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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON RURAL ROAD SPEED LIMITS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON MONDAY 19 AUGUST 2013.

Mr BOB RUTHERFORD, DEPUTY SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, WAS RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED; AND **Ms ANGELA COLLIS** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Welcome to you both. Bob, I will start by saying there is a media release from the minister, and we've seen it on ABC News, but the committee hasn't had anything formally delivered to it at this stage. Would you put on the public record some words about what we have here?

Mr RUTHERFORD - Obviously the minister has been listening to a wide range of opinions, and I am taking the deliberations of this committee seriously, and the issues we took back in respect of those conversations. I affirmed what I took to be the support of the committee for taking the limit down to 80 kph on gravel roads. I also can assure you the minister was well apprised of the committee's view that irrespective of where we were in the science this had not been articulated well enough to the community. Importantly, and my memory is Mr Dean may have raised the issue of the need to take the community with you over changes to limits because it is the respect of the 90-odd per cent who obey the rules that is gold in the saddlebags of how we manage our roading system for safety.

I took that to be the tenor of the remarks from the committee, and you may have put it more forthrightly, Mr Dean, that we had not taken the community on that journey and so at risk was respect for the whole system of the setting, and compliance with, speed limits. I hope that adequately captured what was said. I do not know the minister's mind and I don't know what weight he put on the different things before him, but I am certain the committee reflecting those community views, with the advantage of being able to think long and hard about these issues in your review function, would have been of considerable interest to him. We have to take the community with us in these major changes.

Because we have a greater body of knowledge now after all the work that was done, and the considerable discussions last time, we will be proceeding with getting rid of the 'end speed limit' signs and doing the new signing. That was that was discussed at length - Mr Mulder, you pressed that point hard - and it is about giving people some certainty over the rules. We have knowledge now of some of the areas we need to look harder at, what we are signing them at, and we will going out to engage with local government to prosecute that agenda in a detailed way.

Mr DEAN - Bob, what's the position now with the bill? Will the government now move amendments in our place or will you start afresh?

Mr RUTHERFORD - The crucial thing is the default on the gravel roads. That will come before you but it is a fairly simple regulatory change where we change the default speed limit on unsealed roads. We think that is very straightforward. One of the merits of the

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decision by the minister is that it should be fairly simple in implementation, apart from the work we need to do with local government.

Mr DEAN - So the proceedings in our place will be withdrawn to allow the regulatory -

Mr RUTHERFORD - There is nothing before you at this time. The minister had been hopeful of putting things in but there has been a bit of a dialogue about this committee finishing its work.

Ms COLLIS - There would have been a change to the road rule regulations, and it's the same for the gravel default limit.

Ms RATTRAY - Bob, in relation to the 'end speed limit', is the signage underway for that? It was my understanding that signage had already commenced in relation to the 90 kph. Is that not the fact, given it was a 1 November potential change? Will you need to put in signage for the end speed or are you just going to take out what is there and have nothing?

Mr RUTHERFORD - Obviously, you cannot do these things overnight, but because we are not changing what happens when you do get to a current end speed, where the default at the moment is 100 kph, what we will be doing is replacing that with signage, progressively. Instead of saying end speed, it will put the posted speed. Again, listening to both the committee's deliberations and other inputs, we will be proceeding to reinforce that message, 'Drive to the conditions,' because, as we all discussed the last time, one of the issues is when you do get into those default zones, what you can do or ought to sensibly do on those roads, in varying conditions, should be an issue of major judgment for drivers and they need to be strongly reminded that they need to take those conditions into account.

Ms RATTRAY - Had there been work done already on the 90 kph speed signs? Was my information correct or not?

Mr RUTHERFORD - We certainly have not produced any or anything like that, not to my knowledge.

Ms COLLIS - No. It is in train and has not gone to tender yet.

Mr MULDER - You said that you are withdrawing the proposal on the basis that you have not taken the community with you. Given the amount of science that you referred to and the tenacity and the conviction you had that this was so essential to saving lives, are you now of a mind to take this proposal back to the community so that we could well see it at a future time when you do have community support?

Mr RUTHERFORD - That is for a minister to decide.

Mr MULDER - I cannot grill him, I can only grill the department.

