It is not just about road safety, it is also a broad community awareness. We are seriously looking at the benefit of those signs and increasing their use. There is a technology strategy that is in the thinking stage at the moment.

Mr DEAN - Thank you.

Ms FORREST - There are a couple of things I wanted to ask about some comments you made, and also in relation to wire rope barriers. The first thing, not related to wire rope barriers, is has there been any consideration given to encouraging members of the public to report near misses because often they can suggest an area that perhaps needs looking at.

I instance the case where I was driving through Sandy Bay into Parliament last week, and I notice it is still the case this week. I am not sure of the street that comes out but just down from St Ives, the one that comes into the left as you are coming this way.

Mr McILFATRICK - St Georges Terrace.

Ms FORREST - That is it I think. The right-hand traffic lights are not working and I almost went through a red light because I had a car beside me in the left-hand lane, I was in the right-hand lane and I was watching the right-hand traffic light. It was not working last week when I nearly went through. I had to brake suddenly, brake heavily to stop. I stopped easily because I was only going probably 40 kilometres an hour but this week, this morning when I came through I noticed it is still not working.

Mr McILFATRICK - Okay.

Ms FORREST - This is where cars pull across in front of you. I had another instance around the Bass Highway at Wynyard, in Calder Road, where a car pulled out.

Mr McILFATRICK - They are really hazard identificational.

Ms FORREST - Yes. Has any consideration been given to encouraging members of the public to actually report areas that they see as hazards - whether because something is not working or because of the actual infrastructure of the road at the time?

Mr McILFATRICK - Certainly we have the facility for people to call in and what you may be saying is can we lift the awareness of that.

Ms FORREST - Yes. Encourage people to do it rather than just say oh you can.

Mr McILFATRICK - I am happy to take that on board because I think it is an idea that is worth looking at. I have to make sure I talk to Richard first because it is his people that will be taking the call and at the moment they are probably taking a few calls about the motor registry process which we are still very close to having resolved but it has been an strenuous period for them. I think it is something we could look at internally.

Mr FOWLER - In addition to that, we get a lot of calls from the community and the police about drivers and we follow up on those.

Ms FORREST - At Highclere there was a truck overtaking a car, which was fine when he started but he was on the double white line approaching the crest of the hill. I sat back quite a distance thinking, 'I hope there is nothing coming.

Mr McILFATRICK - There are two ways for those things to be reported. People could call the police but if they called us we are more likely to have the network to be able to contact the contractor or the owner of the company and that is a softer way of getting the result.

Ms FORREST - I just wondered whether it is helpful to progress some of these issues and have road users identify the hazards. I see a lot of things and I am only one road user of many and so I am sure that lots of other people see other things.

Mr McILFATRICK - We have the capability to take these responses on board; I guess you're saying are we doing enough with that feedback line. It is more likely to be the sort of thing.

Ms FORREST - I wouldn't have been aware there was a feedback line.

Mr McILFATRICK - There is an inquiry service.

Ms FORREST - Maybe that is the issue, that people are encouraged. I will leave that with you to consider.

Mr McILFATRICK - That is a good idea.

Ms FORREST - The other issue with the wire rope barriers: we have had some evidence that some of them are placed, in some people's view, too close to the side of the road, particularly the left-hand side of the road for the run-off crashes. As I drive around I look at these things after they have been mentioned and I noticed one south of Parramatta Creek just north of the truck checking station there. It is very close. If someone actually had an incident with their car - with a flat tyre you can keep driving to the end of it and then get off a bit further up but with a breakdown you would not really be able to get off the road there.

Mr McILFATRICK - I do not know the one that you are talking about but it would probably be restricted by maybe a fall-off in the -

Ms FORREST - I would say that is the case, looking at it.

Mr McILFATRICK - It is really about practicality of how do you work within an ideal space to give people that pull-off.

Ms FORREST - So ideally you would make more?

Mr McILFATRICK - You would, but if there is no space and particularly if there is a culvert or whatever sitting there you would run it as close to the culvert as you could.

Ms FORREST - It is right on the edge. There is no doubt that it is right on the edge.

Mr DEAN - Directly opposite Symmons Plains is a good example.

Ms FORREST - Yes, there are a few spots around.

Mr McILFATRICK - And you know that one is because there is probably a pull-off on the side.

Mr DEAN - Symmons Plains in particular was raised with us by one of the groups.

Mr McILFATRICK - Perhaps if it has been raised during a committee session we could follow up on completion by really having a look at *Hansard* to see where we should be having a look. We would not put it right on the side of the road unless there was no alternative.

Ms FORREST - It is costly to extend that, and I am referring particularly to the one near Parramatta Creek where you have bush over on the side. There is a decent gap but it does drop away very suddenly, yes.

Mr McILFATRICK - That would mean you would have to do quite a bit of fill. There are two good reasons that is likely to be. If there is a physical barrier there like a cutting or a fall-off you start magnifying the cost by a factor of 10 if you start looking at having to cut into them.

Ms FORREST - Which brings me perfectly to my next question.

Mr McILFATRICK - Sorry about that.

Laughter.

Ms FORREST - You have done very well. When you actually look at constructing wire rope barriers or other barriers - and we understand that they are there to protect the road user from particularly run-off or head-on collisions or whatever and the benefits in that is that you can reduce the trauma and the cost - do you do a cost benefit analysis on that? Similarly, you would have heard the previous witness's evidence about skid resistance; do you actually consider those issues as well?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, there is a value assessment on where the money should be spent that would have the greatest safety benefit. Each one has to be assessed on a range of things like the crash history, the road conditions et cetera and what we are trying to protect, and then, based on that, how much does that cost versus what we think the safety benefit will be. Certainly the ones that have the greatest safety benefit will be the ones that we do first and any of them that are a positive safety benefit will be on the books in the program. So, yes, they are assessed on that basis.

Ms FORREST - Do you do a cost-benefit analysis that would go into skid resistance as well? Is that part of that process when you are designing a new section or upgrading a road or maintaining a road?

Mr McILFATRICK - Skid resistant treatments are a part of that. There are particular areas where skid resistance is a treatment that's put in as a hazard reduction; generally not part of this program but part of our roads and traffic program.

Ms CONWAY - It could be, though. I don't think there'd be something prohibiting if there were areas. I do know our asset management people keep a record of how well the pavement's doing and then they also look at crashes and overlay where crashes are happening; I know that they do prioritise spending money where there's a problem with the surface and if it has seen crashes.

Ms FORREST - Particularly when they consider the speed that vehicles generally travel on that section of the road?

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes. I've just recently looked at a forward work program for some areas within the roads and traffic area that they believed were a combination of skid treatment and weather related; signage would be in their priorities for the next few years. They're looking at that as part of the overall user profile rather than just specifically for road safety purposes. It's not in this program; it's in their general program.

Ms FORREST - Just one other point in relation to skid; the other witness didn't mention this at all but I am aware that a light gravelly sandy sort of approach is used for putting on roads to deal with ice. I'm aware that there's also an alternate treatment that can be used as a preventative measure using calcium carbonate.

Mr McILFATRICK - As part of this program we're looking to trial that.

Ms FORREST - You are?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Fantastic. On the west coast?

Mr McILFATRICK - No, I'd need to get details on that because I'm relying on memory. I read a report from our roads and traffic people just recently where a range of issues are being considered, including a trial with one of our maintenance providers. If I could

remember who it was I'd know which region it was in. I can't, but it's certainly a trial of that treatment on a couple of specific areas.

Ms FORREST - Will that be rolled out this winter?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, as a trial.

Ms FORREST - As a trial, yes.

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, but I guess we need to get you more information on that because I am only relying on my ageing memory.

Ms FORREST - It's positive to hear because the last communication I had was that it wasn't being considered. A trial sounds positive.

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, and obviously all of those things - because we're putting down chemicals, essentially, it needs to be assessed from an environmental, safety and effectiveness point of view.

CHAIR - This session was scheduled to conclude at 12.30 p.m. and we were to resume at 1.15 p.m. and because a witness scheduled this afternoon is not available we can reorganise that so that we resume at 2 p.m. I'm just wondering if it's convenient if we go on until 1 p.m. Would that inconvenience anybody? We'll finish this report first and then deal with the matter that Mr Fowler is here specifically for before we end today in case it's necessary to have another session.

Mr McILFATRICK - I think we've probably covered the major areas in this report. A better way for the committee to go may be if anything comes up in your reading of this, given it was only released yesterday, we could answer those questions even as follow-up because there's a fair bit in here. We've only highlighted the major areas. It is an early part of the strategy so we're quite impressed with what's happened today and I guess the minister will also be talking about this in the lower House because it will be discussed there too.

CHAIR - Yes, all right, thank you. One matter that was raised with us by a witness last year, I think, or earlier this year is the practice of some of the entities in putting poles or posts to the edge of the road. An example was given at the roundabout at Breadalbane just south of Launceston where hydro poles are placed right beside the edge of the bitumen.

Mr McILFATRICK - It could be my fault from another life.

Laughter.

CHAIR - So does the department have a policy on this? What's the relationship with entities such as Hydro in locating poles close to the roadway?

Mr McILFATRICK - There is a relationship mainly with Aurora Energy who are predominantly within our road networks that would involve that, so there would not be an intention to put power poles close to a road.

There may be an area where a road has been widened and an assessment would have been done at the time of construction to make a change so in that extra construction it would need to be assessed whether the poles needed to be removed or replaced.

We are going through a major relocation of the transmission line tower at the moment through the Brighton Bypass and that is because it would be too close to the Bypass route. I am not sure about the process. There is a defined process which we could probably give you a record of.

Ms CONWAY - We do have a Road Hazard Management Guide that the department has developed and it is meant to be a best practice guide how to manage road safety issues when you are designing a road and it talks about where you put things in the road environment, providing clear zones, keeping it free of hazards and objects and just to try to provide that area so vehicles that are out of control have some space to go.

It also provides information to road owners and other entities about the best way of dealing with poles and those kinds of hazards in that environment. We actually provide that to all road owners like local government, and Aurora would have it as well. DIER has to approve all the traffic signage on roads such as our warning signs, so obviously when we put in a sign we try to comply with that guide and try to make sure we locate it outside of the clear zone. If we are looking at a piece of road where there is something that has been there for a long time in the wrong place there are good opportunities of moving it as part of other works, as Norm said.

CHAIR - In regard to speed limits, do you consider 110 kilometres an hour to be an appropriate speed limit for most of or the whole of the Midland Highway? We have had evidence on the mainland from somebody who has a good knowledge of the Midland Highway that there are very few parts of it where it is safe to travel at 110 kilometres an hour.

Ms FORREST - They said no parts of the Midland Highway, only a few parts of the Bass Highway.

CHAIR - Is that it? Okay.

Ms FORREST - That is what they said, yes.

CHAIR - I invite your comments on that.

Mr McILFATRICK - Based on national evidence we would always be open to reviewing speed signage of our speed restrictions as a safety measure. I mentioned before that part of the trials in the southern part of the State in Tasman and Kingborough are to inform us, not about the 110 level but particularly the 100 versus the 90 and 100 versus 80. That would certainly inform the Road Safety Task Force and Cabinet and the minister. So with regard to the 100 speed limit, I guess we would rely on the crash and incident data on that. Certainly the higher speed you travel the more likely that you are - all other factors taken into account - to put yourself at risk of an accident. The limit needs to be assessed to see where the limit has the most impact on reduction of crashes and impact on safety.

CHAIR - We visited the ARRB - the Australian Road Research Board - in Melbourne to which Tasmania contributes funding. We were very interested to inspect the laser vehicle that assesses the quality and condition of roads and we were told that that vehicle had been used to assess the entire length of the Midland Highway. Do you have a copy of that report and could that be made available to us?

Ms CONWAY - I know the machine you mean. I have seen it, but not recently, on the roads, so yes it does come here from time to time. I am not sure when they most recently assessed that road but there would be a report somewhere.

Mr McILFATRICK - If the report is available we will make it available.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, on the matter of the 110 on the Midland Highway, if I could go back there for a moment, Norm, I hear what you say about taking into account a whole range of matters. When was the last time an assessment was made about the appropriateness of 110 versus 100 on the Midland Highway?

Mr McILFATRICK - We will find out when that report was done. The Road Safety Task Force and the department are constantly reviewing the whole, considering changes based on data that we may want to put forward to the minister. It is not just the Midland Highway, we are looking at speed limits generally, but specifically as far as the Midland Highway is concerned, I would have to put that on notice to see when the last assessment was done. It would have been done in conjunction with a technical assessment of the road.

As each part of the Midland Highway is upgraded obviously there would be an assessment of the speed on Brighton Bypass or through some of the towns as conditions change. There would have been a specific assessment done but whether the whole highway has been assessed recently -

Mr HARRISS - Clearly any assessment you do is evidence-based?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - That being the case, given that the Chairman has just indicated the evidence we have been given interstate -

CHAIR - From the ARRB, I have just been reminded.

Ms FORREST - That bit about the speeding, I am not sure that was the ARRB.

CHAIR - No, I was not sure whether it was that or not.

Ms FORREST - There were a number of people who said -

Mr HARRISS - It may have been the ARRB, but it was an evidence-based assessment or comment made by whoever it was while we were interstate that that highway is certainly not suitable for 110 kilometres per hour.

Mr McILFATRICK - Evidence-based for us would be the infrastructure itself and then what the behaviour on the road is as well. We certainly would have monitored speeds and compliance on that road network, and we know about crashes on the highway et cetera, so what we will need to do is give you all the evidence that we have and when the last assessment was made.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, thanks.

Mr McILFATRICK - It is a constant thought process from the Road Safety Task Force and the council down that we are looking at speeds. There is the balance between what the community acceptance is and what people see as a suitable speed limit and what is actually a safety measure. It is a matter of setting it to get the right balance.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, just on the speed generally. Norm, you mentioned the Kingborough trial - has that concluded yet?

Mr McILFATRICK - No.

Mr HARRISS - You might have mentioned it earlier. Your report here suggests that there has been a 12-month evaluation using the levy funds and so on. Are the results of that evaluation out yet?

Ms CONWAY - They are not out yet. We have a protocol agreement with Kingborough that we have to work through some community feedback process before we publicly make that report available. We also collect a little bit of additional data on travel speeds to finish compiling that report at the moment. We envisage that report will become available towards the middle of the year.

Mr McILFATRICK - There will be three elements we are looking at. One is what the feedback of the community is and their attitude. So far anecdotal evidence is that it is highly supportive. That is the first - what do people think about it. Secondly is whether they are complying, so that is the speed monitoring. Then there is probably a longer-term statistic, what has been the impact on crash data. Because no single year represents a typical year it is going to take a while. If we got no crashes in the area in one year that still would not be a reliable statistic until we had a build-up.

Ms CONWAY - Also, Kingborough is quite a small area so the crash data we can collect from that is actually quite a small data set so there has not been a determined end point. We would like to collect as much data as we can and so the longer that trial or demonstration continues, the better data we will get, which builds up a clear picture of what the community thinks and also what impact it has for road safety.

Mr HARRISS - Just an observation, I suppose, given that there seems to have been very little, if any, opposition to it, why not just keep it rolling?

Mr McILFATRICK - I think that would be in conjunction with the council who are the ones, apart from us, who are going to get the majority of feedback on this. If that was the case then having made that a positive step forward that has community acceptance I would say you were dead right.

Ms CONWAY - That council is quite happy at this point in time.

Mr HARRISS - Thank you.

CHAIR - In the last 12 months there seems to have been an undue number of trucks capsizing, involving fatalities in some cases but fortunately the escapes of the drivers and others. When we visited the ARRB we were very interested to see that they have a mechanism capable of modelling the circumstances of trucks capsizing given the relevant data so that they were able to determine what caused that. In view of the fact that Tasmania contributes to the funding of the ARRB we were surprised that their services had not been used to assess reasons for trucks capsizing here. We asked if Tasmania had used their services for that and we were surprised to know that we had not. I invite comment on that.

Mr DEAN - In fact, Mr Chairman, I think they said the services of the ARRB here had been very, very limited.

Mr McILFATRICK - We will certainly check that. Every major crash is investigated so if there was a tool that could be used I am sure we have considered it.

I think, again for the future, there is a lot of technology emerging which would be basically intelligence programs which have helped the heavy freight operators if we are talking about trucks general. We are seeing just the cusp of a movement where intelligent access programs will be put in place. An example is on-board analysis of the truck speed, loading, the route that it has taken, all of this that will be available to the operator. At the moment we are expecting this to be a voluntary take-up and most of the large trucking operators are saying it would be to their own advantage.

Once that is in place then there's a compliance, there's a record, almost like having a DVD of what has happened over the route to the extent that it can be extended to even have an on-board weighbridge so that you can measure the truck's loading. Quite often when trucks capsize it is not just about speed, it may be about loading. It might be about whether they are overloaded or whether they have exceeded the speed into an intersection. Rather than using a model it may well be possible within the next few years to get a significant way forward in trucks having this intelligence built in. There is a lot of work going on nationally right up to the COAG agenda level to bring this movement forward.

Tasmania has been a leader in thinking through these issues for a number of years. In fact we have a forward program to utilise some of this intelligent access information in our school bus fleet because it gives us a lot better access to the routes travelled, the benefits of those routes et cetera. I think we are going to see another step change over the next five years in technology use in heavy freight and passenger transport. I'm not saying we shouldn't look at that the modelling, but I think we are going forward into a new era of being able to analyse usage, access arrangements to enable us to control heavy vehicle usage of the right roads, at the right time and at the right speed even to be managing driver fatigue.

CHAIR - That sounds very promising but it can't be used retrospectively whereas the modelling system could be. This system could be used to determine the reasons for the trucks capsizing in recent months.

Mr McILFATRICK - I don't object to that, I just do not know whether we have or not.

Ms CONWAY - There was a major review probably 12 or 18 months ago now on looking at the heavy vehicle crash data that we have. It was undertaken by a New Zealand company called TURNS and that was primarily looking at those crashes and trying to work out what was going on because we did have a few roll-over kind of crashes and that is really what triggered that investigation. I am guessing you could use that model on any crash, from what you are saying.

Mr DEAN - Why would we not have used the ARRB when it is partly funded by DIER, by the State?

Ms CONWAY - My understanding is that the ARRB run like a business, even though they do receive some funding from DIER so I can only talk from my own personal experience of when we have work to be undertaken. We have to go through a procurement process and I would usually go to ARRB as one of the people I would seek a quotation or a proposal from and then that has to go through an evaluation process, so what might tend to happen is they might apply and not be successful but they do get the opportunity. I know when I outsource work we would give them an opportunity to apply.

Mr DEAN - What does our funding to them do? What does that provide you with? What does the funding that you make to ARRB provide you with?

Mr McILFATRICK - My understanding is that it makes us almost as a shareholder of the corporation on a pro rata basis given our scale and gives us access to research that they do for our thinking on road network management et cetera. There is a significant amount of data that they gather. It gives us economies of scale, if you like.

All the States are contributing. The research on national issues like heavy vehicle access, a range of road safety issues, road treatments, all of those things we just could not do as a small State on our own. We get that economy of scale and then we have that information available. For instance, if there was a new road treatment as opposed to bitumen or road sealing that they had experimented with we could get those evaluation reports because they are done as a cooperative measure and then we can apply that to our thinking on what the next best practice thing is. That is general research they do.

Then there is specific research that is generated on a consultancy basis and then there are specific services that are generated on a consultancy basis which are competitive so I think we get great benefit out of it. I think they may be talking about the competitive services but certainly our road transport engineers and our road safety people et cetera will access the global reports that are done if that is really why we are there. We have, I believe, a seat at the table. Well, we are an assessor shareholder - pay some money.

Mr FOWLER - They have done an evaluation on this as well.

Mr McILFATRICK - The novice reform, yes. We have feedback and in fact they reviewed our trial, didn't they?.

Mr FOWLER - Yes, they reviewed the model.

Ms FORREST - Is it possible to have a copy of that evaluation?

Mr FOWLER - Well as long as ARRB -

Mr McILFATRICK - Again, it was one of those things that was done for us but would be useful to the other members of the network so I do not have a problem.

Mr FOWLER - As long as ARRB don't.

CHAIR - That would be good if you would be good enough to provide us with a copy of that.

Mr McILFATRICK - The review was of a trial which was, in the absence of anyone who has been through the process yet, a learning process. It has probably got a fairly high hurdle level for the people who went through the trial so I think we will be learning from that as well.

Mr FOWLER - It is a little bit more than a trial. It is actually an evaluation of the model itself and it incorporates comments on the trials and the issues that -

Ms FORREST - How many people took part in the trial?

Mr FOWLER - In the first trial?

Ms FORREST - Yes.

Mr FOWLER - We targeted around about 90 and we got around about 54, I think. The next target will be another 90 and hopefully we will get some more people and relative to Victoria.

Mr McILFATRICK - My belief is that the report was for us so provided we get their permission we should be able to release it.

CHAIR - Thank you, and speaking of reviews we have been told about a report of the review of the investigatory level in Tasmania of skid resistance. Would it be possible for us to be provided with a copy of that, please?

Ms CONWAY - I am not familiar with exactly what that report is but we will look into it.

Ms FORREST - We were not sure if there was a final report or not. It may still be a draft report.

Mr McILFATRICK - I think we heard the tail end of that conversation. We could perhaps look at *Hansard* and see exactly what and then we can have a better reference.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. We have heard evidence -

Ms FORREST - Just before you go on to another topic, Mr Chairman, could I just ask one quick question. Norm, you mentioned in regard to the heavy vehicles monitoring that you might be able to do in the future fatigue and monitoring fatigue. We had evidence yesterday from a witness about fatigue not with heavy vehicles but with other drivers and some drivers who are required to drive a lot of hours for their occupation and people who choose to do it leisurely. Has any consideration been given to that particular workplace health and safety sort of issue because that is the workplace for that person?

CHAIR - As well as road safety.

Ms FORREST - Yes, as well as road safety. But also not just the number of hours but the time of the day that people are required to drive, like really early in the morning when they are normally sleeping or very late at night.

Mr McILFATRICK - The national agenda on driver fatigue focused on heavy vehicles because of the amount of driving. The awareness campaigns that road safety authorities, including ours, have run have been about driver fatigue generally, the rest stops, the awareness and all of the signs. So I am not sure about the middle ground of those semi commercial drivers that may not be heavy vehicle or commercial.

Ms FORREST - Even members of parliament, for example. There are a lot of people that in the course of their work are required to travel long hours as well as long distances. Has that been looked at as a workplace issue as well as a road safety issue?

Ms CONWAY - The whole safe driving policies kind of approach, yes. A lot of bigger organisations have safe driving courses, most government departments, most major employers would have that and certainly because of the OH&S requirements, employers do take that quite seriously. I know that our department has a safe driving policy that talks about not driving more than certain amounts of time in a day and stopping and breaking the journey and all of that sort of thing is built into it in a policy sense.

Ms FORREST - I am sure that there are a lot of your employees that would spend a lot of time on the road. If you had a policy that said do not drive more than six hours a day, for example, they have driven from Smithton to Hobart and really have to come back that night because they have an appointment or even if for some reason they might only have driven to Launceston but the meeting went much longer than they thought so they are driving home late, is there capacity for that person then, without having to contact the head of the department or whomever to say, 'Can I stay overnight?', to stay overnight, it is automatically provided for?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes, our policy is being upgraded at the moment but certainly within the current policy is that preference for an overnight stay versus a return drive out of hours or even after a long day's work.

Ms FORREST - So it is up to the judgment of the employee to make that call?

Mr McILFATRICK - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Do you think that it is a reasonable way that all private businesses as well should be required to do that?

Mr McILFATRICK - I think all businesses have a duty of care. Our duty of care is to make sure our people go home in the same condition, may be a little bit tired, than they came to work. For instance, our current draft policy internally which we are close to signing off, suggests - and I will probably be sorry I said this - that we have a voluntary speed limit of 100 kilometres an hour on any road including the Midland Highway and that on any rural road we have 90. So we are actually saying to our people from a safety point of view and an energy efficiency point of view we would like them to drive 10 kilometres an hour below the speed limit on highways and major roads. We have a fatigue management part of the policy and we have a break policy in there. And we have people that drive a lot of kilometres and so do a lot of businesses. So I expect that the safety aware businesses in the State would have policies reflecting the same sort of thing.

CHAIR - That is good to hear. We have heard evidence from an interested party complaining about a decision to appoint DECA Training to conduct learner motorcycle rider exit tests rather than Stay Upright, which had held the contract for eight and a half years. The complaint is about the fact there was the change and the manner in which it occurred. I would like to ask why the change was made. That is the first question.

Mr FOWLER - We had a contract with Stay Upright. We then went to a public tender and from memory Stay Upright was invited to present. DECA were invited to present and I think either organisation were invited to present to a panel. Obviously there was an assessment through set criteria before the invitation to present and we had a probity auditor from KPMG. Unfortunately the panel assessed that - and I was one of the members of that panel - DECA were the preferred organisation to deliver. I had some subsequent discussions with the national director and he came down to see me and, yes, he was quite upset that, despite the fact that Stay Upright had held the contract for eight years they did not win the tender. The fact of the matter was their presentation and how they actually approached the tender process was somewhat lacking.

CHAIR - What about their performance over the eight and a half years? Was that lacking?

Mr FOWLER - We have had some discussions with Stay Upright over the previous years in terms of their performance. Some feedback we have had from individuals in various districts around the State and as we talked about driver assessing a while ago - you get the good, you get the bad - but there was certainly no malice toward Stay Upright in terms of how they performed in previous years as compared to what they were putting on the table to move forward with the new contract.

CHAIR - There is a suggestion that the person associated with Stay Upright was told that Stay Upright was apparently going to be awarded the contract but the decision was overturned suddenly overnight. Was there any change of thinking by the body that was making this determination?

Mr FOWLER - I remember that concern that was raised. There was no hint of any, for whatever reason, turnaround in the assessment by the panel. I do recall that issue. As I said, the probity auditor was there from KPMG and the probity auditor signed off on the whole process.

Mr McILFATRICK - If could maybe step in with the process here? We do have a rigorous tender process which is we obviously have to have, because we are a business with a lot of expenditure and we are a government department. The tender process would have been scrutinised by the probity auditor and by our independent internal tender review panel. I can't recall being involved in this one directly, but if there was a complaint by one of the tenderers then they have a right to escalate that complaint to me as the executive. I am not aware that that happened.

Mr FOWLER - That was before you time.

Mr McILFATRICK - Was that with the previous chief executive?

Mr FOWLER - Yes.

Mr McILFATRICK - Certainly what we can do is provide to the committee that process of the tender panel, the review panel and whether there was any follow-up. I personally have a view about the value - a strong view that there is value in long-term strategic relationships in any organisation and making a change is not done lightly. But equal to that, we are expending taxpayers' money we need to take into account that there are competitive alternatives out there - everything is done on balance of weighing up the value of the strategic ongoing relationship, the cost of change, but also the needing to be open to other providers who may have a case to put. Eight years is a long time, but it could be equally critical of us if we did not go to the market in the timetable that is required under the contract.

Mr FOWLER - One of the panel members was the president of the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council and he had full knowledge of Stay Upright, so it wasn't just a bureaucratic panel.

CHAIR - Was it a unanimous decision?

Mr FOWLER - Yes.

CHAIR - Is it a fact that a former transport commissioner sits on the board of DECA?

Mr FOWLER - Yes.

CHAIR - Who is that?

Mr FOWLER - Neil Aplin, which was unknown to me until sometime further in the process.

Mr McILFATRICK - Neil would have the Transport commissioner about 1998-99.

CHAIR - Have there been complaints about the manner in which DECA is performing?

Mr FOWLER - The feedback that we have received has been overwhelmingly positive in terms of their professional approach to the learning and provision but, as with any organisation, you will the same as we talked about a little while ago with some of the driver assessors, some comments from the public in terms of 'Maybe that didn't work for me at that point in time'. Over the last 12 months, from memory, I have probably

received one complaint. I investigated that - I can't quite remember all of the detail - there were some issues with the person. We also get some very disgruntled clients, or DECA does, because they don't pass the assessments and they deal with those professionally. On one occasion we have had to call the police and they have handled all of that very professionally. Their national organisation is well organised and I continually talk with not just the Tasmanian manager but the national manager. At this point in time I couldn't say that there have been any major issues with that. I would be concerned about it if there was and would certainly follow it up. I have a regular visitation program with all of the contractors, not just with DECA who produce our licences. There are a number of contractors.

CHAIR - We have heard evidence from Scottsdale, that whereas there used to be regular sessions where testing could take place, they are now irregular and that DECA has the testing sessions there infrequently, waiting for a certain number of people wanting the testing to be available, rather than providing the service as required, which we were told that Stay Upright did. Are you aware of any problem there?

Mr FOWLER - Yes, certainly. You are referring to a previous employer of Stay Upright who lived in Scottsdale and because it was in his particular location he was able to facilitate that more readily than DECA. DECA provides a service based on a commercial approach. A little while ago I received a complaint from a constituent up in Scottsdale so I rang DECA and that weekend they followed it up with an advertisement in the local paper, as well as the *Examiner*, that they were going to conduct some assessments in Scottsdale and they got one taker. It is the same with the west coast. I visited Rosebery - we have a training area at the back of Rosebery High School - but unfortunately the kids around there particularly wanted to get their licence very quickly, so they go up to Smithton where one of the training courses is held.

I am fully aware of that and DECA said they would be more than happy to conduct the assessments in Scottsdale, but you can imagine taking all of the gear - and they provide all the motorcycles from Launceston, where they are held in containers - to Scottsdale. It does cost a bit and also travelling and trainers staying overnight. So if you get one taker for one training, it just does not add up.

Ms FORREST - Is there a minimum number they expect? I think that there is a bit of a community service issue here for the regional communities.

Mr FOWLER - From memory, I think it is five.

Ms FORREST - What is their normal number for a full course?

Mr FOWLER - Five.

Ms FORREST - So they have to have five to run it?

Mr FOWLER - I will check that figure but off the top of my head I think that it is five to run a course. It is not just on a commercial basis. If you have seen one of the training areas, you cannot conduct training in a safe environment with more than that number of people. It is basically the size of two basketball courts and they have witches hats and certain

lines you have to go down and break at certain periods of time. And they virtually do not get over 5 to 10 kilometres.

CHAIR - Has DECA been in breach of its contract due to excessive numbers of participants on courses, excessive waiting periods, and the level of instructor qualifications?

Mr FOWLER - Regarding waiting periods, there is a benchmark, from memory, of eight weeks. So if you book then they should provide you with an assessment, whether it be the L or P, within the eight weeks and I have not heard of any breach of that. Recently there was one concern at Moonah which I followed up and that proved not to be the case. There was one case where they had six people, I think, turn up, and basically it was like, 'We can only do five', if that was the number, 'who would like to come next week or the week after?' or whatever. The person volunteered. That got construed that DECA were not going to take the sixth person but they did that for obvious reasons which I have just pointed out.

CHAIR - It is suggested that the quality of rider training services has declined since DECA training was awarded the contract.

Mr FOWLER - When DECA were awarded the contract they obviously did not have any trainers in Tasmania and they advertised. They have very stringent requirements for trainers in terms of their qualifications. As a matter of fact two of the driver assessors for cars are motorcycle trainers as well. They are very road safety conscious as well. I can recall that some of the personnel that were employed by Stay Upright were not reemployed by DECA because their qualifications and their training skills and their approach were not up to scratch and not up to the benchmark that DECA required.

Yes, there was some concern with some of the people that missed out. They were previously employed by Stay Upright but the benchmark that DECA had was a lot higher in terms of training. They are very skilled. I have sat through the learner course and I have sat through the P course; I have observed by standing and watching. I am not a motorcycle rider but the way that they approach their classroom activities, and you have to sit the classroom and theory test before they take them onto the range, I have to say that they are very professional.

Mr DEAN - Who is DECA, what is their personnel make-up?

Mr FOWLER - Their personnel make-up?

Mr DEAN - Who are they, a mainland group?

Mr FOWLER - They are a national company and they do a lot of training for heavy vehicle operators. They are based in Melbourne and they could be based somewhere else. We have a contract with DECA to provide this motorcycle training. They are very influential in the heavy vehicle training. They actually at their own expense at the last Agfest brought over a simulator for heavy vehicles. I tried that out as well and I failed dismally, I can tell you.

Mr DEAN - Are there any Tasmanians connected with the DECA group at all?

Mr FOWLER - Connected as in what?

Mr DEAN - Any involvement with DECA, part of the group, part of the company?

Mr FOWLER - Not that I am aware of.

Mr DEAN - Just wholly and solely mainland?

Mr FOWLER - Yes.

CHAIR - And Stay Upright was wholly and solely Tasmanian?

Mr FOWLER -Correct.

CHAIR - How many were employed, do you know?

Mr FOWLER - Sorry, Stay Upright weren't wholly Tasmanian, they are a national company as well.

CHAIR - I see. But involving Tasmanians?

Mr McILFATRICK - DECA now involves Tasmanians as it employs people locally. You are talking about the difference in management structure and employment.

Mr DEAN - Did Stay Upright have any Tasmanians as a part of their group? Were any on the board or in the group?

Mr FOWLER - There was a branch manager who lived, as I mentioned, in Scottsdale. In terms of whether he was on the board, I do not think he was on the board. He was a Tasmanian branch manager. It is the same as you have invited Mr Reid to come along to present as well. He is the Tasmanian manager for DECA.

CHAIR - How often is the contract put out to tender and when will be the next occasion?

Mr FOWLER - I would have to come back to you with that. DECA have been involved for a couple of years. The contract normally has a period and then an option to roll over. We have had other people interested in looking at providing that service as well. I can confirm those dates for you.

CHAIR - Do you not know how long the duration of the contract is for?

Mr FOWLER - I think it is five years, off the top of my head and with an option -

CHAIR - With an option to review for?

Mr FOWLER - Invariably, probably another five years. I need to confirm those dates, though.

CHAIR - So that must be a new requirement if Stay Upright had only eight-and-a-half years?

Mr FOWLER - The story with Stay Upright, if I remember correctly, was that for the last three years, and I cannot recall the reason, we did not have a formal contract in place and I think that was extended. We received crown law advice that we could do this. But it got to a point where we had to go back to a formal contract and go through the tender process for the obvious reasons of fairness and test the market, make sure we get the best service we can in term of service delivery and cost and professional approach.

CHAIR - Did the department have any problems with Stay Upright or did they provide an acceptable standard of service?

Mr FOWLER - I mentioned a little while ago that there were issues with Stay Upright on occasions. I met with Stay Upright, I met with Mr Thompson regularly. There were no major issues that I can recall. As I mentioned, those issues similar to DECA or any contractor, there are always issues but not of a frequent nature that would cause me any concern.

CHAIR - So you had no real concern about their operations?

Mr FOWLER - No.

CHAIR - It is just after 1 p.m. and we thank you all very much for your help this morning. It may be that we would like to meet with you again. We will talk about that.

Mr McILFATRICK - Perhaps given the way we talked before, the road engineers might be another area which we could probably go deeper into.

CHAIR - Thank you. We will liaise on that. Mr Fowler is welcome to come back again.

Mr McILFATRICK - For your information, if that was an area you wanted to look at, the General Manager of that area is Peter Todd. If you requested Peter's attendance that would be, I think, worthwhile.

CHAIR - Thank you all very much indeed. It has been a very interesting and quite enjoyable session.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr PAUL REID, DECA TRAINING, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Mr Reid, thank you very much for coming and welcome. We have asked you to come, as I think you are aware, because we had some evidence from an interested party to the tendering of the process that gave your company the contract from DIER to conduct learner motorcycle riding exit tests. We would like to ask you about your company and the circumstances of your tender and allied matters. How long have you been with DECA Training?

Mr REID - I have worked for DECA Training since they took on the Tasmanian venture I suppose. I started with them as a consultant as they moved towards and prepared their tender and then helped them. I was not at the presentation of the tender but they won the tender and I was executor, getting things in place to happen, and between that time and them officially starting their contract on 1 July 2006, I am pretty sure it was, I was employed as full-time to manage the task in Tasmania.

CHAIR - What was your employment before joining DECA?

Mr REID - Prior to that I had had a short stint with a company called Nylex as basically the sales representative. Prior to that I had 16 years with a company called Laminex Industries or the Laminex Group. I was the Hobart manager for quite some time.

CHAIR - What experience had you had with motorcycles and motorcycle training?

Mr REID - Absolutely none, other than riding them on a farm when I was in my late teens and early twenties. My wife is off a large farm in Victoria so I did a fair bit of farm bike riding around cattle and sheep, but no, I do not hold a motorcycle licence. I was employed to administer the task rather than to be expert in motorbike training.

CHAIR - Do you do any of the training?

Mr REID - No, not at all, no.

CHAIR - How many people do you employ?

Mr REID - Counting myself in Tasmania we have four full-time employees. We have a full-time trainee whom we host and we have approximately 18 to 20 casual trainers and the casuals are all motorcycle trainers. Our full-time trainers do our heavy vehicles. One does a bit of motorcycle.

CHAIR - In which other States does your company operate?

Mr REID - In Victoria, New South Wales, in most States, actually, but certainly it is a major player in the industry in Victoria and New South Wales. We do not do any motorcycle stuff in New South Wales, though, and they do a lot of work in other States via contracts that they have so in the car area we have a very large national contract with AAMI Insurance and we deliver what they call skilled driver training in the car area to young drivers. We do that here in Hobart. I administer that now. I did not initially but we have

a small team that does that too. I left out the accounts - there are another four or five people involved with that. It happened once or twice a month here in Hobart.

Mr DEAN - In Victoria is it predominantly motorcycle training they do?

Mr REID - No, the biggest part of their business in Victoria is heavy vehicle.

Mr DEAN - Just heavy vehicle?

Mr REID - Yes, probably, and a lot of defensive car over there, but their motorcycle business is building. It is a very competitive field in Victoria, the motorcycle training industry. There are quite a few different players and also in New South Wales I believe there are quite a lot of people doing it whereas in Tasmania we are the winner of that particular tender and the sole provider of the service to the Government.

Mr DEAN - The tender process, as I understand there was a presentation made to DIER - to a board or a committee or whatever it was. Were you a part of that committee?

Mr REID - No. I missed the presentation. I just could not make it at the time. I was certainly invited to be part of it but I would not have been presenting. The managing director at the time of DECA presented as well as the manager who was directly responsible for the process.

Mr DEAN - Who are those people in DECA? Who make up DECA?

Mr REID - The managing director at the time was a gentleman by the name of Ian Bushby but he has moved on since then so our chief executive officer now they have changed the titles is a chap by the name of Bruce McDonald. The manager who was like the Vic-Tas manager if you like at the time was a Peter Haywood who is still with the company but no longer in that role so I reported to him. That gentleman is now Alan Gault. Peter Haywood has gone on to a different role, almost a global role. He is acquiring business overseas in Dubai, China and various places.

Mr DEAN - At the time of that occurring you were saying they were building up into the motorcycle training?

Mr REID - No. They had always done motorcycle training in Victoria for quite a number of years, but not on a big scale. They do it in Melbourne and various country centres in Victoria.

CHAIR - Do you know how many directors there are, and who is the chairman and who are the other members?

Mr REID - The Chairman of the board is John Edderhouse and there are about five or six other board members. I could name a couple but I cannot name them all. The one that comes instantly to mind is a chap by the name of Ian Johnston and he is a recent addition to our board in the last 18 months or two years. He is very well known from the Monash University Road Safety. He appears on some TV ads and he is Professor Ian Johnston. I actually saw him on an ad on TV last night.

CHAIR - At Monash?

Ms FORREST - The research centre.

Mr REID - Yes. I am not sure that he is directly involved with that anymore but he certainly was for a long period of time. He is on our board. A fairly dominant person in the heavy vehicle industry in Australia and the President or the Chairman of the Australian Trucking Association is also on the board.

CHAIR - Not Lindsay Fox?

Mr REID - No. His name is not coming to mind instantly. I am glad he is not sitting near me.

CHAIR - That is all right. We will keep the transcript from them.

Mr REID - And some other people. I do not know the history in great detail but about 1975 Deca Training was formed. I am not sure if you would call it a government business enterprise but it is linked to the Victorian Government.

CHAIR - DECA?

Mr REID - It is a bit of an offshoot, yes.

CHAIR - I see.

Mr REID - It was originally set up to train year 10 school students to drive cars. They have a very large training centre at Shepparton in central Victoria. That was how it was established and it has spread since to lots of locations and all the different products that it delivers in the training area.

CHAIR - There is a training centre at Shepparton, is there not?

Mr REID - There is, yes.

CHAIR - Did DECA establish that?

Mr REID - Yes.

CHAIR - I saw that 20 years ago.

Mr REID - Yes, I think about 1975. It is a large complex. It has lots of roads on the complex itself and has skidpans.

CHAIR - I have seen them.

Mr REID - Although skidpans and things have gone out of vogue. Defensive driving really does not involve that anymore. They believe you want to learn not to get into a skid rather than how to get out of it, which is probably a good thought.

CHAIR - So have you had any problems and complaints since you have been managing this from people participating in the learning process?

Mr REID - Yes, we certainly have complaints. I mentioned earlier that we did approximately 4 000 people last year.

CHAIR - In Tasmania?