Mr RUTHERFORD - We have evidence that a significant part of our network cannot be as safely driven on as we would like at 100 kph and that was the evidence that we relied on from the work that was done for us by ARB [?TBC 1:53:00]. Equally obviously, you

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have to have a system that is workable with the community. Our notion had been that the department had put forward was to re-sign, to change those speed limits. But when you change speed limits and, again, we talked about this, you cannot rely, we used to say, a policeman in every paddock, but you cannot rely on enforcement for that. You have to rely on the community voluntarily cooperating in the respectful way they usually do on roads. But if you have not taken the broad mass of the people, and that is the minister's judgement and I know it was the judgment of several of you. I talk about a general tenor, not a he said, she said. That seems to be where we are now. I think there will be an appraisal over time of different pieces of road and what they should be signed at and it will be an ongoing and intricate process.

Mr MULDER - From that, I take that instead of having a default speed limit, we are now going to be signing the roads, 90 km instead of the default speed limit; is that the case?

Mr RUTHERFORD - In areas where we work with communities and get agreement is the way the minister has decided to go.

Mr MULDER - My question is, on the Tasman and Arthur Highways, what will be the maximum speed limit in those zones that were going pushed down to 90 kph; what are they going to be now? At Sorell, what is the end of road sign going to be replaced with?

Mr RUTHERFORD - At the moment, I don't know. What I can tell you is there will be 100 kph because they will stay at 100 kph until it is otherwise determined and we have done the work, and where we - as the minister has said - have the community on side for the change.

Mr MULDER - That gets to your point, though, that we won't be coming back in under the default scheme, we will be coming back in eventually maybe with say the 90 kph that you propose for the Arthur Highway, but at that time it will be just simply an internal departmental decision that we will go and post new speed limit signs. There will be no change to the regulations; there will be need to come back before parliament for scrutiny so you can get your 90 kph on the Tasman and Arthur Highways in a couple of months time and the first we will know about it is when we happen to drive down the highway.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I am not here with that in front of me, Mr Mulder, as to what the process is. There is no intent to bypass proper process. I suspect that where we are talking about the normal process that that has gone on over the last decades over changing speed limits in specific locations. That is a correct description. I think it is a long bow to go from that to changing whole sections of highway without some form of process and it would -

Mr MULDER - You would have to concede that it could simply be done by changing the posted speed limit sign, which is basically a departmental decision. Yes, is the answer.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It is true.

Mr MULDER - As a proposition that is true, thank you.

Mr RUTHERFORD - And it has been true for the last 50 years or so, but it doesn't mean we do it.

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Mr MULDER - The other question I had, and you talked about the signs and this was the question I had lined up for you before today's announcement, but much was made at several times of the saving of 100 lives over the next six years by reducing the speed limit on rural roads from 100 kph to 90 kph.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I think it was 100 lives and serious injuries, from memory.

Mr MULDER - Serious injuries.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Very important. I don't like to over-claim.

Mr MULDER - Now, I would like to know what the science behind that claim was? How did you calculate that?

Ms COLLIS - Monash University did some modelling for us.

Mr MULDER - Some modelling.

Ms COLLIS - Originally, I think the modelling showed that it would be 126 lives over six years, but that was based on reducing all 100 kph to 90 kph. When we went through the assessment process and some roads were going to remain at 100, that figure came down to around 100.

Mr MULDER - When you use that modelling, does that mean that - how do you calculate which particular - why does the accident rate come down because the accident rate in 90 kph zones is so much less than 100 kph zones, or what is the logical basis behind pulling a number like 126 out by doing it?

Mr RUTHERFORD - As we went through the last time, and I am sure we can get you something more on this, the essence of what we were looking at was it was the level of speed - it wasn't speeding - it was just the level of speed and what that does both into the probability of an incident and to the consequences. Both the probability and the consequences rise at 100 kph as opposed to 90 kph and that was what was used to tease out the number of -

Mr MULDER - Based on the assumption that the average amount of speed being travelled on that road -

Mr RUTHERFORD - Is higher -

Mr MULDER - is lower when you lower the speed limit and it is higher when you raise the speed limit. I am just trying to get the logic about it.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I think that is correct.

Mr MULDER - Thank you. With that assumption there, the average level of speed, but then the other data, surely science should be telling you, that it is not the average level of speed, it is the high end of speed which is the one that causes the seriousness of the accident. I am just wondering about how your modelling can be justified if you were

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talking about average travelling speeds rather than the problem speeds at the top end, which obviously aren't affected by the change in the speed limits.