Mr REID - Yes, in Tasmania, and that is purely motorcycle, that is not other parts of our business.

Mr DEAN - That is a calendar year, 2008?

Mr REID - Yes, January to December. It was just a bit shy of 4 000, rounding up to that. Complaint-wise out of 4 000, there was not a huge amount. I get quite a few phone calls on a Monday morning for various reasons and it is sometimes people who have turned up an hour late for their course and want to know why they were sent away. You would obviously consider that as a complaint.

I negotiate my way around that as best I can but when they are an hour late, it is very difficult. The class has had to move on and there are four other students at a learner class. People are not happy when that happens. I do not treat those as a really serious complaint but they are issues that we deal with regularly. Probably the biggest issue I deal with on a Monday morning is those sorts of things where people have come late to a class or didn't get there at all, for whatever reason.

CHAIR - How many do you have in each class?

Mr REID - In a learner class we have five. I am not quite sure that it is legislated but it certainly is mandated in the contract that five is the maximum.

CHAIR - Do you ever have more than five and are there complaints about that?

Mr REID - No, we never run more than five and we have a maximum of six in a licence class or a P-plate class, whichever.

CHAIR - Do you ever run more than six or have complaints about that?

Mr REID - Never, no. I do not think I have ever had a complaint about that, that I can remember. Following on from the other complaints, I get the odd letter of complaint which tends to be more detailed and I always go right into them, get the trainers in, discuss it, get the complainant in and discuss it with them.

I do not believe we have any complaints that would be outstanding and people thought they were not handled properly. I would hope that every complaint that I have certainly had in written form has been dealt with.

Our company process is that we like to get people to sign off that they are happy with the way they have been treated at the end of the day.

I have not had a lot of luck with that. People write their letter and they complain, and they come and sit down with me and discuss it all but when you ask them to give you the stamp - well, okay, I am sort of maybe not happy but I am happy - they don't want to do that.

I can't say for sure but I don't think we have any really aggrieved people out there.

CHAIR - Have you had any complaints from the Scottsdale area that you are not providing testing opportunities as regularly as they would like or as frequently as they would like?

Mr REID - There has definitely been talk of that. I have not had any direct complaint much to myself. I know that we have been the subject of discussion in the House here on one or two occasions and we were asked by DIER to provide some evidence to answer, obviously, a question from the Floor and to help the minister answer that question.

One of those was very early in our contract and we believe, quite strongly, that that was instigated by the previous operators. A gentleman by the name of Brendan Thompson was the manager of Stay Upright in Tasmania. His residence is somewhere in or around Scottsdale. I am not sure if he is still there. I think he is still involved with Stay Upright in Tasmania.

He came from that area and I think, because of that, Scottsdale did get a fairly high level of service over the years with the Stay Upright contract. When DECA tendered we tended to provide service to Scottsdale, Rosebery, Smithton and St Marys on an as-needs basis, if you like. That is probably a little bit of a broad term but the way we run it is that we run a waiting list so people ring and we say we have been at Scottsdale or whatever, we run a list as soon as we have 10 learners - that is the two - because we need to fill the weekend to obviously justify packing up 10 motorbikes and a trainer and accommodating for the night out there and all that sort of stuff.

Ms FORREST - In all fairness then to our small communities, Rosebery, Smithton - although Smithton has a decent population - you'd be hard pressed at times to get that number without some having to wait a significant amount of time. I appreciate the logistics of getting the bikes and things there, but in those small communities why won't you consider a smaller number, say three or four?

Mr REID - I know that when we have been a couple of times the numbers have ended up less. At a point in time we have to make a commitment. I have to say, 'That weekend we will go to Smithton', and we call that at a certain period. We have looked at our waiting list, we have got to a point - and we are in the midst of doing it at the moment for Smithton and St Marys, I think, so in the next short while we will be there. I have to make the commitment, I have to book the trainer, I have to also adjust the business in, say, Launceston to let some of those motorbikes go for that weekend to either of those places. Sometimes we get there and a couple of the people have dropped off, but we still go. I can't go out there for two people; I just can't justify that within the business.

Ms FORREST - So if someone was from Smithton or wherever - and you haven't got a back-up list you can call on, most likely - was sick on the day and didn't turn up, would they still be charged?

Mr REID - It would depend on the circumstances. Those are all dealt with on an individual basis.

Ms FORREST - So you do consider that?

Mr REID - We certainly are compassionate and we try to help people out in whatever circumstance, but some people do forgo their money if they are a last-minute cancellation. We have a 14-day cancellation policy. I get a phone call sometimes on a Friday, 'My father has had a heart attack and is in hospital and I can't be there tomorrow', and no questions asked.

Ms FORREST - What is the cost of the course?

Mr REID - It is \$232 for a learner course, which is two four-hour sessions. We provide everything within that because obviously they can't bring their own motorbike to a learner course.

Ms FORREST - How do you evaluate the course?

Mr REID - When you say 'evaluate', I am not quite sure what you mean by that?

Ms FORREST - How do you assess the outcomes of the course?

Mr REID - Whether someone is competent or not?

Ms FORREST - Yes, but also the success of the course. How many people pass is one side of it, but also to look at client satisfaction, meeting the terms of your contract and that sort of thing.

Mr REID - As far as meeting the terms of the contract, that is the way we run the business. We have a contract and we run it to meet every term of the contract and if we don't I would expect that DIER would be knocking on our door.

Ms FORREST - Who keeps an eye on the fact that you are doing that? Does DIER keep an eye on that?

Mr REID - We come under land transport - Richard Fowler is the department head, he is the main man, and there are a couple of people in his office whose focus is motorcycles. They are looking after any issues to do with motorcycles and we are in constant contact with them. The last report I had heard via Richard was that he was extremely happy with what we were doing and that there were no major issues that he needed to take up with us. I know that if there was he would be on the phone or knocking on the door.

As far as evaluating the customer satisfaction, we have a process, as all registered training organisations do. We administer in line with all those rules, even though we are not delivering competency-based training, although we do use the term 'competency' within it. It is not fulfilling a national competency so it is not under the strict control of RTO rules and regulations, but we pretty well deliver exactly that way. All our trainers are accredited, have the appropriate qualifications. We train people and, if successful, they are issued with a certificate of competence - which is a little bit of paper that DIER

gives us - that they take to Service Tasmania to continue on the licence process. We also give everybody a feedback form. I read all those forms every week without fail and I act on any that I believe warrant acting on. A lot of the feedback form is, 'Mark us on a scale 1-5 what you think' - I don't take a lot of notice of that, but if I see a 1 it usually attracts my attention. The feedback forms are voluntary, so people don't have to put their name on them. If people put their name on them and have had a real beef about something or they have scored us badly, I attempt to contact them and apologise for ringing them but would they mind discussing what they put and generally get a positive result back. That gives me a good feel of what is going on.

Ms FORREST - Have you done a summary of those evaluations?

Mr REID - No, there is no summary of them.

Ms FORREST - You don't think that is a matter of quality assurance?

Mr REID - No.

Ms FORREST - Do you think it would be worthwhile doing that sort of thing so that someone like our committee could ask you for all that summary and you could provide it?

Mr REID - Maybe. We would need to put some fairly severe thought into how we would summarise it or report it. But it may well be something that could be used. They are commonly known as 'happy sheets' in the training industry. I do not know whether you guys have heard that term. If people get through a training course and they have the result they want and they have had a pretty good time you do not get any adverse comment ever. You get lovely comments. You do get a good percentage that I think are very good, honest comments - really good feedback.

Ms FORREST - So if you gave them to complete before you told them whether they had passed or failed, do you think that would make a difference?

Mr REID - It may do.

Ms FORREST - Maybe that is the way to do it.

Mr REID - It is a difficult one to know how you would gather it all together, other than take 50 sheets every weekend and then tick them off on another sheet like: good, bad, ugly or whatever.

Ms FORREST - And qualitative stuff is more difficult to collate, I do appreciate.

Mr REID - I think, honestly, reading them all the general flavour would be good, and it is what I like. You want to hear good stuff, obviously. But certainly I act on anything that is not sound looking.

Ms FORREST - What sort of negative comments have you had?

Mr REID - It is a huge range inasmuch as you get some very negative stuff if someone has failed, particularly on P-plate test day.

Ms FORREST - What sort of things do they say in that regard?

Mr REID - It is generally related to the test. They think it is unfair. They do not think it is appropriate. They do not think that weaving between some witches' hats is a good way to judge their licence but, I mean, that is out of our control. The contract says this is what we shall do.

Ms FORREST - So they understand that there is a standard formula, that everyone goes through the same thing?

Mr REID - Yes. When it comes to test time, the whole process becomes a bit more serious. The trainer has to fulfil a fairly responsible role, which is something I am always pointing out to them and also pointing out to the people that ring up and complain. He said, 'I only just clipped that'. I said, 'Yes, I know. That is unfortunate and it probably is not a huge reflection on your skill as a rider but at that point in time the trainer could not tick the box. He had to put a cross, which meant you did not get your licence'. But some miss it by lots. They are generally the complaints. We get very little complaint directly at the trainer or at DECA. It is more about the system, like 'I do not think it is appropriate that you have to do this in the test' and 'I do not think this is appropriate in the test. Why don't we go out on the road and ride up and down hills and get assessed that way?' That could be all food for thought for you guys as a road safety committee.

Ms FORREST - If you are using a tick and flick sheet it is not really a competency-based assessment at all then, is it?

Mr REID - The learner course is more competency based because we have a sheet we have prepared ourselves and we have the major things that these people need to achieve before we could say they were competent. When you come to the P-plate or the licence test we give them some training, we show them some video which is just general good awareness stuff, good stuff they need to know. There is quite a lot of that. But whether they get their Ps on the day or not is all related to what is called the MOST test - which is an acronym - M-O-S-T - and it is Motorcycle Operator Skills Test. It has about five or six major exercises they have to perform and that is where the trainer gets serious: 'Righto, this is the exercise you have to do'. He reads it all out in detail to them: 'Do you understand?' 'Yes'. And off they go and they do that one. Then they stop and he scores that, obviously, and if they take off and they do not do a head-check, as we call it, they lose a point. If they do not do a second head-check they lose two points. If they get to eight, nine points they are out. They have missed.

Mr DEAN - Tell me this: do you ever do any follow-ups - say, a survey to identify the safety records of those cyclists who have gone through the testing process? In other words, have you looked at those people 12 months down the road to see whether or not they have been involved in accidents or whether they have become competent riders? Is there any statistical data to identify with those?

Mr REID - I would love to be able to get hold of that. I am not sure how that would be gathered. I guess if someone has had an accident and gone into hospital they are recorded.

Mr DEAN - If you rang those people you would have those details, wouldn't you?

Mr REID - We have never done that and I am not sure where we stand from a privacy point of view to just pluck their details and ring them and ask them things like that. I honestly must say that when I see a motorcycle accident in the newspapers - and we just had one in the last 24 hours but it was a Victorian person - as soon as there is a name I always go to the data base to see.

Mr DEAN - I would have thought that would have been a good process to give you some indication of whether or not the testing processes need reviewing or whether or not you believe that they are successful. If you put 4 000 through last year and you surveyed 100 of those and there were no accidents or yes, there were 25 accidents amongst those 100 that you surveyed, it would not be a good return, I would have thought.

Mr REID - I certainly take on board what you are saying but I think the key thing is that we are certainly delivering this training and we are saying that when someone gets a learner licence or a P-plate licence that is a decision made on a day by a trainer tester. What we are delivering is totally mandated and prescribed to us by DIER in our contract.

We do not have any licence to vary that in any way. Within the eight hours of training, yes, it must have this and it must have that and there can be no more than five or six people and the trainer can throw in a few of his real-life experiences to colour the training up.

If I honestly thought that the test did not do the right thing, I have access to Richard Fowler, and could tell him I think this is not right, and I am not sure where Richard would have to go with that. I have not done that to this point in time. We are coming up to the end off our first three years at the end of June this year and we have been extended for another three.

CHAIR - When did that happen?

Mr REID - It was early this year. We were notified.

CHAIR - The first period was for five years -

Mr REID - No, three, I believe.

CHAIR - Three.

Mr REID - Three, three and it may be a third three. It is an optional thing. Even the second three was an optional for the Government to extend.

Ms FORREST - May I just clarify then, who or what body establishes that formal part of the test for the licensing process?

Mr REID - The test itself?

Ms FORREST - Yes.

Mr REID - I believe it come out of DIER, the Land Transport department who do all the registration and licensing.

Ms FORREST - So DIER are responsible for it?

Mr REID - Yes.

Ms FORREST - They determine what skills are tested for?

Mr REID - I can give you a little background on that because I know that prior to the tender being put out for this one that we won, it was all quite heavily reviewed. It has been heavily based on the New South Wales system. It was not far off the mark anyway from what they do in New South Wales. I think Tassie were about the first, way back in the mid-1980s, to actually bring in this quite comprehensive training for motorcyclists. Many years ago in a lot of States it was just a bit like the car: go and answer the questions, get your Ls and away you go.

It is certainly good to see that there is a level of training given before they get on the road. I am surprised that the same sort of principle is not applied to car drivers.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr REID - Kids go in, get their Ls and get in the car and drive - albeit under supervision.

CHAIR - What would you like to see happen there as far as car drivers are concerned?

Mr REID - I have recently looked at the ACT system, Road Ready, which I do not know intimately, but I think they do their car licences at 15 years and nine months. Tassie was somewhere like that too until their recent change

CHAIR - Ms Forrest went to see it in operation and we took evidence from the people operating this when we were in Canberra about two months ago.

Ms FORREST - They still cannot get their provisional licence until they turn 17 but it gives them that extra three months of practising time. They have to do that course of instruction, which is an in-class setting either through school or through a weekend program.

Mr REID - I have been able to read up on most of the mechanics of it but I have been a bit disappointed I have not been able to get to the content of the course to understand what they are delivering.

Ms FORREST - I think that you would be impressed.

Mr REID - I know we get a lot of feedback from our motorbike youngsters, the 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds and even a bit older, who say, on their feedback sheet, their happy

sheet, that they wished they had done something like this prior to driving a car. We spend a lot of time with our learners teaching them about hazard perception and awareness and looking after themselves and all those things.

CHAIR - How do you do that, by any illustrations?

Mr REID - A lot of slide shows. Some of the things we have are a little aged. I would like to see it updated. But the principles are the same. You are riding along on your motorbike and the car in front of you pulls up to the kerb and the next move you should make as a motorcyclist is to get to the middle of the road because this person is likely to throw their door open and get out and if you are riding close to them you are going to get caught. Good advice for push bike riders too.

Ms FORREST - My daughter did the course at 22 years of age and she received her car driving licence when she was 17. She made that very same comment, that she would have benefited from it because she is a better driver now, in a car as well as on her motorbike.

Mr REID - We get a lot of comment to that effect and that is what put that thought in my mind.

Ms FORREST - She did get on to her brothers, anyway, about some of their habits.

Mr REID - Yes. It is amazing.

CHAIR - It is surprising that that is not the case in all Australian States and Territories.

Mr REID - There is no doubt, I think, when you get the raw statistics. Motorcyclists are certainly overrepresented as to how many there are and how many we badly injure or we lose, unfortunately. I think they probably get a fair bit of unfair focus in a way but the statistics do not lie, do they? The numbers are there. I know the car learner system has been under review recently and there is some new stuff happening in the very near future as far as Learner 1 and Learner 2 are concerned.

CHAIR - But not incorporated in the course instruction?

Mr REID - I really think they need this classroom stuff. They can do it in year 10 as part of their curriculum, which is a good thing.

Ms FORREST - Yes, it is an optional. Some kids will do it because they can get a licence at 15 years and nine months; they will go and do it early in the year. It is often at the end of the year because they want to go and get their Ls in March or whatever.

Mr REID - If they do not do it at school they do it with an outside provider, I believe. I have not been quite into that system.

Ms FORREST - And they have to pay.

Mr DEAN - Can I take you in a different direction at this stage? With your background on motorcycles and so on, you would be aware, as we are, of a lot of off-road cycle

accidents and injuries and all of those things. From your point of view, would you like to see some licensing method or some testing method brought in for those people who are able to ride off-road cycles in off-road areas? Do you have a view on that?

Mr REID - I saw it as a point of reference there, so I tried to gather some thoughts on it. It is obviously a difficult area to control because people can get a motorbike and head bush and go for it and, unfortunately, we get some nasty accidents out there. Yes, I think the ideal world would be that anybody who gets on one of these motorbikes has had a certain amount of training. To what level, for what purpose, is all stuff that would need to be debated, I suppose.

Mr DEAN - There is no reason that could not become part of a program like this. There would need to be legislative changes, quite obviously. But it would be a requirement of you if you are going to ride a bike off-road et cetera that you must first achieve the standard.

Mr REID - People have become a lot more aware. We hear a lot of people now ringing and saying, 'I have to get a learner's because where I go and ride my bike is forestry and they will not let us on there anymore now unless we are licensed'. So those government departments that are in control of those areas are starting to tighten up who they let in, obviously. How they control it, I am not sure. But that is a good thing. So we are seeing customers who are driven by that.

I guess the other area that you are probably referring to and that we do not have much to do with would be like ATV. We had a very bad one recently up in the north of the State as well. For years and years all these people were riding motorbikes around farms. I was one of those too and I never had any training and, fortunately, did not have a bad accident. I did have a couple of busters, I must admit. I think ATVs are a very confusing vehicle. Are they a car or are they a motorbike? If you want to ride them on a road, I believe some now can get registered for road use and they have to have a car licence for that. But I guess they have to wear a helmet as well. The lady who had the accident up north had no protective gear on at all. Is that required on an ATV? I do not really know.

Ms FORREST - The cause of death there was not related to a lack of helmet.

Mr REID - It was not?

Ms FORREST - No. The cause of death was no related to the lack of a helmet.

Mr REID - It is a difficult area but I think in this day and age appropriate training for whatever we do is necessary, to dot the i's and cross all the t's. It is the best way to go.

CHAIR - We talked about Hydro before when I thought you were representing Hydro, but I can tell you that Hydro does that, to their great credit.

Mr REID - And I am sure Forestry do too. DECA as a company has a lot to do with a lot of these big companies, not so much here in Tasmania yet because we are only young here but we would like to move that way with four-wheel-drive training, ATV training and all

those sorts of things. We do Telstra nationally with all their four-wheel-drive training and I have delivered quite a bit of that in Tasmania.

CHAIR - DPIW do that, too.

Ms FORREST - Four-wheel-drive bikes or vehicles?

Mr REID - Four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Ms FORREST - And they have a high propensity to roll over?

Mr REID - Of course, yes.

Mr DEAN - It has been suggested to us that we need to look at ensuring that motorbikes are readily identifiable by police and by those doing traffic duties in control and therefore there is a need to rethink the situation on the front numberplate on a vehicle. It was put to us yesterday that one reason some motorcyclists probably do some silly things is that they believe that they are not easily recognised and it is difficult to get the numberplate of a vehicle moving away. Do you have a view on that, that we should be looking at reintroducing that?

Mr REID - I remember reading a bit of the history about why the front numberplate went. It was deemed to be dangerous in years gone by because I think they used to mount it pointing forward - it was a dangerous object on the mudguard of the motorbike, so it was granted that it was a dangerous thing and they got rid of it.

Mr DEAN - You could now have a collapsible-type numberplate. There would be ways around that now.

Mr REID - You would think in this day and age with the materials, technology and clever people around that they could come up with something, but I am not sure. It is outside my expertise. I think it is very important that we can identify these guys. If we can't get them from behind we want to photograph them from the front when they are doing their silly speeds. We can get all the cars. I think there have been some classic photos of guys who have one foot swung around covering up the back plate while they are doing their excessive speed or silly antics.

Mr DEAN - It is an issue that has been raised with us by a person who has some knowledge of that sort of thing, and accidents and injuries.

CHAIR - We invited you to give evidence principally to give your company the opportunity to answer matters that have been put. There is just one more that we haven't given you the opportunity to comment on. It was suggested that DECA Training has been in breach of its contract due to excessive numbers of participants on courses, excessive waiting periods and the level of instructor qualifications. I invite you to make any comment on that.

Mr REID - That sort of accusation has come as a submission to your committee?

CHAIR - Yes, by a person who had an interest in the tendering process.

Mr REID - I would quite strongly say that we don't exceed numbers, ever. We know what the rules are and we abide by them. We understand that the previous provider got into trouble on many occasions because they breached those rules. We did not have any intention of ever trying to train more than the contract-specified number of people, and we don't and never will.

CHAIR - So got into trouble by whom? We have had some evidence that there weren't any serious complaints.

Mr REID - Hearsay only, that if there were any issues with the previous provider it was related to that topic. We never heard any great reports of wrongdoings by them but that is one that did seem to do the rounds.

CHAIR - We had evidence from a departmental officer that there were not any serious problems.

Mr REID - I did not hear of any serious problems, depending on whether exceeding the number is considered as serious as not. There were a couple of other things you asked there about the numbers.

CHAIR - The excessive waiting periods and the level of instructor qualifications.

Mr REID - In regard to the waiting periods, we probably had a little bit of an issue early in the piece because we were flabbergasted with the numbers. We were given numbers by DIER in the tender process but I think that they were a little aged and out of date and did not really reflect what we were confronting and when we got on the ground and started to operate we very quickly realised we did not have enough equipment and we put extra motorbikes in place as quickly as we could. I think apart from those early days on no occasion have we been spoken to, or written to or contacted by DIER to say that we are falling outside our waiting periods, and I know we are not. In Hobart you can get in within two weeks on any given occasion and in Prospect and Penguin the numbers are usually out around three to four weeks. Over the summer months they have been in very tight because we are able to run a lot of twilight stuff with daylight saving. So a learner course being two four-hour sessions which must be delivered on two separate days gives us that opportunity.

So we run most week nights, at both Penguin and Prospect all through the summer months with daylight saving and that keeps our numbers down. I noticed the other day that our Prospect and Penguin numbers are pushing out a little. We get the opportunity again in the June school holidays to pump in some extra classes at those high school sites and we will certainly get it well under control by then. But it is certainly by no means out of control. We have an eight to 10-week measure that DIER have on the contract and, as I say, the only time that we ever went anywhere near that or outside it was in our very early days when we really did get caught off guard.

CHAIR - And as to instructor qualifications?

Mr REID - All the instructors with DECA have the minimum requirement specified by DIER in the contract. The qualification that they need to have is related to the Certificate

4 in Work Place Training and Assessment which is now called TAA training and assessment. I have upgraded all our trainers to the new qualification TAA40104 and they all have at least six modules which are the ones that relate to assessment and testing. Every trainer that delivers those courses has those qualifications.

CHAIR - Do you hear any comments or reports from motorcyclists about the wire rope railings that are now appearing beside our roads?

Mr REID - Probably more what I read in the paper and hear. We have a bit of direct contact with the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council through Sean Lennard and Sean certainly has a strong opinion about that, which I have heard him spruik on many occasions. I guess they are pretty severe on a motorcyclist when they come off and come in contact with that stuff. It is not the best result, I think.

CHAIR - Compared with coming into contact with concrete?

Mr REID - What is the comparison, concrete Armco railing? I do not know if you are any better of at the end of the day or not.

Ms FORREST - Or a car coming the other way.

Mr REID - I think the crux of the matter is that if you come off a motorbike you are in pretty serious trouble and particularly if you are at high speed, even if be at a legal speed of 100 kilometres or even 60 or 70 kilometres. It is a nasty situation, maybe compounded by some of these things.

Ms FORREST - One of the more recent motorcycle deaths was at Chasm Creek when they hit Armco railing not wire rope fencing.

Mr REID - It is a tough question. We want - and you guys do too - to do everything we can do to save lives and reduce injury but I do not know, how far can you go and how much can you protect a body flying through the air or skidding along the ground? Unfortunately a lot of the time those people do not have the appropriate protective gear on. In some cases that might help or save the situation but in others it will not.

Mr DEAN - I take it that is a part of the learner program -

Mr REID - Most definitely.

Mr DEAN - that they must be properly equipped and dress in protective clothing.

Mr REID - It happens in about the first half an hour when they sit down.

Mr DEAN - On protective clothing?

Mr REID - Yes, protective gear awareness.

Mr DEAN - Boots and -

Mr REID - The whole lot.

Ms FORREST - So if they do not have it, do you let them on the bikes?

Mr REID - We have a very strict policy. This sounds a little bit funny in a way, I suppose. We do not obviously insist that people turn up in full boots and leathers because we barely get over 20 kilometres an hour at a learner course.

Ms FORREST - But if they rocked up in their thongs and shorts?

Mr REID - No way. No, they get documentation when they book in about the appropriate dress and that is full skin cover, as we call it. So it has to be long pants, it has to be long sleeves. We provide the helmet and we provide a glove. It is not a full leather glove but it is a protective glove.

Ms FORREST - And a full shoe, not a sandal?

Mr REID - And the recommendation is that they wear sturdy footwear. People ask us. We say, 'A Blunnie boot or a good solid sneaker'. But, no, if someone turned up in thongs they would not get on a motorbike. And if someone said, 'I will not put that helmet on', they would not get on a motorbike.

Ms FORREST - Someone can bring their own helmet if they wanted to?

Mr REID - A lot do. As I was saying to Ivan before we started, particularly at Penguin and Prospect a lot of our students come from rural areas and they have been riding motorbikes since they could walk almost and they have their own. They will turn up with their own helmets. But some people have been out shopping, they are very optimistic, I guess. They are going to get their Ls, they are going to get a bike or they are going to get a scooter and they have their brand-new helmet and they have their gloves and they turn up there, they are all ready to go, which is good to see.

Mr DEAN - Most of them who are trying to get a licence will get it eventually, even if they have to come back two or three times. Do you think that there should be something in there ensuring that if you are going to do that you must be appropriately dressed with the full protective gear et cetera as a part of the program?

Mr REID - So to come to the course?

Mr DEAN - Yes. Do you think there is merit in that?

Mr REID - I guess there is. It means that then when they go out there they do have it -

Mr DEAN - That they are properly dressed.

Mr REID - whereas when they come and just turn up however they turn up and if they are not reasonably well dressed or covered they will not get on the bike with us.

Mr DEAN - Evidence has been given to our committee that a lot of the injuries have been sustained because of inappropriate dress. That is the reason I asked that.

Mr REID - I think you only have to drive around of a weekend, particularly in the summer months, and you see guys on massive motorbikes in thongs, in singlets, in shorts. If they come off, they are going to be an absolute mess.

Ms FORREST - I came off a pushbike a few times on gravel.

Mr REID - Same thing. You can, yes. I did once when I was a young fellow and had gravel implanted in the palms of my hands. It is quite worrying. I never used to take a lot of notice of that sort of stuff. But as much as we pay them to do what they do, most of our trainers are not doing it to make money. They are doing it because they are passionate about motorcycle riding, they are passionate about safety and teaching young people particularly all the right things, right from getting the right gear on. All that.

CHAIR - Do you have much contact with members of motorcycle associations?

Mr REID - Limited, but I did refer earlier to the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council. One of our trainers at Moonah is very heavily involved with the Motorcycle Riders Association so I am well aware of what they are up to and what they are doing all the time. She reports to me fairly regularly on that sort of stuff. But we do not officially go and sit at meetings with those people, no.

CHAIR - No, I would not expect that. Are there any comments you would wish to make in rounding up this session?

Mr REID - No, I think I have had ample opportunity. We did talk earlier about those outer areas - Scottsdale and Smithton. There was an original question but we got a bit distracted and we went off it and did not get back to it. I do not know if you guys were happy with what got covered there or not.

CHAIR - I think you have answered that.

Mr REID - We are committed to getting the product to wherever it needs to be but obviously as a business we cannot go and do it at a loss. We have found that a lot of people are understanding when we talk to them about the time frames and when we can get there and when we cannot get there and have they considered getting into Launceston to do it if they are at Scottsdale or getting from Smithton over to Penguin. We get a lot of phone calls from Queenstown and they either come up to Hobart or they - it is certainly difficult for them -

Ms FORREST - Down to Hobart.

Mr REID - Down to Hobart, is it, I am sorry.

CHAIR - From up in Queenstown.

Mr REID - It is something I have always wrestled with. I came from Victoria about 12 or 13 years ago and the ups and the downs in Tassie are certainly difficult to work out.

CHAIR - You go up to Launceston from everywhere and down the north-west coast.

Ms FORREST - We always go up the coast.

Mr REID - Because the course is prescribed as two four-hour sessions on two separate days, that is what is in the contract, that does make it difficult for anyone who does travel from those areas unless they are prepared to make a trip of it and stay the night in Hobart or hopefully have some family or something. I think the general thought has come to be that we need this done quickly, that we need to get into one of the major centres and get it done.

CHAIR - Just briefly, at Scottsdale - how regularly do you go there?

Mr REID - It has been about four times a year since we started but inquiries from Scottsdale in recent times seem to have dropped off. I cannot explain exactly why that is but I am sure if we went through our records by address we would have done a lot of people from out around Scottsdale and that area. People have found that the weekday evenings are fantastic and they are happy to take advantage of those. School holidays are great times for people to get in and get it done.

CHAIR - Learners need to undertake your course before they can be licensed, is that right?

Mr REID - Yes.

CHAIR - You pass them?

Mr REID - Yes. At the end of their eight hours they will get a certificate of competence if they are deemed to be competent by the trainers.

CHAIR - Are there any who do not receive that after the eight hours?

Mr REID - I have an overall percentage of Ps and learners and by far the greater majority of what we do is learners. It is between 5 and 7 per cent - it moves up and down so it is not a huge failure rate. We hear figures of 30 and 40 per cent I think with cars, people going for their Ps for the first time.

CHAIR - Greg, thank you very much. We appreciate your attendance here and the information that you have given us.

Mr REID - Thanks for the opportunity.

Mr DEAN - Are the two four-hour tests on successive days normally?

Mr REID - Yes. The contract allows us to stretch it up to seven days, day one to day two. It is almost always on two consecutive days.

Mr DEAN - Having got the certificate of competency to ride the cycle, are you saying they do not then undergo a written test in Service Tasmania?

Mr REID - Yes they do. The next step is the written test.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. You are welcome to stay and listen if you wish.

Mr REID - Thanks.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr LANCE BALCOMBE, HYDRO TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thanks for coming. I must say it was very heartening to read your report and to know about the driver training that Hydro are voluntarily having implemented. We would be pleased if you would like to expand on that and make any comments you wish, bearing in mind that we have read the report.

Mr BALCOMBE - Just by way of context, I chaired a driving safety subcommittee and I have chaired that for probably six or seven years since it was formed. Hydro has always had a very strong focus on safety. Over the last two years we identified six of our key safety initiatives that we wanted to focus on and driving is one of them because we have so many people in cars at any time of the day. Because of the remote nature of our business, we get people in remote areas in various conditions and, I suppose over time, one of the things we have really had to work on with regard to driving is attitude. I suppose that comes through a number of issues. We have had various incidents of speeding, we have had various road infringements and I suppose, over time, you will expect those things to happen. We have had to ensure that people are deterred from speeding because our view is that it is not safe and, through the safety committee that I chair, we have taken a lot of statistics. One of the things within our Hydro safety culture is we encourage people to report incidents so we get various types of incidents like a stone thrown up from a passing car or weather - when there is ice, there is skidding - and things like that.

We have been able to track these incidents and we have plotted where our speeding infringements are occurring. Over time we have been able to build up a history so that we can actually identify trends and, to some extent, causes but generally we probably have three or four major issues.

We noticed about 12 months ago that the majority of our speeding offences - we were probably getting three to four a month - were occurring in built-up areas between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Our view was that people were suddenly finding it was time to get home so we put out a notice to all of our staff saying that one thing we have noticed is that people are speeding at this time of day, and you are speeding in built-up areas, so that, in itself, is not safe because you are not only putting yourself at risk. You are putting other people at risk.

Since we issued that notice we have found a very substantial reduction in our speeding.

CHAIR - And they have been driving Hydro vehicles.

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes, that is right. As well, we have conducted a fairly comprehensive audit of our fleet in accordance with some - and I cannot remember the national guidelines - but it was basically like an automobile association-type audit. We reviewed the fleet to make sure every vehicle had ABS, dual airbags, and was the right sort of vehicle heading in that terrain. When we have specialised types of vehicles we do a fair amount of off-roading so anyone who goes off-road in a four-wheel drive has to do four-wheel drive training. I think we mention that in the letter.

Ms FORREST - On that point, I noticed one of the road safety initiatives is for any fleet vehicle, which yours would be. They have to have a minimum of four-star/new car assessment program NCAP safety rating, which means they have curtain airbags as well as your ABS braking and VSA or VSE.

Mr BALCOMBE - I would have to take advice on the curtain airbags, to be honest. Most of our cars are Subarus or Toyotas so they probably do qualify for that but I am not absolutely certain on that issue. I would imagine that audit might have revealed where we might have been deficient.

Ms FORREST - It was from 1 July 2008 that all Government vehicles were required to meet that safety standard.

Mr BALCOMBE - We have just adopted that policy, I think.

Ms FORREST - Then you will be getting it.

Mr BALCOMBE - I imagine as we roll the fleet out, we will be complying with that.

In the end, the old saying is that your driver is only as good as the nut behind the wheel. We have had a lot of discussion about these trends. There are seasonal things that happen. When daylight saving comes in, we find our guys are driving a lot more and when it is starting to phase out, a lot more are driving at dawn and dusk, so you get a lot more animals.

We publicise the fact to try to hang around 80 kph. That is a much safer speed than 100 kph when you are in those country areas trying to avoid animal accidents and things like that and, over time, you start to get the messages across.

We have also done a lot of work on trying to reduce the distance we travel so we have a lot of places like Gowrie Park where we have depots. Rather than have a whole bunch of guys in cars going to those depots, we have introduced commuter vehicles. At places such as Poatina and Gowrie Park, we have 12- and 14-seater buses where we have one guy driving and that gets them to and from the site. That does a couple of things. It saves us some money because we have a smaller fleet and we have fewer people driving. Probably the other major risk for us is fatigue, particularly when you have these guys working long days, particularly when there is a major outage. Probably our three most serious incidents when we have had cars involved in serious accidents have been fatigued related. Most of the guys involved in those accidents can't recall the accident, so there is a view that they have either had a micronap or they have been so tired that they have switched off. We have had some luck, touch wood we have not had anything of a serious nature for probably six or eight months. Prior to that we had two or three quite serious accidents where the cars were written off. The drivers were safe, albeit perhaps if they had hit something different to where they landed it could have been a lot more serious.

Ms FORREST - What is your policy in relation to fatigue?

Mr BALCOMBE - We have talked about the safety initiatives, and fatigue is one of those. We have our operators on the night floor of the building, and it is a 24/7 operation, so we

are trialling a fatigue tool there. It is basically a track ball that you try to keep on a moving spot on the screen. After you have used it four or five times it will set a base line. Everyone who works on that floor has to come in and do this test every morning and it will help you determine if you are fatigued. If you fail that test twice in that morning, you have to report to your immediate manager and have a little sleep. The other issue is obviously when these people are coming off shift overnight. We have had an incident when one of these people felt tired and jumped in their car and thought, 'This doesn't feel right' - fortunately they didn't drive. There is a place where they can go and get some rest or they leave their car at work and get a taxi home. We try to get people to avoid driving.

Ms FORREST - For them to get a taxi, they don't have to go through a supervisor? They can make that decision themselves?

Mr BALCOMBE - Absolutely. We want people to have personal accountability here. With respect to safety, it is safety before production or anything in our business so we are very keen on that.

Probably the bigger issue is when we have people on these long outages and quite often these are 12 to 14 days on and then four days off, they are 12-hour shifts, and then, particularly at Gowrie Park, Poatina and the Mersey-Forth scheme on the west coast where you have an hour or two travelling at the end of the day. These commuter vehicles have been a great help there. Another thing we are trying to do is to have options for more on-site accommodation. The safety culture we have is for people to have conversations, to say, 'Mate, you've just worked 12 hours, you shouldn't be driving'.

Ms FORREST - But do they say, 'No, mate, I'm right'?

Mr BALCOMBE - I would say that is an absolute risk but this is part of a culture we are trying to create, for people to have those conversations or for his buddy to pull him up. We have toolbox meetings every morning on site, and driving would be one of the key risks we have. The other thing we have tried to do to cut down kilometres is by having more of the video phone hook-ups and things like that. We introduced a check list in the vehicles because quite often you are in a different car to the one you were before and you are not familiar with it. The first thing on the check list is, 'Is this trip absolutely necessary? Can I do this by a phone call? Can I do it by videoconferencing?' It is just to get them to think, 'It's three or four hours to Hobart from wherever I am going from, do I need to make the trip?' It is trying to get people out of cars because if you have fewer people in cars there is less risk exposure.

Ms FORREST - Lance, to facilitate that obviously you need to have good high-speed Internet connections, good-quality sound et cetera. I have tried to have phone hook-ups and they have been useless.

Mr BALCOMBE - It is difficult and if it does not work they will get jack of it and they will just jump in their car.

Ms FORREST - Yes. So do you have that?

Mr BALCOMBE - No, but we are working on it. We have connections at Trevallyn, Gowrie Park, obviously, the office in Hobart. I am not too sure whether there are any on west coast because the bandwidth is pretty thin there.

Ms FORREST - Are our friends at Telstra helping with that?

Mr BALCOMBE - I do not know, I would have to ask one of my colleagues. But, to some extent, it is all about time and dollars and investment but it saves you money, there is no doubt about it. It increases productivity and things like that.

We are making our people accountable, and it is simple things too. For instance, we found we have a lot of reversing accidents, with people who jump in cars and back into light posts and things like that. They are not serious unless you decide to run over a person who is walking behind your car or something like that. One of our initiatives is that everyone who parks at any one of power stations reverses into a car park, so they do not back out.

Ms FORREST - It also makes it quicker to evacuate.

Mr BALCOMBE - Things like that as well.

Mr DEAN - The police department had that problem as well and I think you are aware of that. What they introduced to try to stop it was that if you do that, you pay for it, and it did work. As well, you could have your police permit to drive a vehicle withdrawn. It worked and it cut accidents by half.

What statistical data do you now have to say that all of these things are working and obviously not working?

Mr BALCOMBE - I suppose the only thing that has really rolled through to us at this stage is the speeding, from the point of view that we have a significantly lower amount of speeding infringements than we had 12 months ago, since we said, 'These are the times we are speeding, so think about it.' The driver training is still rolling out.

Ms FORREST - What percentage of your work force would have done that?

Mr BALCOMBE - Probably close to 20 per cent. We have targeted all the managers, from the point of view that they are the people who, having done the course, will encourage the people in their teams to do it. Secondly, we have targeted the high-risk drivers, and the high-risk drivers are the guys who do the most kilometres.

Ms FORREST - What is your feedback?

Mr BALCOMBE - It has been positive.

CHAIR - You are going to build it up to 522 in two years. What percentage will that be?

Mr BALCOMBE - That will be about 70 per cent of the business.

CHAIR - That is very good.

Ms FORREST - What feedback have you had from workers who have done it?

Mr BALCOMBE - Mixed, and I suppose one of the issues has been that you get all sorts of driver training. Some of it is 100 per cent classroom and some of it 100 per cent driving around the Baskerville race track. This training we are doing is a mixture and, sorry, I cannot remember the organisation we are using. Basically, we spend a fair amount of time in the classroom at Baskerville but we get on the track to talk about things such as safe braking distances if you are driving a vehicle at 60, 80 or 100 kph, and when you have warning and when you do not have warning to stop a vehicle. Everyone takes their own car out there.

Ms FORREST - Sounds like a John Bowe course?

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes, but from my point of view, I quite enjoyed it because in the end it draws attention to a lot of attitude and your own habits. How many people in the room, for instance, use their mobile phone while they are driving? We had one guy in the room with us who said, 'Yes, basically what I do is, before I get in the car I get a sticky note out and write a list of all the names I have to call and by the time I'm at the end of the trip, I can't remember that I've done it.' What does that say about what he is doing while he is driving? He is focused on his phone calls, as opposed to driving the car. So the big wake-up for that guy was, if I have to make my phone calls, I make the phone calls but I make sure that the vehicle is not moving.

Ms FORREST - We have heard from some companies, and particularly the one with transport roles, that they have implemented the rule of 'engine on, phone off' and they ring their employees every now and then to check what is happening.

Mr BALCOMBE - I would say we are not quite there, but certainly -

Ms FORREST - Is that where you are likely to head?

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes, I think we will. We certainly discourage that, certainly with respect to our trunk mobile radio network because we have that for the more remote areas. You have to pull over because you have to pick up a microphone.

Ms FORREST - But there is no coverage on the west coast, so you are pretty safe with your mobile.

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes, it is more the hands-free type of situations and we are encouraging people that way.

There has always been this dichotomy where you can drive at 0.05 and our operational sites are zero blood alcohol. From my point of view as the 'owner' of the driving policy there was this dichotomy where the law says you can drive at 0.05 but operationally we should be at zero. Basically we now have a blanket position that any business driving is 0.00.

Ms FORREST - Your employees can take the company car home and drive it?

Mr BALCOMBE - Some can, yes.

Ms FORREST - Those who can, can they drive when they are not working?

Mr BALCOMBE - That is correct.

Ms FORREST - And have a blood alcohol up to 0.05?