Ms COLLIS - All speed reduces; there is a consequence of reducing travel speed, so everybody's travel speed will reduce when you lower that limit.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It's obviously the case that we are acting as a informed client to experts. What I ought to say is that I don't receive the emoluments so I won't have the title, rather like my colleague Mr Challen.

Mr MULDER - There is a point that we've had and we'll have an opportunity to discuss it with some other witnesses, the point being that are these accidents caused by people who are obeying the speed limit or are they accidents by people who are deliberately not obeying the speed limit and are going to travel at the speed that causes the damage, irrespective of what you have on the signpost?

Mr RUTHERFORD - Our understanding is that it's at the crux of the issue and I understand that, Mr Mulder.

Mr MULDER - I really think this is an important thing because if we find this comes back or will they change the posted signs and I really think it's important that we understand the rational and the assumptions behind some of this. It gets trotted out under the Monash University cover page and it's implicitly believed, yet there's plenty of evidence that maybe the assumptions and what's being modelled and measured and projected aren't valid and therefore shouldn't be part of public policy. That's why I'm pursuing this line of question.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It is a question that goes to the modelling, it goes to the technical assumptions in the modelling. I would like the opportunity to come back on that issue because I don't have it front of me to look at and refresh my mind.

Ms COLLIS - It is not really about speed as a crash cause, though, the issue is that speed is an aggravating factor in all crashes regardless of the cause, so reducing the travel speed will reduce the impact of the crash.

Mr MULDER - What your modelling is doing is reducing the speed of those who are having the accidents will do it. The policy issue is, does the speed limit signage have that impact on those who are having the high end crashes?

Mr RUTHERFORD - The way I look at your question is this: is the average dominated by the tail of the distribution? Because if it's the case that it is, since that tail may well be based on illegal or improper behaviour, then the analysis would be biased by that tail. We might get a false impression of the effect of speed. I understand the question but I don't have the paper in front of me and I want to go to it. We must, as in many areas of public policy, put our trust in experts, but I'll go back and check that and come back to this.

Mr MULDER - The tail of the distribution is an interesting point. The tail of that distribution you will find from the practitioners saying that it is in the tail of the

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distribution. If we start on that assumption you start to undermine the prospect about reducing the average speed.

Mr RUTHERFORD - If it is the case that that is what the modelling says and that's the issue you are raising. I don't know whether it does.

Mr FINCH - This might be a little bit early to ask this question. I've talked about this during our investigation about driving to the conditions and that principle that seems to have been adopted, particularly by the police, and we've had that resonating in their minds. I've heard that phrase often enough about people who have accidents - that they weren't driving to the conditions. That is going to be one of the planks of the educative program as we go forward. Can you tell me something about that? Is something in place at this stage? You may be able to talk from previous experience about how that educative message has got out there so far and what we might see in the future on the back of this decision not to proceed with the limiting of speed on rural roads. Will it be confined to rural roads or will we expand it out generally to the driving public?

Ms COLLIS - I think the public education campaign will be targeting the rural roads because that is where we have 40 per cent of our crashes. The new signage will have the speed limit and a message underneath saying 'Changing road conditions,' and with a call to action to reduce or adapt speed, or something like that. We will be focusing on the rural roads and the message will be, 'If you see a sign like this, that means that you can't drive consistently at one speed and you need to adapt your driving to suit the changing road conditions.'

Mr FINCH - As I say, probably again a little early, but have you set a budget for that marketing and what that might cost to get that message out?

Ms COLLIS - Our education campaign was likely to be around \$300 000 or \$400 000. That is about average for a public education campaign, including TV advertising.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It would be redirected in its purpose.

Ms COLLIS - We were already going to do the public education.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Obviously inherent in the whole safer non-urban roads project was the need to have a communications campaign. We would hope that that the drive to the conditions message has been a consistent message for many years coming out of road safety. The decision to get rid of the end speed limit and re-sign gives you something that will be obvious to tag the message to in the communications campaign and that is what we would aim to do.

Mr FINCH - Thanks very much.

Mr DEAN - In relation to the change in position, what in fact has been the Road Safety Advisory Committee's position on this? Are they obviously now supportive of the changes that are going to occur or are they still adamant that we should have proceeded in the way that the government wanted to go?