Mr BALCOMBE - That is correct. That is the issue because the law allows you to do one thing but a company's rules are another.

Ms FORREST - It's the same as on a mine site and things like that though.

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes.

Ms FORREST - And the construction sites.

CHAIR - If they are speeding and caught by a speed camera they are required to pay the fine?

Mr BALCOMBE - Absolutely. The other issue is that we have a process where the general manager of that person has a one on one conversation that that is not the expected behaviour. Unfortunately people do speed and some of it is accidental and some of it is an attention thing but what we are finding is it is more the issues around built-up areas as opposed to the 145s or 150s; we do not see any of that. It is more like the 65 in a 50 zone and perhaps the 50 in a school zone and things like that. What that would probably say is it is somewhat more accidental.

CHAIR - You say in your submission which is dated 18 December 2008 it is unknown at this stage whether the focus on education has led to a reduction in driving misuse.

Mr BALCOMBE - No, we do not have any evidence. I suppose the only thing we did there was to speak to both Forestry Tasmania and Aurora Energy and Aurora had done, for want of a better term, 'a sheep dip' with all their people and put them through driver training.

Their qualitative evidence was that, following the driver training, their number of incidents reduced and then as they came back, as that training had sunk in and got further away from people's minds the number of incidents started to increase again. We thought that was strong enough evidence for us to actually implement something ourselves.

Ms FORREST - What was that time frame, do you know?

Mr BALCOMBE - I think a couple of years.

Ms FORREST - So you suggest repeating it every couple of years?

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes, certainly for your high-risk people.

CHAIR - How long do you think it might take for you to make an evaluation on the effectiveness or otherwise of it?

Mr BALCOMBE - I think it would be at least 12 months, until we have got a good number of people through.

CHAIR - Despite the fact you have not had enough time to make a definite evaluation, what is your impression about the worthwhileness of training?

Mr BALCOMBE - As soon as your people walk out of that room or out of that course they are having conversations about it. Part of the course is to actually adopt new habits and new positive sorts of habits. I know I very much focus now on braking distances, particularly on open roads.

Ms FORREST - Maintaining your space in front of you, your safety bubble?

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes. The other thing is also that when people come and squeeze in on that safety bubble you do not do the normal Tasmanian thing and go and jam up their backside, you just allow the space. It is about being a bit more patient. Those sort of small things I find have stuck with me and I am fairly confident that that will be the case with other people.

CHAIR - Would you think it would be desirable for all learner drivers to be required to undertake some similar course before getting a licence?

Mr BALCOMBE - That is interesting. I have a 17-year-old son and I think he would benefit greatly from that course. I would say he is fairly conservative anyway but I think there would be great benefit from some sort of course - I would not call it advanced driving because I think that gives you the wrong impression; ??? maybe defensive driving or something like that, just to understand, and particularly in their own vehicles, the capabilities of their own car.

Ms FORREST - Peter, my kids all learnt on the farm but in the ACT before drivers can get their Ls they have to undertake an in-class thing that talks about the safety bubble in front, the main sort of crash they are likely to have and what the hazards are and how to perceive those hazards and that sort of thing. Then they provide another course after they have their Ps that does the sort of things you are talking about.

Mr BALCOMBE - Yes. Hutchins School put most of their boys through a course at year 10 and that is before they are even near a vehicle.

Ms FORREST - Only the boys? It is an only-boys school, isn't it, of course.

CHAIR - None of the girls there are required to undertake it.

Ms FORREST - Good, how sexist.

CHAIR - Would you recommend that it be a requirement that learner drivers undertake a similar type of course?

Mr BALCOMBE - I suppose I would. I am not too sure whether it is learner drivers or maybe it is more, as Ms Forrest says, sometime during their P-plate period so they have had some time driving and they have had some experience and perhaps learnt a few bad habits.

CHAIR - At some stage of the licensing process, perhaps a little later, you are recommending?

Mr BALCOMBE - I think so, I think there would be great benefit in that.

CHAIR - Perhaps you might tell the people at DIER.

Mr DEAN - I do not know how you would do it, but would it be a good position for all organisations and companies to enforce this type of thing upon their employees? If you look at some of the larger companies such as yourself, we have a trucking companies and so on; should they be required to ensure that their personnel have this extra training and experience and background in driving?

Mr BALCOMBE - I would be pretty surprised if they didn't already in those larger businesses, particularly if they are transport-type companies. I would think it most likely that driving would be probably their greatest risk and I know that our fleet managers have many conversations and have gone to several conferences and most of those big transport companies are represented there. I would be pretty surprised if they didn't.

Mr DEAN - It is an interesting concept because a lot of organisations are thinking about it. They are not all doing it but certainly are thinking about it.

Ms FORREST - Do you require your drivers to keep a log of their hours of travel and that sort of thing?

Mr BALCOMBE - No we don't, but we are able to track that through our fleet management system. Generally a person will have a car assigned to him; he is the designated operator of that vehicle and you can log that through fuel usage and things like that because we record the kilometres. With respect to our fleet vehicles, they do get logged because we have to track it for fringe benefits purposes and things like that so we are actually able to identify who these people are who are doing the long distances.

Ms FORREST - That does not give any indication of the hours those people are driving. I know that you do not work shift work as such in your organisation.

Mr BALCOMBE - From a time-of-day-type hours, sorry.

Ms FORREST - You are right in answering the way you did but I am saying that is one measure, the number of hours that someone spends on the road. You could sit around all day and be concentrating really intensely on some important meetings and stuff and then you might have a late night, either socially or with work, and the next day you have another really intense day of meetings and at four o'clock in the afternoon think you can drive home but you are stuffed and you have a five-hour drive ahead of you.

That would not necessarily show up in having much because they have been in the same location for two days of meetings but that could be the really dangerous time for them to drive.

Mr BALCOMBE - Absolutely. That is the next stage of fatigue management in our safety initiative. We have had some people come and talk to us about the importance of sleep and rest, based on a lot of experience in mines. We have discovered some interesting things there from the point of view of simple tools, things to eat before you to bed, things not to eat before you go to bed, the amount of sleep you need, how much sleep deprivation you have and what that does to your physiology.

Things to eat during the day and if you are working at night are simple things like green apples and water with lemon juice in it that will give you a natural stimulant to help you get through fatigue. All that aside, you still need to have the person thinking and understanding how their body is and whether they are capable of driving.

It is not only driving. From our point of view it is handling heavy equipment and dangerous equipment. We deal with the most dangerous commodity there is, probably, electricity. You cannot see it but it can cause you a lot of damage straightaway. Fatigue for us goes beyond driving with respect to automobiles.

Ms FORREST - A driver who finished at four o'clock in the afternoon and had to drive back from Launceston to Hobart, say, if they felt they should stay overnight you would not ask any questions?

Mr BALCOMBE - We would not ask one question.

CHAIR - The time is just about 3.30 p.m. Would you like to make any comments before we finish this session?

Mr BALCOMBE - No, thank you for the opportunity to appear. From Hydro Tasmania's perspective we think the job is still a work in progress. We have more work to do and our next biggest focus is on fatigue management.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for your submission and for coming and giving us your time. It is very impressive what Hydro Tasmania is doing.

Mr BALCOMBE - It is a pleasure.

CHAIR - I hope it catches on with other government departments including the Department of Infrastructure and the road safety division here and in all other States.

Mr BALCOMBE - Thank you very much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Dr ROBERT WALKER AND Mr ANTHONY STEVEN, AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Welcome, gentlemen.?

Mr STEVEN - I am here as an employee of the Australian Medical Association. I have been appointed for three months. I just wanted to introduce my vice-president and apologise for the President, Dr Chris Middleton, of Launceston who is unable to be here today. In introducing Dr Walker I would just like to say that doctors are the people who are in the front line of the fight against road trauma. They are the people who see the results, the casualties, day in, day out so if that lends any credibility that is not already obvious to the evidence about to be put before you, that is good. One last thing before I hand over. The final, ultimate point to be taken by the community here is that the final test lies with self-responsibility. In the end, the Government, the parents, pedestrians, drivers - other drivers can all have an influence but the final decision lies with the individual themselves. That is the end result that we have to effect. With those things in mind, I would like to introduce Dr Bob Walker, the vice-president of the AMA in Tasmania.

Dr WALKER - Can I just lead off from the AMA's point of view? I will leave with Nathan a print-out of our policy resolution, the national body responsible for keeping resolutions and policy. It is a list of items that have actually been accruing since 1983 right up to 2008. It refers to a lot of what we think are important road safety issues from seatbelts to alcohol, to improving roads to education and so forth. I will put that in as a submission. It actually comes to us as an e-mail from Chris Middleton and that e-mail is a public document. Although people might have the right to take risks he impresses that they also have to bear in mind that the cost of their risk is borne by the community.

My role is as a medico. I think you had Gary Fettke present yesterday.

CHAIR - Yesterday, yes.

Dr WALKER - I am not a trauma surgeon and I am sure you would have heard a lot from Gary in terms of the trauma he faces day in, day out with his particular interest in trail bikes.

CHAIR - Off-roads.

Dr WALKER - My interest is that of a general practitioner but my main interest is adolescent health. I am intrigued with the adolescent brain and how it works and doesn't work. From an adolescent doctor's point of view, the greatest risk we see in terms of cause of death in the 15 to 25-year-old group is road accidents. That is the one that takes them away, by injury and death. I also had an interest in coaching sports teams and being a mentor to school sports teams over a period of time. When you spend a lot of time with kids, be they on the sports field or in travel to national competitions and so forth, you get to understand a little bit about what these kids are like and their attitudes to a whole range of things. They are 'children' but also young adults who have just got their licences and they are testing the boundaries, as you will understand.

I also speak as an examiner of airmen for civil aviation. I am involved in the medical standards for pilots. In that role I am also interested in the mental health of pilots, and that includes young pilots, and the risks that they face and the trigger times for their accidents. I am also involved as a GP doing medicals for ageing people, who might be over a certain age groups who require medicals for driving, and specific medicals for people who might be operating buses, trucks and school buses. It is something that is interesting to all of us but in particular, from my point of view, is maybe taking the debate today a little way to what we can do to try to reduce the death and injury amongst young people.

I am not going to talk about speed limits, barriers or alcohol. I am sure many other people have talked about that. My interest is to raise the understanding of adolescents. Part of their nature is taking risks. Give them a motor car and it is just the thing they want to do. They want to take it to the limits and it is natural, normative behaviour. Although we might be critical of it, it is part of the nature of the adolescent brain.

Ms FORREST - Is that boys and girls?

Dr WALKER - I think so, yes. There is no doubt that up until the latter part of primary school they work on a certain set of frequencies. Once they start at the top end of primary school right through to high school they are right into peer groups - and maybe other speakers have addressed that. How you appear in that peer group and how you compete in that peer group is something where driving is tested out. The classic one is if you put a 17-year-old who has just got their Ps into a car on their own - they have a set death rate Australia-wide - if you have a passenger in that car who is also a young person the death rate doubles.

Ms FORREST - If it is a boy with a girl in the car is it better?

Dr WALKER - Yes.

Ms FORREST - There is less of a risk?

Dr WALKER - Yes, the girl is a calming influence. I am talking about a carload, of three or four boys. When I talk to adolescents - and part of my work is talking about risk taking - when you talk about doubling the risk for two people in the car and say, 'If you put a third person in the car, what is the risk?' and everybody says, 'Triple', and I say, 'No, it actually quadruples'. Just two passengers in a car may quadruple the death rate. When you start talking about those figures I find that kids are really interested. I think we need to get on with our kids and teach them physiology, psychology and behaviour because they are very interested in it. I think our driver education and work with the schools is to take it just as we do with drug and alcohol and sex education, but to take it further into road safety but not in a restrictive, boring and dull way. It has to be interesting and something that they can switch on to. Their risk-taking behaviour is something that can be harnessed. What is happening now with kids is that there are so many restrictions on what they can do. School camps are now terribly restrictive because of the occupational health and safety issues. You can't take kids out and do what you did 20 years ago. There are so many safety rules. What is happening is that schools are reluctant to take the kids out and give them what really is a near-death experience. Look at the Danish navy that takes kids out at 15 and 16 on the tall ships across the Atlantic. Those kids are

swinging out there in a north Atlantic storm, hanging on by a rope. They kill some of them - some of them die. But the group that survive have suddenly put themselves up to a very high level of risk. Therefore when they get back to their home town -

CHAIR - If they do.

Laughter.

Dr WALKER - There is the rare exception. There is a risk involved and accidents do happen, but the vast majority come back safely. When they get back to their home towns, the fact that they have had that really challenging away-from-home, away-from-school experience, when they get on the roads they tend to say, 'I don't need to take risks, I've been there, I've done that, I've extended myself'.

Maybe we should be thinking at schools where we really look very much at challenging behaviour at taking kids out on more extreme sorts of activities where they can experience touching the boundaries so they do not have to rely on the road, because that is what they are doing.

Ms FORREST - My 18-year-old and his elder brother recently jumped out of a perfectly good aeroplane, which I found difficult to come to terms with. But, anyway, they did it and they survived it. I said, 'So are you right now?' and he said, 'No, I might do it again' - didn't deal with it totally.

Dr WALKER - But it is the nature of the person. You take kids, particularly 14 to 16, 17 when they are in a peer group, it is all about being cool with the peer group. Once you get to 17, 18 they start to make decisions for themselves.

But the trouble is that their driver stuff starts at 16 and 17. Once you get to 25, there is a different set of risks factors because the brain has matured. What we are trying to do is to be able to transport that cohort of kids from 16 when they start their Ls up to 25 when they are going to be safer with minimal risk. I throw that up as a thought. I am not quite sure what people in schools are doing with driver education but it strikes me that if we can actually talk to them in fun terms, in interesting terms, in physiological terms, in challenging terms about the safety on the roads and what you can and cannot do, this might help.

Throw in, of course, a lot of very challenging behaviours in our activities in schools where kids are able to test their death wish but not on the roads. If I am talking to kids, I can see that the road is their obvious way of testing that.

CHAIR - I feel as if I must have had a very dull adolescence. The most exciting thing that happened to me was being in a DC-3 when it went into an air pocket. You do not experience these nowadays. What percentage of young people do you think go through this feeling of needing to take risks, either in a car or before?

Dr WALKER - In different ways. I think it is part of nature, it is part of the peer group.

Ms FORREST - It depends how you define what a risk is though, doesn't it? Some people take risks with their sexual health, some people take risks with the physical health, they

may take risks in a variety of ways. If you had a really boring life, I feel sorry for you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR - I have had a great life I think but I do not think I experienced that sort of sensation.

Mr STEVEN - If I may, I want to impart some of my own experience in that I was never a brave adolescent but there were elements where I was forced into situations and needed, for my part, to look good to the people around me. So I went further than I would have done normally and I think that to a degree - not totally - that is a male condition. I have read a book recently by Allan and Barbara Pease, *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*. I think that explains to the layman, especially to me, the difference between the male and female behaviour and a little bit about why we need a little bit more in our culture about the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood, to get us through some of the things that we do as young adults.

CHAIR - Yes, having said that about my own experience, I do acknowledge that there are a lot of young people in that category. I wonder what percentage.

Dr WALKER - I think it is hard to define.

CHAIR - There are quite a few youths who drive safely from the beginning but I think the majority are probably lairise and show off. Do you think that?

Mr STEVEN - Sport is a good fix it when it comes to helping people to get through the ability of being able to say no to lairising and hooning. If you know you are good on the field at the football or in basketball or something, your need to prove yourself has been diminished because it has already been accomplished in the eyes of your peers.

Ms FORREST - Being successful in something, that is what you are suggesting, are you?

Mr STEVEN - Yes.

CHAIR - It is really heartening to hear, Dr Walker, you say that it is something that can be harnessed by a course of instruction. So you would support people learning to drive or, in the early stages of driving and P licences, being required to undertake some course of instruction or information, would you?

Dr WALKER - Absolutely.

CHAIR - It is difficult to understand why people in government departments, not only here but in other States, do not have the same view. We experience so many people expressing the view that you have but we do not find it in the government departments dealing with these matters.

Dr WALKER - I would like to see a driving laboratory established somewhere, a standing laboratory where school groups can come in and you have some really good demonstrators who can show videos and films and what have you of cause and consequences. You cannot really do much with kids.

You take marijuana which has a significant effect on driving ability. I talked to pilots. About 20 years ago American Airlines wanted to know the effect of marijuana on the safe conduct of flying. They decided to put some money into the project. They set up a research project - and I think it was in Philadelphia - and they had a group of 20 to 25 pilots. Some had marijuana and some did not and they swapped them over and they ran them through simulators over the course of a couple of weeks. There is no doubt about it, the ability of the simulated group that had been subjected to marijuana to land at night, follow instruments, follow commands and react to emergencies was significantly less. When I talk to pilots they say, 'Oh'. It has been done. It has been proved. You cannot change nature. That is what is going to happen to you.

We talk to kids and say that if you have marijuana, you might not be the aggressive driver like one under the influence of alcohol, you will be more the sleepy driver, the one that does not care and tends not to give way and tends to float along. The driver under the influence of alcohol, as you are probably aware, is more aggressive and is much more obvious in their aggressive behaviour.

It just struck me that we need to invest in schools because this is where kids are learning those skills at 16 and 17. If they could have some good instruction that would back up what they are having in schools, it might be interesting to do it, by driving simulators - how fast can you turn the wheel and press the accelerator before the thing rolls over? You learn from that and pilots are notoriously well trained on simulators. You have senior instructors who sit behind them and say, 'You get yourself out of that pickle and see how you go'. There are no driving simulators in Australia.

CHAIR - Ms Forrest has operated one.

Ms FORREST - It did not work like a proper car I think. You could not get it up to any speed.

You have obviously looked at the adolescent brain and how it works and how things evolve at different speeds. We tend to hear from some of the people who are opposed to such programs where you have some education for learner drivers or provisional drivers that they are young kids and they know it all. You are disputing that, are you not, by saying that you think they may approach it with that attitude but there is the capacity there for them to learn a great deal. Is that what you are suggesting.

Dr WALKER - I think there is because at the end of the day when you talk to kids, no kid wants to be conned. They do not want to be trapped or tricked. If you can give them good information and they can see where it is coming from, they can understand that. The problem we have with kids is that they adopt the parental attitudes of driving, the attitudes of their brothers and sisters and the neighbour next-door and all those sorts of things and so they are not necessarily getting good exposure to sound experience. I mentioned peer pressure.

The other thing that is happening is with the media. When you look at the media now, they will show car crashes, cars going off the end of cliffs and it is a theatrical thing, it is beautifully filmed, with lovely colours.

Ms FORREST - Noise.

CHAIR - And sound.

Dr WALKER - The sound, would you believe - the tricky thing now with media is that they are using very calming music as that tragedy evolves. You are seeing people shot with a machine gun and they are playing Bach.

Mr STEVEN - It sounds like *The Matrix* to me.

Dr WALKER - What is happening now is that the media are having this effect on kids. We cannot always blame the media but I am sure 10 or 15 per cent of kids' behaviour is directly related to media. Just as you can use the media to create bad impressions and bad behaviour you can also use the media to come around to some good things.

This is where we need to educate our kids how the media try to influence them; how they try to get money out of their pocket and their parents' pockets and how they are trying to get them to do something. Once kids realise they are being conned they are receptive to that and they won't do that.

Ms FORREST - The point was made that young kids know it all already. I used to sex education with adolescents and I loved it, it was great. They never admit they do not know something but they desperately want to know what it is. The way you approach it is to not make them feel they do not know anything but they actually know it all, but then you tell them the facts. They think, oh my God, is that what happens? They don't actually say it out loud, you just see it on their face. You have a similar situation with driving where they don't want to admit that they don't know that stuff and you have got to present it in a way that is an adult learning principle and accept that kids aren't as stupid as we pretend to think they are at times.

Dr WALKER - I think you are right, and I think education has to be pointed at that. You take bicycle helmets. I think we have lost the plot in this State because I think 20 years ago we brought in pretty interesting legislation to encourage people to wear bicycle helmets, and this is kids and adults.

Looking around the suburbs now I have a feeling that is no longer enforced. I have unfortunately been involved. One child in Rose Bay just came off and hit his head on the kerb and he died. If he actually had had a helmet he would have been perfect. That was some years back but that was when the bicycle helmet thing came in. You have to be able to do it carefully. For example, if you come down really hard on kids and say you must wear a helmet they will say I won't do that, I want to challenge that behaviour, so how do you sell them the helmet story that is cool?

CHAIR - Show them the Tour de France with all the champion cyclists with them on, so they might want to emulate them.

Dr WALKER - You could probably use media people and celebrities to say, 'Hey it's cool to wear a helmet'. At the moment if you go up to the North Hobart skate park and just drive past any time, any weekend and you will see less than 20 per cent of kids wearing helmets.

Mr STEVEN - Would the Premier be a good role model?

Dr WALKER - He would be, yes.

Ms FORREST - Maybe people do not think he is cool though.

CHAIR - I think they would, being quite youthful.

Ms FORREST - Just over a week ago there was a young boy, I think he was a seven or eight-year-old in Wynyard, who was hit by a car on his bike. He had his helmet on, he was fine, and the helmet had a hole in it where he was hit. *The Advocate* actually covered that very well saying this helmet saved this kid's life and it has a photo of this little kid with his helmet showing the hole in it. As you are saying, the media probably need to jump on that and use it as a story to say, 'Here we go, this is really serious here'.

Dr WALKER - You have to use the good bits of the media to try to get that message across because if you present helmets as uncool, only wusses wear them, you are not going to succeed because kids will wear it as they leave the house and they will take it off when they get around the corner.

Mr DEAN - Many of them.

Dr WALKER - Occasionally in my suburb I see kids that I know on the street and I say, 'Hey, where is your helmet?' a ha-ha sort of thing. Maybe that's worthwhile, maybe it's not, but how do you get that message across?

CHAIR - It wouldn't do any harm.

Mr DEAN - You have to make it cool to wear them, not cool not to. That is the issue.

CHAIR - Any other questions?

Ms FORREST - I want to take a slightly different approach. We have not talked to a lot of victims of car crashes or anything. One of our terms of reference is looking at the care and after care of victims. Having worked in a hospital, it seems to me that predominantly when you get a victim of a trauma in, whether it is road trauma or whatever, you are busy patching them up physically initially.

There seems to be some sort of lack in that psychological and emotional long-term follow-up for some of these victims. How do you see that within the medical profession and whose role is it to actually meet that need because it is often a long-term need? You can have post-traumatic stress disorder from some of these more serious crashes and even some less serious ones.

Dr WALKER - I think that you are right. People get taken into casualty, there is all the shouting happening and all the bright lights and all the drama happening and bones are refixed and lives are saved. You are quite right; they then get sent home and who is there following it on? There is a vacuum.

Ms FORREST - Who do you think should be following up on that? Is it the medical profession's role or do we need to hand that to someone else?

Dr WALKER - I think it could be both. I think we are lucky in the sense that the hospitals here tend to refer their patients back to GPs. It is a matter of just keeping up the awareness of GPs that that is a role that they can do, and I think in the main most do. A lot of people have an accident, they'll get fixed up and again, and it is probably more males than females - 'I have had an accident, I survived, I am okay, I am tough' - but they don't accept the fact that there is some stress disorder there that is going to catch up with them later on.

One thing that I would like to say is that I think that MAIB is one of the best insurance schemes that you can have. I quote the example of either South Australia or Victoria, and it is of something simple like there is no excess. I have heard of one hospital where they say will not accept road accidents. If there is a prang on the highway, they will say, 'Take all the bodies to somewhere else, take them to a leading hospital but do not bring them here'. They all arrive in casualty, some seriously injured and some not, but the hospital then tries to get their fees back from those patients, and in an accident there is always somebody at fault and somebody not at fault so those not at fault say they are not paying the bill, get somebody else to. In country hospitals a road accident is a serious risk to their budget because they are going to develop a lot of bad debt. I think the excesses were \$200 or something like that so when you have 10 people from an accident going through you multiply that \$200 by 10, and they are all f to pay the bill. Under the MAIB scheme, -as long as they have recorded the passengers and the date of birth and the link to the accident and the police have the registration numbers, you have a system that is actually working very well.

Ms FORREST - Isn't that to do with the no fault though rather than the excess?

Dr WALKER - It is a bit of both.

Ms FORREST - Rather than the excess, it is the no-fault side of it and MAIB is a no-fault insurance.

CHAIR - It is both. You can have a no fault and if there were an excess you would still have the same problem.

Ms FORREST - Yes, but the fact is that Tasmania has no fault whereas in some of the other States if you are at fault the situation is different.

Dr WALKER - I will just mention other examples so that if anybody is attacking you might be able to say it is a good system. In the families that I have had that have had serious injuries and they have lost sons and daughters and even been seriously injured, the MAIB follow-up to the ones that are seriously injured has been incredibly good. They accommodate them in proper units, they will make alterations to houses and they will organise ongoing care and things like that.

CHAIR - And they have homes for people who need 24-hour care. Rather than paying so much a week for the rest of their life they look after them for the rest of their lives. It is a very good scheme.

Dr WALKER - We are very lucky.

CHAIR - And it is an affordable one too, well administered.

Mr DEAN - Going back to the media again, do you believe that there ought to be a lot more of these hard-hitting media programs in relation to sharp, short accident situations in a fairly real situation shown on a regular basis?

Mr STEVEN - Similar to the Victorian ads?

Mr DEAN - Similar to that one, yes. And what impact does that have, in your opinion, on young persons watching an advertisement of an accident with somebody being dragged out and then being a paraplegic?

Dr WALKER - I am in two minds about that because when people sit and watch their telly, an adolescent sees a huge number of murders in the course of a year. To the older child things on television are not reality - it is not going to happen to me, it has not happened, it is part of entertainment. I think that we really have to sit down with good media experts and find a way of selling that message. It is like when the grim reaper ads came out back in the 1980s; they certainly had an impact. They say if you ran those ads now it might be different. I don't know, I think this is a job for some experts to really sit down and say how you would sell that message. There is no doubt that the media is there to make money, and we accept that and that is the way it is, but driving the money mechanism is the way of changing behaviour. If you can use the media expertise to change what could be developing aberrant behaviour I think you are very right but I just have a feeling that people become super-sensitised if they just see blood and gore all the time and they just switch off. You have to put consequences into it.

Mr DEAN - The other suggestion that has been made by some is that, say on computers, there ought to be some road-warning flashing every now and again.

Ms FORREST - Pop-ups are you talking about?

Mr DEAN - Yes, a pop-up in that system because so many of them are involved with their computers. Maybe even on mobiles there could be a pop-up there, and they have the program for that sort of thing. That is a way to try to get this message through. Do you have any view on that?

Dr WALKER - The ideal thing is where you have accident victims who give of their time to go and talk to people. I remember one morning at the rowing shed the friend of the coach came out and said, 'I really want to talk to these kids'. He was in a road accident and his friend was killed and it had affected him so deeply that he wanted to be able to say to these kids, 'This is what happened to me. This is what we were doing, this is how we got into that situation'. How long that lasts I don't know, but I think how we change attitudes to kids and educate them is an education person's expertise and not mine, but there must be a range of experiences we can put kids in to change what could become aberrant behaviour.

Ms FORREST - I went to a course recently for provisional drivers just to observe the course. They showed them a series of approximately seven or eight ads, one after the other, that were really graphic. As a mother I was struggling, but the facilitator asked the young people at the end which ad particularly spoke to them. Most of them said the one where the driver had killed his brother in a car crash - I was more shocked by the mother being told that her son was dead. I asked the kids afterwards, 'Is that effective? Do you think those really graphic ads works?' - and you have to bear in mind they had just watched seven on the trot - and they said that they thought it would be but only occasionally. There was one ad where there was a young girl running a red light - she didn't mean to, she was not paying attention and ran a red light and ran into a car driven by a young mother. She was dead and the baby was crying in the back seat. They were told before they watched the ads that they were based on actual events in New South Wales - and these kids lived in the ACT. If they had some concept that this is a real event that is being shown, although it is a reconstruction it is not something that is completely fictional.

Dr WALKER - If you are looking for a reference to the effect of media on adolescents, an expert who is very good is a guy called Victor Strasburg. He is a paediatrician in Albuquerque. He has done an enormous amount of work on the effect of media on children - how they sell cars, sex and alcohol et cetera. His interest is particularly gun violence in the states. He will compare the death rate of children in the states to the death rate of children in Japan. There is an imbalance. He is an interesting guy to talk to. If you are looking at his reference, there would be something he is saying about selling the safety message using responsible media.

Mr DEAN - You raised the issue of the risk when you get two and three males, and particularly young males, in a vehicle and how the rate quadruples. Evidence has been given to us as a committee that we should be considering restricting the number of passengers that a P-plate driver is able to have in a vehicle. Would you be advocating for that to become law - in other words, on a P-plate you can only carry one passenger?

Dr WALKER - I have two comments. One is the evidence is there but if you want to sell that message, people have to understand why you are doing it. If people understood when the third person gets in the car are they really able to really focus on their driving and they are therefore forearmed, you may not need that legislation. I do not know. I would have to think about that.

Mr STEVEN - We have not consulted with the membership on that at all of course but my own feeling, if I am allowed, is that there is an ever-increasing level of legislation governing our behaviour in the community when the actual responsibility is not Parliament's, it is not Government's, it is the individual.

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr STEVEN - And I think getting to the end of the game and - just as Dr Walker has been talking about - educating the individual is the answer rather than just putting up barriers and walls and legislation.

Mr DEAN - However, we know that that level of responsibility in youth in particular diminishes considerably - they way they see things, the way they perceive things - with

that peer group pressure that they are confronted with. It all changes for them, does it not? If they get one person on their own they can act very responsibly and control the vehicle properly and do all of those things but then when they get one or two other people in that vehicle there is evidence to suggest very clearly that they do not behave that way, as you have said also.

Mr STEVEN - Not always but sometimes.

Mr DEAN - No, not always but unfortunately in too many cases.

Dr WALKER - Kids think in different ways. They might think, 'I cannot take my mates out this afternoon but tomorrow I am going out to the farm, we are all going to meet up in the back paddock and we will have a good time'. And they will get in the car and roll it when nobody is watching. It is a chick-and-egg thing.

Ms FORREST - We have promoted Des, haven't we? Des is the responsible person who is not going to drink that night so their mates can. So you potentially stop them doing that. In my mind, that is being responsible, having a designated driver. Your three drunk mates in the car does pose some challenges.

Dr WALKER - Good point.

Ms FORREST - But is that not being responsible?

Dr WALKER - It is.

Ms FORREST - So it is not an easy solution here, I think.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. That has been really good and we appreciate your attendance and the helpful advice and information that you have given us.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Mr GREGORY CASIMATY, CAMBRIDGE MOTO TRAINING, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thank you very much for your submission and for coming to help us by giving evidence about your particular expertise in this area.

Mr CASIMATY - I was a bit unsure exactly how to go about this, from my point of view, but I have been involved in motorcycles for in excess of 40 years. I have been racing for 39 years and I have an absolute genuine passion for children. I have a very simple philosophy, which is, if you do not give these children somewhere to ride they find somewhere that is illegal and dangerous. I have devoted the last 10 years of my life to developing a mechanism by which children can be coached or educated to ride and/or drive safely with wonderful outcomes for all concerned.

I have a facility at Cambridge called Cambridge Moto Training, which is the first of its type in the nation. I am fiercely Tasmanian and very proud to come from a very Tasmanian family, although we originated from Greece. As I said, I have an absolute passion for how this works. I think I am better just to explain how I do things instead of reading. It just does not work for me.

CHAIR - That would be good. Just tell us.

Mr CASIMATY - As I said, I have raced all my life and so many of my friends and children have been injured and have died unnecessarily. Some 10 years ago I endeavoured to do something about it. We have been having competitive motorcycle racing on my property next to Cambridge Airport for in excess of 15 years. We have succeeded time and time again to have race meetings with no injuries whatsoever. The methodology of how I go about it is that the Cambridge Moto Training facility is run under either Motorcycling Australia and/or CAMS. There is no private insurance that I have whatsoever apart from liability insurance if people trip over.

All of the motorcycling and driving activity is organised and insured and licensed and accredited by the two bodies in Australia that organise racing for cars and bikes. I cannot see why it has been so long that these mechanisms are not used on a regular basis. My aim is to build motos, as I would call them, right across the country. I have done rides from here to Cairns to Alice Springs and every single municipality and every single police station has trouble with illegal riding. It is simple. Give them somewhere to ride. It really is as simple as that.

Children do not want to ride out in the middle of nowhere in the bush. They want to ride where people can see them and they want to race their mates. It is self-explanatory. Children do not fall off because they are going too fast, they fall off because they have no technique. I say again, the only way to stop them, in my opinion, is to give them somewhere to ride. It is not a quick process. It will not happen overnight. I have been working with the recreational vehicle advisory group as one of their motorcycle representatives. It is the initiative of Scott Gadd, and I believe it is the most sensible way to give these children somewhere to ride that I have ever seen. Have they given a submission yet?

CHAIR - Yes, he has given evidence.

Mr CASIMATY - He has. As you know, it is essentially to identify all land in Tasmania that is suitable for recreational purposes, to classify it in order of environmental sensitivity and give areas of land to clubs to manage and maintain themselves. It makes perfect sense to me. I will just go back to Motorcycling Australia for a moment. I am an accredited Motorcycling Australia coach official and I said I have been racing for 40 years. Motorcycling Australia have a system by which children from seven years of age and upwards have a coaching education regime that is compulsory.

You must have coaching to enter the racing arena. When you get to the racing arena they are all going in the same direction, they are all taken care of and baby-sat the whole way through by accredited officials and they are trained. Every year I have a national competition at my property at Cambridge to find Australia's most complete, both male and female, dirt bike rider. So it is national, State by State, and they all go off against each other at the end. The four criteria to become Australia's most successful junior motorcyclist are speed and how they get around the track; technique; public speaking; and health and fitness. Those four things go together to make a complete motorcyclist, not these lunatics who ride over the back fence on these \$200 Chinese bikes that everyone is so sick and tired of. They get thousands of children every year entering into this national competition. The winner gets a factory ride with Honda. I say again, the mechanisms are all there for this to happen at tracks all over the country. I have interest at the moment from the Brighton Council, the Queenstown council believe it or not, and I have had some interest from Launceston City Council. With 1 hectare of land or more I can build a facility that is capable of having 120 riders every day going round an approved, accredited track, custom made and they are licensed and insured.

Mr DEAN - Launceston is just looking at it and that is great to learn that they talking to you about it because I am going to a meeting-

Ms FORREST - I am not surprised to learn that the West Coast Council is interested because they have a lot of trouble there.

Mr CASIMATY - You would have thought that the West Coast have untold tracts of land to ride on.

Ms FORREST - They do but it is not in the best interests of the landscape.

Mr CASIMATY - Absolutely correct. And the big thing about going under the Motorcycling Australia regime is that under the guidelines - I am not sure of the legislative requirements of how it works but I am sure this manual of motor sport will tell you - we can have events on public land with police permits, where children seven years of age and upwards have a Motorcycling Australia licence, that is all they need, that is it.

For me personally it costs \$200 per annum for a Motorcycling Australia licence. For children who do not wish to race a recreational licence is \$80. It is chickenfeed in regard to what it actually costs to chase these kids through the bush, round them up, impound the bikes and they are back out again next week. The catching mentality to me just does not work.

Mr DEAN - So you are adequately catering for those, a recreational rider and also the other -

Mr CASIMATY - Both. I will go back to the Cambridge Moto; it is probably the easiest way to explain it. I have permanent council approval for a facility down there I have five tracks operating, we have approval to have night-time racing, we have approval to have what they call four major events per annum. I am negotiating with Kevin Williams who is the promoter of the Australian motocross series to have a round of the Australian motos down there.

A junior round of the Australian motos has 750 competitors and 10 000 spectators over three days. It is a windfall for Tasmanian in tourism, in so many different ways and I have been 10 years trying to get somebody to listen to me. I wrote to Mr McCreadie for four years and did not even get a response.

It took me to have a Liberal Party fundraiser in my shearing shed for Vanessa Goodwin to tell her that I could not get any response and two days later Commander Tully from the Eastern Shore precinct rang me and I have been liaising with John McCormack from community policing who is absolutely, wholeheartedly, 100 per cent behind my idea.

Ms FORREST - We had some evidence in Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment provided some evidence of the tracks they have established over there in the bush and things like that where people go and meet. So you are talking about a similar sort of thing but on a smaller scale perhaps?

Mr CASIMATY - No. My aim is to buy 10 000 acres and have a facility that will encompass all recreational vehicles.

Ms FORREST - 10 000 acres in one spot?

Mr CASIMATY - Yes, absolutely. That is my aim in Hobart as such, to head out to Forcett or not too far away and have a facility that encompasses absolutely everything in the one area. There are such facilities in Australia at the moment, however they are run under private insurance. I have just come back from Gatton in Queensland. There is a facility called Black Duck Valley, which is on 1 000 acres, which has been operating for 18 years. They have just lost their insurance. It is over. Unless they take the Motorcycling Australia and CAMS mentality, which is tracks are inspected and accredited and the riders are licensed and you have a myriad of rules and regulations that you have to adhere to, that is it.

Mr DEAN - On the licence, you cater for age -

Mr CASIMATY - Seven years old and upwards in Motorcycling Australia.

Mr DEAN - Seven years and upwards and they have to have a licence but it is a CAMS licence, is it?

Mr CASIMATY - It is the equivalent of a CAMS licence for motorcycles. Motorcycling Australia is the national body that does racing nationwide for two wheels, whereas CAMS is the national body that does four wheels. They are related but -

Mr DEAN - So it is a CAMS licence?

Mr CASIMATY - Yes.

Mr DEAN - There is obviously a training thing that they go through to get that, is there, or not? Is that part of it?

Mr CASIMATY - Before they get their race licence with children there is compulsory coaching. They must attend compulsory coaching. For example, the Getting Started booklet is the one that is given to all children between seven and 16 just to get them very basically headed in the right direction.

Mr DEAN - You tabled that?

Mr CASIMATY - Yes, absolutely, yes.

Ms FORREST - That was tabled yesterday in that package.

CHAIR - With the package, was it?

Ms FORREST - Yes.

Mr CASIMATY - Our coaching ethos starts with work hard and be kind to your mother and go from there, it really does. For me personally the Crusty Demon mentality of pulling a one-armed wheelie with a girl on the back in bikinis while drinking a can of beer with no helmet on is undoubtedly the most abhorrent - to a genuine racer it is abhorrent.

CHAIR - Which particular part of it?

Laughter.

Mr CASIMATY - All of it. I cannot get away with it, I suppose. It is just bizarre. With CAMS, for example, we have the 500 Car Club running at Cambridge Moto. They have what they call auto-crossers which is a flag and barrel race, for want of better words, where you race against the clock. With a CAMS licence from 12 years of age and upwards then they can race against the clock and be taught. It is a one on one with a coach in the car and they get taught not just how to get their licence but how to operate a motor vehicle.

I have written to NRMA, RACT, we have offered the Education department to do a driver training, driver education program at Cambridge Moto because I believe kids need to be able to feel; they are tactile. You can put them in front of the simulator but it will mean absolutely nothing to them, in my experience. They need to get dirty, they need to get dusty. I coach every single weekend. When they come in and tell me that they know everything there is to know about motorcycling I tell them that the day that they can beat me I will begin to believe them and until that time -

Ms FORREST - That is a challenge for them.

Mr CASIMATY - Absolutely. That is simply not going to happen and we get out on the track and I whip them, I have had 40 years' experience, and then they listen to you. They need to feel and touch and experience it. There is no other way.

Mr DEAN - A part of that obviously is wearing all the right gear, I take it?

Mr CASIMATY - Absolutely. Apart from work hard and be kind to your mother, safety is the most important factor in what we teach them. I do not know if I have tabled the 2008 motorcycle manual.

Ms FORREST - Was that in that package? I have it here. Yes, it is.

Mr CASIMATY - There is a rule book there that covers everything, like CAMS, but my speciality is Motorcycling Australia. There is a rule book there that covers every single discipline of motorcycle racing and what is necessary in every single requirement and if those requirements are not met, the children and/or adults do not race. They are not allowed on the track and it is as simple as that. Bikes are scrutineered.

Ms FORREST - The gear?

Mr CASIMATY - Absolutely - all of the safety gear. We have to have paramedics on site. As an example, if I may, just before Christmas we had an event on some property over on the other side of the road in Kennedy Drive. We held a grass track which is just a flag and barrel race again for motorcycles with 30 riders on the start grid, which is the maximum allowed under Motorcycling Australia. We had 220 riders ranging from seven to 67 years of age in numerous classes. We had 55 races on the day, which are only four minutes' duration, it is a quick sprint around and back again with no injuries - not one ambulance report, as such - and we had 2 500 spectators.

Ms FORREST - No fights from the spectators either.

Mr CASIMATY - No, none whatsoever, and the only advertising we do for them now is we put two signs out on the Tasman Highway and a couple of little ads in the *Mercury* the week before, stating that we are having a grass track event and away we go.

Mr DEAN - Greg, in your view, is this making these people much safer motorbike riders? You would be aware, I guess, as much as we are that there have been a lot of off-road motorcycle accidents, fatalities and serious injuries and all of those things. In your opinion, are the events and the business you are conducting having an impact on that?