Mr RUTHERFORD - I am not in a position to talk about the position of the -

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Mr DEAN - The reason I ask that is because the chairman, Mr Gledhill, was telling us very clearly on all the evidence that they had, that the signs they had, as Tony has indicated, there would be the saving of a number of lives and a number of serious injuries, etcetera, over a period of time. If that position they were holding was based on real evidence, then I would find it difficult to understand why they would now not want to continue and press on with the position that they had previously. What has changed that?

Mr RUTHERFORD - I am not aware that anything has. I have not had any discussions with the Road Safety Advisory Committee.

Mr DEAN - You are not aware of the minister's -

Mr RUTHERFORD - And I am not aware of what advice the minister has taken in that regard.

Mr DEAN - On the information that we have been provided with so far, nothing has come out of the Road Safety Advisory Committee that I am aware of.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I think it is fair to say that the Road Safety Advisory Committee was in a similar space to the department; we did put a lot of weight on the scientific advice and on the work we had done on road condition, and that leads you to a technical view - if I can put it that way - and it does go to the heart of some of our discussion the last time, a technical view that the limit should be lower, but it doesn't necessarily address the issues that were raised about the need for the co-operation of the community in implementation.

Mr DEAN - Moving forward with the position that Tony was putting, or some of it, during our last questioning of yourself and others it was made fairly clear - I thought so myself and I think others did as well - that a lot of the crashes that were occurring were commonly those people who were exceeding the speed limit as it was - those who were exceeding 100 kph and we were trying to make that clear at the time and we received further evidence on that, some statistical data, but it really didn't, in my view, answer that proposition that we were putting, that it does not matter what the speed limit is, if you have people going over the speed limit causing accidents and involved in accidents then reducing the speed limit is -

Mr RUTHERFORD - That's similar to the comment that Tony Mulder made a moment ago.

Mr DEAN - Another point is that the trials that were going out in the Tasman and Kingborough areas really didn't, with the greatest respect, support the lowering of speed limits to any degree. The Tasman one in particular demonstrated that in fact crashes have increased.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Yes, I think we touched on this last time. We saw those trials as being about acceptability in the community rather than imagining that the level of data you get from two trials like that and for the time period involved would ever be adequate to justify the bringing in of the lower speed limit on an outcomes basis because clearly it would not.

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Mr DEAN - I am pleased to hear you say that because I was of the view that you are basing a lot of what you want to do on those trials, on the Kingborough trial in particular, but now you are saying it was about acceptance by the public.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I apologise - I pulled before I tried to speak to that about on the last occasion, but I mightn't have been as clear as I should have been because I absolutely accept that. It's important because we are on an evidence basis, which is what Tony's point was about, the point you both just made about the nature of the trail; it is a really important point.

Mr DEAN - It is, thank you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR - Bob, the department did a lot of work with local councils and particularly with their roads and the 3-metre carriageways and the criteria which would have to be met. Just looking forward, where are you going to go with that now? Will that work continue with them? Angela may be able to answer that for me.

Ms COLLIS - We will be going back to the councils to discuss the results of the assessments with them and as the minister has indicated, where a community wants to look at reducing some sections of road, we will be looking to do that if that is what the community wants. But the first step is taking the results back to the local governments so that they can see how the assessments came out.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I am meeting on Wednesday with the Kingborough road safety committee and that was in the diary before this announcement. No doubt what is talked about will change a bit but it is very important that we continue that engagement; the local governments are absolutely critical partners in this, in trying to get safer outcomes and we are all about that - the highway is the issue.

Ms RATTRAY - I wanted a clarification, Mr Rutherford, around where you indicated that the potential saving of lives was 'lives and serious accidents' over the six years - it was never just 'lives'?

Mr RUTHERFORD - No.

Ms RATTRAY - Because I was absolutely certain it was always 100 lives over six years.

Mr DEAN - You are right, it was lives and it is included in your short manual put out by the road safety advisory committee.

Ms COLLIS - I think the term was 'saving more than 100 lives, including fatalities and serious injuries'. We have never said it was just fatalities.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I don't know what others have said; I've got my transcript from the last time.