Mr CASIMATY - There is no doubt. Opposite, at the Meehan Range, young Tiger Richardson was killed by going for a ride in the bush and having a head-up with a bike coming from the other direction. The young guy killed out on the side of the highway at Granton four or five years ago was killed for exactly the same reason.

The racetrack is the safest place, without doubt, for any child, male or female, because they are all going in the same direction. The track is tailor-made, the bikes are scrutinied before they start, they have had compulsory coaching and on every corner, there are people waving flags to tell them what to do. The nature of the beast of the sport that I love is that motorcycling is inherently dangerous, there is no doubt - and that is not going

to change - but if you can get them all going the same direction and save all of these unnecessary deaths, to me, it speaks for itself.

Ms FORREST - We heard evidence from a witness who is a doctor interested in adolescent health and the adolescent brain, about the desire of adolescents to take risks.

Mr CASIMATY - Sure.

Ms FORREST - When you take out significant elements of risk because you are all going the same way, your bikes are all right, you have people on the corners waving flags, telling them what to do, are there people who do not want to do that because they think, 'That's for kids, I want to go and do the real stuff'?

Mr CASIMATY - I understand what you mean, and what I would call 'the idiot factor'. There is the idiot factor in every single thing that we do. You will never stop all of them. Long term, under the recreational vehicle advisory council or group, I would suggest that if you bring the seven-year-olds now and teach them that the only place they can ride is on a registered facility, and not on the west coast, in 10 years' time then that is all they have ever known and that, to me, is how you solve the problem of illegal riding.

Ms FORREST - If that is all they have ever known and they think, 'Well, I will pop down the west coast, I know some great tracks down there and I'll go down with my mates' -

Mr CASIMATY - Yes, I understand that but if the recreational vehicle advisory group comes to where it should do, where tracts of land are given to motorcycle groups, hunting groups, fishing groups or ATV groups to manage and maintain, in my opinion, then you can really throw the book at these people who are doing the wrong thing because there is an alternative venue.

This all started with Wellington Park, rangers ringing up and saying, 'We need to be able to send these kids somewhere, what are we going to do?'. The other thing is what I am doing at Cambridge. We are doing coaching for ATVs, bobcats, backhoes, excavators, chainsaws, all within the same facility. As far as the maintenance of the track is concerned, the most expensive part, I am being paid by people training on bobcats and backhoes to maintain the track.

The track was built as a landfill process where they pay to dump the dirt there. Financially, it doesn't get any better than that and these facilities, I say again, can be built, I believe, nationwide.

Mr DEAN - Greg, can you tell me, is that also assisting with the problems being experienced in many of the suburban areas, with a lot of these bikes being taken off the back streets, riding around the backs of houses and on land very close to built-up areas and getting rid of the inherent dangers and so on?

Mr CASIMATY - There is no doubt. The biggest catalyst in recent years of illegal riding has been the import of these Chinese motorcycles. In Victoria you can buy a mobile phone and they will give you a motorcycle. They are \$250 or \$500 - they are imported into the country as motorised toys. They are not motorcycles, they have no ADRs, they are extremely unsafe and everybody buys them and rides them. We have a purpose-built

track at Cambridge Moto, which is operating specifically for the fast 50s motorcycles, as they are known. You would appreciate this, Ivan, a common comment that I hear every time I walk through the pits - and there are 200 of them there when we have a race day - 'This is the first time we have ever been for a ride without being chased by the cops'.

Laughter.

Mr CASIMATY - Fast 50s are ridden by everyone, even 60-year-olds still get on them. They do not want to ride in the middle of nowhere. The nature of the sport is that it is a flashy, showy sport and that is why they all have the big earrings and the bling all over them. At the international races they do. They want to race where people can see them; they don't want to race in the middle of nowhere. First of all they want to race, they want to be able to beat their mate and, secondly, they want people watching. They want thousands of people in an arena watching. Last year in Australia there was the Super X series, the supercross series, which is all over pay TV, which Chad Reid - they tell me he is now Australia's biggest paid sportsman. He has come back from America and promoted a series nationwide. They were filling Princess Park - they had 40 000 people turning up to these events. They bring the track in and build it, put the bling on it - all of the bunting and signage - and then race and then drag it out again. The opportunity is there to do anything but, unfortunately, supercross is for the top 50 elite riders in the country.

Mr DEAN - Can I go back to the cheaper import bikes - and we have had evidence given to this committee that there needs to be some control in relation to those bikes coming here - there has been some evidence given that they may well be contributing to some of the injuries and accidents occurring on off-road bikes.

Mr CASIMATY - No doubt.

Mr DEAN - What is your position on it? Should there be some controlling point of sale or point of entry to this State?

Mr CASIMATY - It is point of entry. I have a bit of a vested interest in this. I own Bikeworks Motorcycles and have a franchise for Suzuki, Kawaka and KTM - two Japanese and a now Austrian-Italian brand. I have just sold the shop so I can speak freely now. The majority of Chinese bikes, I'm sorry to say, the ones that people buy off the Internet, are absolute pieces of junk. They bring them into our shop all the time. They buy them in a box and they want us to put them together for them but we won't touch them. They have disc brakes with two pads on one side and nothing on the other. They have front axles that are 10 mm metric bolts, soft metric bolts, with 40 mm of thread hanging out of them. You stand them up on the foot pegs and they break off.

Mr HARRISS - They probably have ashtrays on them, too, do they?

Laughter.

Mr CASIMATY - We use them as ashtrays after we finish with them. Initially in the motorcycle industry we thought they were dangerous and were going to overtake traditional bike sales, but all they do is get people interested, they ride them for three

weeks, they break in half and they chuck them in the back of the shed and then they go and buy a real bike.

Ms FORREST - These are the ones that the member for Windermere should be crushing.

Mr CASIMATY - Absolutely.

CHAIR - We have heard nothing but criticism of them.

Mr CASIMATY - There are some Chinese bikes that are good quality. But, unfortunately, the ones that you buy on the Internet and web site are here this week and gone next week, they are just absolute pieces of rubbish.

Ms FORREST - The better ones would come at a price wouldn't they?

Mr CASIMATY - They do, and there is a Tasmanian guy who flies to China, designs his own bikes, gets them sent to Tasmania and is well on the way to becoming, in my opinion, the leader of the fast 50 motorcycles in the country. They are properly built and they last more than 15 minutes, which is always a positive thing. I call them Chinese takeaways. I think it is like the Olympics, once you have a ride on one you just want to do it again, except it does not work.

I have a real passion for this. I think the best message I can try to get through is there are already mechanisms in place by which this can occur by organisations that are internationally affiliated with FIM. We do not have to reinvent the wheel, it is already there and it should not be up to me to be in front of this committee, it should be up to Motorcycling Australia and CAMS.

Ms FORREST - Motorcycling Australia have been.

Mr CASIMATY - Can I ask who it was from Motorcycling Australia?

Ms FORREST - Peter Kitto and Anne Franks.

Mr CASIMATY - Okay. You see, this is an example of the communication. I run the first-of-its-kind facility in the country and I did not know that Motorcycling Tasmania were going to be here.

Ms FORREST - They knew you were coming though.

Mr CASIMATY - Yes, they did. Peter Kitto is a gentleman and Anne is dedicated to giving these kids somewhere to ride safely and we want them all to race every Sunday and we want them all to go home in their ute instead of in an ambulance.

CHAIR - And they want more members.

Mr CASIMATY - Absolutely. By building these facilities, in my opinion it is the only way that has a remote chance of stopping these people riding all over the place. It is the only way. It will not happen overnight but it will happen if we can build these facilities nationwide.

CHAIR - Scott Gadd and other people responsible for public land and recreational land would be very grateful.

Mr CASIMATY - Yes, because the biggest question has always been insurance under MA or CAMS, it is self-insured. As I said, it is \$80 a year for a child to ride at my facility and it is \$10 every weekend he wants to come down and ride there on the choice of five tracks with supervision and only riding against people of their own ability.

CHAIR - You are providing a very good service.

Ms FORREST - I love the passion.

Mr CASIMATY - I live and breathe motorcycles.

Ms FORREST - I can tell.

Mr CASIMATY - I have seen so many children in what they do, unnecessarily injured and they are only going for a ride over the back fence, and that is the worst place in the world.

CHAIR - We hope you find a suitable property of 10 000 acres to continue your good work.

Mr CASIMATY - I would like to think that one day I can that through Scott Gadd and this Recreation Vehicle Advisory Council so that it belongs to someone else and yet I have control over it.

Laughter.

CHAIR - Good luck with that.

Mr DEAN - Do you have a business card?

Mr CASIMATY - Not on me, no.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Casimaty, we appreciate your time, interest and your enthusiasm.

Mr CASIMATY - My enthusiasm sometimes gets me into trouble but it is better than not being enthusiastic.

CHAIR - Thanks for your help to us.

Mr CASIMATY - It is a pleasure, thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr DAVID BROWN WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thank you for your submission and all the information you have been good enough to give us.

Mr BROWN - I do have some additional stuff.

CHAIR - We have not read all of this yet but you might like to tell us some of the main features of it.

Mr BROWN - I did not realise how lengthy that UK Department of Transport document was but I was only going to focus on a small section out of that.

CHAIR - Yes, certainly, please go ahead.

Mr BROWN - I have made a summarised version of some my thoughts and bits and pieces as well which I thought we could go through and that would make it a bit clearer, if that is all right.

CHAIR - Yes, certainly.

Mr BROWN - I will give you copies to follow along.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr BROWN - I have three.

CHAIR - We can make other copies.

Mr BROWN - I do not have any affiliation to any motoring organisation at all. I am an anaesthetist and I have worked in all parts of the State. I have had four years up in Burnie, I have been some time in Launceston and also I have been moved back down to Hobart at the end of 2006 so I do work at the Royal Hobart as well as all the private hospitals in town.

I have always had an interest, I suppose, for quite a while, particularly looking at various car web sites and road safety. I think I saw this committee in the paper and I thought it might be good to put a submission in so I can discuss a few thoughts and ideas that I have. It is mostly focusing on cars, I suppose, more than motorbikes.

I will go all the way back to the start. The main bits I was looking at were related to accident causation factors and the things they found - the actual 'tick the boxes' I suppose - and, probably as you are already aware, the biggest causes, the failure to look, failure to judge the other person's paths or speed, careless, reckless, loss of control, travelling too fast for the conditions, the pedestrian failing to look properly, so it is all those sort of things - failure to look and exceeding the speed limit. That is probably 5 per cent, although you can find it somewhere else, when they alter the denominator, and they make it 3 per cent or 2 per cent.

Ms FORREST - As you can do with statistics and numbers.

Mr BROWN - As you can do. When it originally turned up, referencing this article, I think they were quoting 3 per cent, but I don't think there was much difference.

I was looking at all those above factors and I was thinking those are the sort of things that can be potentially targeted more by the driver training, and the education side of things may have a much bigger impact in terms of affecting accidents and road fatalities rather than the large number of resources that seem to focus on speed, as in speed over the speed limit. In this report and also the next one which is the US accident causation survey that they did, speed is a relatively small factor. So you feel that all the resources that are placed on constraining people to driving at a certain limit or under a certain limit is probably unlikely to have a huge impact on accidents when there are so many other causes for that. The US one is similar. They divided theirs up a little bit into looking at vehicles before an accident, critical pre-crash events and reasons to try to break it up a little bit more.

Regarding the critical pre-crash events, the 36 per cent turning or crossing at an intersection or 22 per cent of people falling off the edge of the road, some people were stopped on the road or going out of their lane, counts for a large number of things, whereas travelling too fast is only a small 5 per cent.

CHAIR - It is interesting, 5 per cent.

Ms FORREST - It seems to be fairly consistent. It seems to suggest that we should focus more on resourcing driver education. When do you think that should occur?

Mr BROWN - It probably needs to occur at all stages and also potentially with an ongoing thing which I can go through again at the very end in the possible thoughts and solutions, I suppose.

Mr DEAN - It is an interesting figure there, isn't it, that the travelling too fast was an addition which means that they could well be travelling well within the speed limits but the very wet conditions or other adverse conditions applying at the time caused more accidents than the excessive speed.

Mr BROWN - The other interesting thing is that associated factors show that 20 per cent or thereabouts of people were engaged in one interior non-driving activity at the time of the accident. For another 20 per cent they could not work it out. I have a little bit of stuff on driver distraction.

My next thought was looking at the speed limits themselves and what is the best, what is the safest speed to travel on a particular road. When you look at a lot of web sites there seems to be a general agreement that the safest speed to travel at is the speed that everyone else is driving at on the road and the further you get away from that speed the more likely you are to have an accident.

Ms FORREST - David, when we consider that P-platers are restricted to 80 kilometres for the first 12 months of their provisional licence, that would contradict safe driving then?

Mr BROWN - Yes. Queensland have no restrictions on the speed limits.

Ms FORREST - Other States too - the ACT.

Mr BROWN - I think WA as well. I have that mentioned at the end. I am sorry, I am giving you all these little titbits, aren't I. And with the car that goes faster or slower, the average speed is going to either catch up or be caught up by other cars, which means that they are going to be overtaking or overtaken and whether that is part of the reason there is an increase in risk. In the UK there is a group that did a survey of what speeds people drive at.

Mr DEAN - I am interested in the higher speed limits may result in less variance from the mean speed and so reduce the risk of accidents. That was information given to us by a guru in traffic on the mainland, in Sydney, Mr Will Hagan. He gave evidence along those very similar lines. Where was this statistical data obtained from again?

Mr BROWN - This one which is the -

Ms FORREST - The UK, was it not?

Mr BROWN - I have the reference there. The best or safer speed to travel - I think I copied this document, which I thoughtfully printed out, but it often has U-shaped curves showing the further you get away from the mean speed, the higher your accidents. I think there has been a number of studies. Some have shown that high speed or low speed increases the risk. I think there have been a couple of others that just show going at a higher speed increases your risk. So you do get some slight conflict in evidence when you look at things, just hunting around on the Net. But I thought that is an observation that seems to be made by a larger number of people over significant periods of time. I will leave all these other bits of paper here that I have printed out which essentially are all these little extra references as we go through them.

CHAIR - It is very helpful having the summary.

Mr BROWN - Yes, I thought you could follow along and that way it stays more interesting for you. Regarding the vehicle speed in the UK, they just sat by the side of roads in lots of different places and different types of road and surveyed them. On their highways and motorways which are under a 70 mile an hour limit they found that 57 per cent of people were going over that limit. But of those only 20 per cent were going more than 10 miles an hour over. So it means that most people are going a little bit over. The mean speed might be 71 or 72 miles an hour. Does that make that the safest?

Mr DEAN - I think those figures of vehicle speeds in the UK - and there has not been much change - could well be reflected here in this State, for instance, because if you read the Tasmanian police annual returns reports it demonstrates over a number of years now that the number of speeding infringements does not decrease each year. If anything it increases each year or that stays some static at least. So perhaps it is not changing here either.

Mr BROWN - I found this really interesting report from British Columbia, which is in Canada, which is a fairly thick document. Basically they wanted to go out and work out what is the best speed, what are the safest speeds to travel? They have certainly considered that as a general principle if you got rid of all the speed limits and probably took speedos out of people's cars, what sort of speed would they actually travel at and would there be more accidents or not? They feel that the vast majority of drivers will drive at a speed that is safe and reasonable for those road conditions and then there would be that small percentage of exceedingly reckless drivers. They had a few little principles there.

They felt that the speed limit should be set so perhaps that at least the majority of motorists are going to observe it voluntarily and then enforcements can be targeted at that reckless percentage a lot more. They also refreshed the idea that the crashes depend more on a variation in speed with your risk of a crash being greater for those who are greater or less than the average speed of the traffic. They have this concept of the 85th percentile speed which you may or may not have heard of. It is essentially, if you have a road and you let people drive at whatever speed they feel like, once you start exceeding the 85th percentile speed then that is the point at where the accident rates and crashes start to increase. It is all based upon a lot of the road design, how people are accessing and leaving the road, crash histories of road. They went and looked at, I think, just about every single road in British Columbia. They found that on a divided dual-lane road with controlled access 116 to 126 kph was the optimal speed. I think on a two-lane highway they had quite a big range there of 92 to 111 kph. They were more trying to look at setting speed limits that suited the type of road and setting it at a point that if you let them drive along freely most people would probably drive at that speed anyway.

CHAIR - Do you think that should be a guide to determine the maximum speed limit on that particular road?

Mr BROWN - I think it gives you a good guide. On their highways, as a result of that I think they increased theirs to about 120 kph, which matches a lot of other countries in the world in terms of the speed they have chosen on those good-quality highways with controlled access.

CHAIR - On the previous page where 57 per cent were exceeding the speed limit, although only 20 per cent exceeded it by more than 10 miles per hour in a 70 miles per hour limit, should that have been increased to 80 mph or 75 mph?

Mr BROWN - I think it is very reasonable to argue that. A lot of the motorways in the UK are three-lane things, probably similar to a lot of the German autobahn-type things. Most people know that the far right-hand lane is the fast lane and the other lanes are the slow lanes. If you stay in your lane and everyone is in the fast lane, say you are doing 80 mph, then you could say everyone is doing the same speed so that potentially could be the safer speed in that lane. Obviously if someone doing 40 mph decided to move into that lane it is going to cause potentially significant issues and increase the risk of a crash.

Ms FORREST - I was driven on the English motorways last year in December by an English driver who said, 'No-one follows the speed limit'. Then a police car comes along and everyone slows down a bit -

Mr BROWN - I drove quite a bit on the motorways in the UK because I had a year working there. Generally the police were unlikely to book anyone unless they were exceeding about 100 mph on the motorway. There are no speed cameras. Most people were probably travelling towards that 80 mph mark.

Ms FORREST - In that case, where some people who do feel safer driving a bit slower -

Mr BROWN - They would tend to stay in the left-hand lane.

Ms FORREST - Would that left lane be designated as, say, a 70 mph zone and the right lane and middle lane are 80 mph? Is that too confusing for people?

Mr BROWN - It may well be too confusing. I think most people learn to appreciate, whether through education, that that lane is the fast lane and the far left is the slow lane. That is the one you get all the movement onto and off the road from.

Mr DEAN - America is a bit like that as well. In America, in most States, the police only book those who are doing considerably greater speeds than the posted speed limits. My son experienced that. You can do 10, 15, even 20 over and they would not even look at you, but do more than that and they are right onto you. They do not let too many get away with it.

Mr BROWN - I think that is a very reasonable and safe thing, given that the further you are getting away from the mean speed - there is a suggestion that once you are getting more than 15 or 20 kph faster or slower than the speed limit that is when the risk of problems increases, whether that is related to catching up to other cars and having to go around and manoeuvre.

CHAIR - Do you know whether there are very many accidents on the motorways in the United Kingdom, where the speed limit is quite high?

Mr BROWN - I suspect it may well be in the really big United Kingdom Department of Transport document, but not off the top of my head. You could extrapolate that to Germany where on their autobahns they have one of the lowest accident rates, I think, in the world.

CHAIR - And some of the highest speeds?

Mr BROWN - And some of the highest speeds. Their drivers generally go through a fairly rigorous driver training program, I think.

CHAIR - Also the roads are safe.

Mr BROWN - The roads are well designed. People are aware that if they are going to be in the fast lane perhaps they should be doing 200 kilometres an hour and most people know they had better not do 100 kilometres an hour in the fast lane.

The other last couple of things in that study were to do with the idea of transition zones, which is where you are going from, say, 100 kilometres an hour limit here, down to

60 kilometres, say, going into Campbell Town. They found in British Columbia that most people completely ignored that transition.

CHAIR - British Columbia?

Mr BROWN - British Columbia in Canada. They said most people just ignored them and did not slow down and I am not sure how far ahead they place these signs, whether it is half a kilometre or a kilometre away, but they found most of the drivers just completely ignored it. One suggestion was that perhaps you would be better having an advisory sign like 60 ahead, instead of trying to put in an 80 sign, so that people would see there was a 60 limit ahead, and think maybe they should start slowing down.

There are a few areas where they increased their speed limit from 90 to -

Mr DEAN - Talking about advisory signs, we have some and we have the one coming into Brighton where the limit starts at the hill there.

CHAIR - Campbell town too.

Mr DEAN - Yes, there is a sign saying, 60 kilometres coming up or something, and it does make you slow down.

Mr BROWN - So it is just a visual cue to people to tell them to start slowing down, even though they do not necessarily have to slow down at that those signs. I think my older brother said he saw some of this style of sign in New South Wales as well.

Ms FORREST - At Heybridge where the roundabout is you come from 110 to 60 immediately.

Mr BROWN - That is a fairly harsh transition.

Ms FORREST - They have put up a little sign saying 60 ahead, about 50 metres up the road. It does not give you a lot of time, but you know it is there. They ping a few people on the roundabout.

Mr BROWN - When they increased their speed limits on some roads from 90 to 100, they found a reduction in crash rates, which is contrary to lots of other reports. I have also found the United States report relating to when they increased all their speed limits on their highways through most States. Most went from 55 to 70 or 75 miles an hour on their highways and they found a reduction in traffic-related injuries and fatalities and then they went on to estimate the economic benefit of raising the speed limit to be \$2US billion to \$3US billion a year.

Ms FORREST - They could fix the economic crisis over there. Is that how it works?

CHAIR - The Leader for the Government in our House would be very happy about all this. He does not like any suggestion of putting up speed limits. He is the former chairman of the Road Safety Council.

Mr BROWN - I was basically putting it out there that speed limits set on the roads may not be the most optimum speed limit to contribute a little bit of different evidence to add a bit of flavour to the plethora of evidence around there suggesting that speed limits increase fatalities and things.

CHAIR - Very interesting.

Mr BROWN - This one is a fairly official United State Government type of -

Mr DEAN - When you go to the thoughts, these are your thoughts?

Mr BROWN - These are my own thoughts and ideas just from reading. This all refers to thoughts about speed, given it is a fairly minor factor in terms of accident causation. If you alter the speed limit by lowering or even potentially raising it you may not make huge differences. If you dropped it to, say, 90 on a dual-lane highway you would get a lot of very frustrated, bored drivers.

Mr DEAN - On the bottom of that first page, your comment on the Northern Territory is very interesting. Do you know if there is any statistical data available at this stage to show the real cause for that? Is it overtaking of more vehicles now?

Mr BROWN - I am not certain. I suspect they have to run at least another year with it to confirm it but it is certainly contrary to the rest of the country which had a slight reduction in fatalities whereas the Northern Territory went completely against the trend. I think it came in in mid-2007 and the figures for 2008 were a 30 per cent increase but if it goes up in 2009 then they will probably have to seriously reconsider getting rid of it.

CHAIR - The maximum I think was reduced to 130.

Mr BROWN - 130, yes.

CHAIR - So it is still quite high.

Ms FORREST - The point I was going to make, David, is that when there was no speed limit then, the people tended to drive at a speed they feel was safe.

Mr BROWN - Yes, they choose a speed that is comfortable and safe for the road, the conditions.

Ms FORREST - When you post a limit of 130 obviously they could be hearing that it is safe to do 130 here, even though they may not feel it is, and so they are driving at 130 when they perhaps would have only driven at 110.

Mr BROWN - There are lots of potential thoughts or issues. The trip that would normally take two hours now might take them four hours of driving on a straight road and you have issues of driver fatigue, boredom and inattention, which seems to be a very large factor in terms of accident causation. They are driving at a higher speed, it may be that they are able to concentrate better, focus better, so therefore decreasing their risk of an accident but it would be interesting to see how it goes for another year. I reckon they will run it for at least another year just to see.

Mr DEAN - Just to trial it.

Ms FORREST - You would have to because one year is not enough.

Mr BROWN - If it goes up again then it is going to be hard not to change it or get rid of it, plus they have lost millions and millions of dollars in car company revenue because all the car companies worldwide used to do all their speed testing in the Northern Territory because there are so many places where you could run unrestricted. British Columbia I think looked at running unrestricted speed limits on some of their really remote roads because there were hardly any cars on the road and it is remote.

Ms FORREST - There are not as many trees and so on, that sort of thing to run into.

Mr BROWN - Yes. The other thing just thrown in out of this British Columbia report is areas with high risk of wildlife activity and suggesting having some advisory signs suggesting people drive slightly slower. They put in the paper an example of a 20 kilometre an hour reduction to try to reduce the impact of running into kangaroos. Probably in British Columbia it would be moose.

Ms FORREST - Moose is what kills you in Canada.

Mr BROWN - I suspect insurance companies get a fairly large number of claims related to running into various wildlife, certainly in Tasmania as well. That could be something to consider.

Ms FORREST - I did see some statistics once about the number of people who died as a result of hitting a moose. It was one of the highest causes of driver deaths in Canada, I think. Because of the shape of a moose, if a driver hits their legs their body just rolls up over the bonnet and comes in and lands on them in the car and squashes them. That is what kills the driver.

Mr DEAN - Is that right?

Ms FORREST - Yes, it was interesting to read. I remember reading that; they crashed into the moose but it was the moose landing on them that caused the injuries.

CHAIR - Just as well there are no elephants out there.

Ms FORREST - That's right. If you hit an elephant you would stop but it would not actually end up in the cab with you.

Laughter.

Mr BROWN - They get more extreme road conditions with lots of ice, lots of snow and those types of aspects as well.

The next bit is looking at driver distractions. To me, it came out as quite a big thing. I have a mixture, I suppose, of different web sites and bits and pieces here, but there is one - I think it is another US article - suggesting that mobile phones, moving objects in

vehicles, looking at an object or event outside the vehicle, reading while driving and applying make-up were the top things that often occurred pre-accident.

I thought I would throw a few things in. I am suggesting that to check your speedo you have to look down, focus, look up again and I am estimating it can take potentially up to a second to check your speedo and that people approaching a fixed speed camera check their speedo about five times -

CHAIR - That is a very relevant point.

Mr BROWN - which means there are five seconds of time that they are potentially not looking at where they are going, which is quite a bad thing.

I have a thing on road signs. There is also evidence that drivers can spend three-quarters of a second to two seconds - I am not quite sure what people are looking at for two seconds - looking at a road sign on the side of the road.

CHAIR - Trying to interpret what they mean, in some cases, where it is not obvious.

Mr BROWN - I am being fairly harsh on Victoria but I often feel that the drivers have to look from their speedo to the road safety sign and then back to their speedo, and they do not seem to have any time left to look at where they are actually going on the road.

Ms FORREST - Election signs, we are coming to that.

Mr BROWN - All those big advertising signs. If you drive around in Victoria, you see all the road safety campaign signs as well.

CHAIR - They claim that is having an effect but is it distracting?

Mr BROWN - There are all those distraction things but there is also all the improvements in cars and safety and those sort of things. But if they did not have signs, would they find that their accident rate decreased more than it is?

So, yes, there is a big focus on distractions. It does seem to be a pretty significant factor in the cause of accidents more than whether you are going 5 kilometres over the speed limit or not.

I thought I would put that up as a couple of thoughts in terms of things that are going to take people's eyes and focus off what they are doing behind the wheel.

I thought I would throw this one in. In the UK a lady was successfully convicted for talking on a hands-free mobile phone. The details are she was chatting away and then went off onto the wrong side of the road and ran into another car, and the person in the other car died. She was banned, fined and convicted for careless driving. But apparently they have introduced some corporate manslaughter and corporate homicide act which they potentially could have used.

There is good evidence on mobile phones. They increase the risk of a crash, accident, and there is some suggestion that there is little difference between hands-free and

hand-held, although I found in California that they found that hand-held accidents outnumbered those with hands-free accidents.

But probably worse than talking on the phone is sending text messages while you are driving and one would worry if you ban mobile phone use completely, it would result in an increase in people texting in their lap as they go along.

Ms FORREST - A lot of these kids can do it without looking at their phone.

Mr BROWN - Yes. If you are well practised, then maybe. If you do a search online looking at texting, there are quite a few articles. Certainly in the US there has been some legal action taken against people who have been distracted by texting. There is a suggestion there that if you are doing a text message you spend 400 per cent more time taking your eyes off the road and are 70 per cent less likely to stay in your lane.

CHAIR - Text messaging should be banned anyway.

Mr BROWN - Washington state in the US has banned texting. It is one of those things that is probably just about impossible to police and enforce, but obviously it is significant. At least one US state, and I think there might be another one, has considered banning texting in cars.

CHAIR - The only way to enforce it would be to give the police power to check the mobile phone; stop the motorists suspected of doing it, check it and see what time the last text was.

Mr BROWN - It is probably pretty obvious when they are weaving all over their lane and looking down a lot.

I have a bit of stuff on speed cameras but you probably already have lots of stuff on that already. I have taken some of it from an Australian and a UK web site. They are very passionate about speed cameras and their use and whether they are a useful thing or not. There are a few little points from the Safe Speed one in the UK, that there is a large increase in speed-related convictions but there has been fairly little benefit or change in accident reduction. The accident rate due to exceeding the speed limit hasn't really changed much, despite that introduction of speed cameras. They do not distinguish between safe driving and reckless driving inasmuch as is the person doing 5 kph over the speed limit at nine o'clock at night with no other cars around doing a particularly dangerous thing versus the person doing 5 kph over and weaving in and out of traffic during peak times? Both people get fined but one person has obviously been far more dangerous and reckless than the other.

Mr DEAN - I think this is one of the issues that has been raised in some of the other States as well, and in this State to some extent where what they get is a continual decrease for tolerance that police were providing or allowing for exceeding the speed limit. Then you were getting the statistics at the end of that financial year which said that speeding drivers were increasing not decreasing, when in actual fact what was happening was that the tolerance was being dropped and people were being caught because of the lower tolerance.

Mr BROWN - They seem fabulous machines; they must be better than poker machines in terms of income per speed camera.

Laughter.

Ms FORREST - Unfortunately the revenue doesn't go back to road safety, it goes to consolidated revenue.

Mr BROWN - The revenue is nice from the Government's point of view. Relating to that speed camera thing, the bad effects are that people are going to look at their speedo more and check their speed and not focus on the world around them and what they are doing quite as much. This is where I put if you got rid of the speedos from every single car would there be more or less accidents? It would be interesting to trial it. I suspect that it would be unlikely to get worse. Reckless people will always be reckless and most people will be sensible. The Australian web site Road Sense - this is playing with statistics again - were looking at the reduction in road fatalities before and after speed camera introduction. They were suggesting that if the rate of reduction before speed cameras had been introduced was allowed to continue then fatalities should be a lot lower now than they are. They were trying to argue that introduction of speed cameras has resulted in a relative increase in fatalities. That is an interesting thought but I felt that there was a little statistical and line playing with the graphs because there have been a lot of other changes and other factors to take into account.

As an interesting point, they suggested that even though it has been decreasing since speed cameras, if there were not speed cameras it may have been decreasing at a more rapid rate.

CHAIR - I am just not following that logic.

Mr DEAN - I am trying to work that one out myself. Can you explain that, David?

Mr BROWN - They looked at the eight-year period before speed cameras were introduced and said that each year fatalities were coming down but if you drew a line -

Mr DEAN - Before speed cameras were introduced fatalities were coming down.

Mr BROWN - And they drew a line saying this is the rate that the fatalities are coming down.

Ms FORREST - That is the trend line?

Mr BROWN - The trend line. And then they took the time period eight since the introduction of speed cameras and looked at the fatality rates and drew another trend line and then they overlapped them and said that in that original eight-year period before speed cameras if that trend had continued on then you would have ended up with significantly less fatalities than there has been since the introduction of speed cameras.

CHAIR - So the reduction rate was greater over the eight-year period before the introduction, even though there was a decline in fatalities from 30 per cent to 10 per cent after speed

cameras. But it was a greater rate of decline before the speed cameras. That is what that is intended to mean, is it? It is not what it says but I understand now.

Mr BROWN - Yes.

Ms FORREST - I think what you are saying, David -

Mr BROWN - I have tried to sort it out; I have a web site print-out here but that is what I am trying to say. I may not have explained that very clearly in that. I was trying to summarise.

CHAIR - I understand.

Ms FORREST - You are saying that if speed cameras had not been introduced, the current trend for those eight years might have continued and now we would be at a lower fatality rate than where we currently are?

Mr BROWN - Yes.

CHAIR - I understand. It just does not point out that it was coming down at a greater rate before speed cameras.

Mr BROWN - That is fine, I am happy to clarify. The article was slightly clearer. But I think there are too many other variables involved to try to say that is a definite conclusion. It is one that sounds nice if you are trying to argue against speed cameras. But whether it is true or not is really difficult to say. They were quoting that 2 per cent of accidents involve people going over the speed limit and they were suggesting that at least half of those are made up by suicide, criminal behaviour and police chases. So they are probably targeting even a smaller percentage and suggesting that you might only be targeting 1 per cent of people in terms of accident causation, if that makes sense.

CHAIR - It does, and it is all very interesting.

Mr BROWN - I have this list of thoughts and solutions, I suppose. The speed camera one was that they are only targeting a very small proportion of factors that cause accidents and some of those are preventable. If the people are distracted it could increase risk of having an accident. The use of visible police presence has some deterrent effect. They would be very good at being able to detect reckless and dangerous driving and probably able to detect distracted drivers.

Ms FORREST - As opposed to people who are just a few Ks over the limit but are essentially driving in a safe manner?

Mr BROWN - Yes. So they are driving safe. On a dual lane highway everyone else is driving at a similar speed.

Ms FORREST - They are not changing lanes.

Mr BROWN - With the use of the speed cameras, people lose their licence which causes quite a large social, financial cost as well as occupying a lot of court time, I suspect, as

well for people who have multiple tickets maybe just doing 5 or 10 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. They lose their licence and go off to court to try to get a restricted licence. So there is a lot of effort toward targeting people who probably are not particularly of a criminal mindset in the first place and were probably driving relatively safely on the roads. Because intersections are quite high up in terms of accidents, I wondered for the controlled ones whether there may be some advantage for this concept of red-light overlap where the lights remain red for a period of time to allow all the red-light runners to get through before it changes to green. I think in the UK it goes green, amber, red and then the reverse happens: red, amber, green. So it goes amber before it goes green so it is like, 'Be cautious'.

Ms FORREST - But you cannot go until it is green?

Mr BROWN - I think you can go when it is amber if it is safe. But I suspect that a red, amber, green would be a difficult thing to introduce because people are just used to the current system. But I thought a red-light overlap concept may be useful. You may not need to apply it to all intersections. You could apply it potentially during certain time periods. It may not be that useful during peak hour in Hobart, running a lot of red-light overlap.

Mr DEAN - David, on the intersection statistics, they are 35 per cent or more of all accidents, are they your figures?

Mr BROWN - I think they came out of the US. 'Turning or crossing an intersection', 36 per cent in terms of critical crashes. It is a US figure. There was not a lot of Australian data that I was able to access or locate. It is a US figure so I am doing a little bit of extrapolating. The UK one, if I scroll all the back to the start, I think there is a 'poor turn or manoeuvre' one which is around about 15 per cent. The 'fail to look properly' I suspect incorporates a lot of intersection type of stuff. Theirs is 35 per cent failed to look to properly. So there is a little bit of consistency there between the two.

I do not have any studies here but I am pretty certain in the US there has been a couple of cities which have done studies before and after red-light cameras. I think they find it pretty much makes no difference whatsoever in terms of accidents and crashes. I think some of the US cities that have done that have then gone and got rid of all their red-light cameras. I did not get a chance to go and hunt down stuff for that.

Mr DEAN - We have got rid of all of ours in Tasmania because they will not work properly.

Mr BROWN - That is the other issue.

Regarding the intersections, the other thing is whether you have some speed reduction at selected intersections with a high crash history.

On the education side of things, I think there is already a pilot program that does the parents with learner drivers for professional lessons - I think it is in one of the mainland States - where the Government provides some funding towards having training lessons for son or daughter to get their licence but the parents have to go along and sit in the car during the lesson as well so they are receiving education from the driving instructor so hopefully then they learn good habits.

CHAIR - After 30 years.

Mr BROWN - After 30 years.

CHAIR - You mention advanced driving. Is that the same meaning as defensive driving?

Mr BROWN - Defensive driving courses.

CHAIR - Because they do have different meanings and different people have different views about them. Most people favour defensive driving courses. Some people feel that advanced driving courses give people taking them an over-confidence.

Mr BROWN - Yes.

CHAIR - Are you differentiating between the two?

Mr BROWN - I am probably using it as meaning both because I do not have enough information to say one way is better than the other way. It is a bit hard to probably force people to do defensive driving or advanced driving courses. New South Wales also I think run the P-Off course.

Ms FORREST - That is the ACT.

Mr BROWN - It uses incentive-based things so if they complete this course I think they get to take their P-plates down or if you complete this course you get an extra four demerit points.

Ms FORREST - They get both.

Mr BROWN - On your licence.

CHAIR - Do you favour compulsory courses, whether it is termed advanced or defensive, before people are fully licensed?

Mr BROWN - Yes, would be my answer because otherwise they miss out on a lot of education related to where to look, how to position your car, what spacing should there be; you know, all that sort of road awareness stuff which often does not get taught.

I was thinking for non P-platers, for adults as an incentive-based thing they could regain some demerit points that they had lost if they undertook some of these defensive or advanced driving courses as well so that that person who obviously has a history of speeding and may be down to one or two points can get some more points back. It means they will more voluntarily undertake one of these courses rather than forcing them to. Where there is more an incentive-based technique maybe you are more likely to improve compliance. It would be nice when people sit their P test to undertake compulsory courses. I think motorbike guys tend to do a lot of that stuff.

CHAIR - Yes, and that is effective.

Mr BROWN - I will skip over the restrictions for cars based on power to weight because some of the States did silly things where they banned the turbo-charged smart car but you could drive a Golf, a 180 kilowatt Golf -

CHAIR - That is the point.

Mr BROWN - And they are difficult to police.

In New Zealand they have quite a few signs particularly for the camper van drivers, reminding them to pull over to let other traffic go past. That type of signage might be a useful thing on particularly, say, west-coast roads or even on the Midlands for those people driving along slowly to remind them perhaps they should pull over and let the line of 10 cars behind them go past.

CHAIR - Rather than keep them behind you and then, when you come to overtaking lanes, speed up so they cannot get past.

Mr BROWN - The reason for that is to maintain your same impression of speed. When the road gets wider you have to go faster. So, if people are not running the cruise control, it just happens.

Ms FORREST - There is a problem on the west coast that there are very few places that you can pull over. So it is an infrastructure issue, that they would need to construct a few.

Mr BROWN - They could construct some. But even if they put their indicator on and slowed down a bit on a suitable bit of road, then people could probably safely go past.

Ms FORREST - It is a challenge down. You need to construct some areas that would enable that to happen.

Mr BROWN - There is the P-plater stuff - given that the safer speed is the mean speed of all the traffic on the road, meaning the P-plater or the learner can drive at 80 kilometres an hour on the main highway with a huge line of traffic behind them. I think in Queensland learners and P-platers get to drive up to the posted speed.

CHAIR - Probably in some other States too.

Ms FORREST - The ACT do. Queensland, though, have a limit of 100, so it is slower than in the ACT where it is 110, only in sections though.

Mr BROWN - They get issues where they cross borders and Queensland P-platers can drive at full speed, I think.

Ms FORREST - That is right. The same as the ACT going into New South Wales.

Mr BROWN - That might be a useful thing to do because a lot of P-platers anyway drive at more than 80, I suspect.

Another thought is some refresher thing when people have to renew their licence, a quick five-minute thing, not necessarily a pass/fail thing, but they have to answer 10 questions

relating to things that have been recently introduced or what to do at intersections and even if they get it wrong, then it gives the correct answer. So it acts as an educational tool because the person who has been driving for 40 years may not be aware that perhaps you have to indicate when leaving roundabouts or the give way to the right rule is a bit vague. There are already those little stations set up for learner drivers and you could have a non-pass/fail style educational test where they have to sit and answer 10 questions.

Mr DEAN - Where you have two one-way streets coming down here like this, who gives way to whom? It is not an easy one that one.

Ms FORREST - It is only in Launceston that happens, isn't it?

Mr DEAN - In Launceston they have it down Brisbane Street. Where you come down Brisbane Street and come out of the avenue and you have the two meeting there on that intersection, who gives way to whom?

CHAIR - The one turning left has the right of way.

Mr DEAN - That is right. Not too many realise that. A lot of people turning right say they have the right of way. You are absolutely right.

Mr BROWN - I thought that would be a simple way that is not going to generate a lot of cost. It would be relatively easy to implement. It will not occupy very much time. It would probably take under five minutes and is a way of educating everybody, every five years, to the latest updates and to refresh their knowledge, particularly with intersections because that is quite a big cause of accidents so that when the controlled lights are out, they know what to do.

CHAIR - That is really a very helpful presentation and a very thoughtful one, a good one with many excellent points and a lot of new ones.

Mr BROWN - That is good. Mostly it is just stuff that I have read about or found on-line and thought about.

CHAIR - You have a particular interest in this obviously and have given a lot of thought to it.

Mr DEAN - What did you say your position was? I missed that

Mr BROWN - I am a specialist anaesthetist. I am currently just doing one day a week at the Royal Hobart Hospital and three days in the private sector and get one day off a week to play with the children, plus the weekend.

CHAIR - We will draw this session to a close and our deep thanks, David, that has been very good.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.