Ms RATTRAY - It says, 'serious injury'.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It says, 'more than 100 people from death or serious injury over six years'. I think language is really important in this because one of the issues that we've all

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got in this area is that we have actually been successful in getting the road toll down a very long way - historically, and in international comparisons, we stand up pretty well. It gets harder and harder to keep people's attention focused on the level of road trauma we still have so the language is important.

Ms RATTRAY - I wanted to clarify that.

Mr RUTHERFORD - We focus on the serious injury more because it is obviously a bit more stable and there is a number but there are still large numbers from the trauma inflicted on Tasmanian families so we just have to keep on keeping on over it.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Mr Chair, that is all I have in relation to questioning I am very pleased that the Minister has taken on board the Tasmanian communities.

Mr MULDER - My question is a point on the speed trials and why I wanted to make the point at the same time; the point came out that the two trials, which I think ran over two years in each of the municipalities, the point being made was that there was insufficient time to take any really significant note of the accident data that could be collected during that period of time, but I will point out, though, that the other major thing that those two trials were looking at was the impact upon the average speed at which vehicles were travelling and I would also like to point out that that did not change either in either of the studies by any significant proportion; in other words, the community awareness program did not impact upon the average speeds that people were travelling at in those areas. What was gained from those trials? You did not get community acceptance, you did not get a change in the speed limit and it insufficient data to make any findings about the accidents.

Ms COLLIS - We have very high community acceptance. There is 81-84 per cent.

Mr MULDER - On the community survey stuff? Acceptance needs to translate into behaviour, surely.

Mr RUTHERFORD - The evidence is very limited from that sort of trial.

Mr MULDER - The average speed is pretty comprehensive, you park your speed camera on the side of the road and you measure every car that drives past.

Ms COLLIS - There were fewer vehicles travelling at high speeds; that was one of the outcomes that was deducted in the evaluation.

Mr DEAN - How did that change?.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I tend to think in statistical terms, I was concerned that these were snapshot measures and the results were a bit mixed. It is that issue again that you get that problem at the end in a sense that the results for the end of the top end of the distribution were better than for the average, so it is a bit of a mixed bag. What we'd hope, and this will depend on where we go to when we talk to those areas concerned, but there may be some appetite for continuing work with the councils on what can be done to look at that further, but that is a conversation to be had with Kingborough and Tasman.

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Mr FINCH - Mr Rutherford, of the influences that might have come in to play for the minister to change his mind and the evidence that that might be coming forward, I wonder what sort of impact the petition by, Mr Richard Sheriff might have had on the minister's thinking. Was that talked about in the department - that it is a very strong petition that he had developed?

Mr RUTHERFORD - I was aware of its existence, I have had no conversation with the minister or his office on that subject so I do not know the answer. He has obviously listened to a number of sources, not least the report back from this committee. I am unaware of what influence such a petition would have.

Mr FINCH - No, I just thought that it was a very strong one, 2 917, some time ago with the possibility that it would go well over 3 000, so to me, for somebody who is doing it while he is trying to run a business as well, is a very strong result, in respect of public opinion.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It goes back to the point I made at the start, which is a point made in this committee: that the system only works if the vast majority of law-abiding citizens obey the rules. It is fundamental.

Mr DEAN - I take it that the minister is wanting to bring this forward as quickly as he possibly can, these changes in the gravel roads and changes to the regulations?

Mr RUTHERFORD - Given that we have some momentum and the support that came from this committee and others to take this forward, then I am sure he will want to do it as quickly as possible. He reflected a lot of what we have heard elsewhere. I think the last time, when I started to talk about 80 kph on the gravel road, it was, 'No, we aren't going to talk about that.' We all agree it is time to move on. Let us get to the hard stuff. It does not mean that there aren't gains to be had by doing that. It is a classic case where it is very easy to focus on the differences and not focus on where we all agreed and ticked the box and could see a gain and said, 'Let us do it.'

CHAIR - Bob, I will just clarify there. We have the minister's statement, the minister's media release, and I think it either comes back to Tony's question or Tony's clarification to do with councils. It says:

Mr O'Byrne confirmed that the default speed limit on rural roads statewide will not be reduced from 100 kph to 90 kph. Instead the government will continue to roll out a major education campaign and will work with local communities and councils to keep Tasmanians safe on our roads.

Does that mean pressure will be brought to bear at all on councils to reduce that speed limit? Given those road restrictions or parameters that I talked about before, a three-metre carriageway and everything else, that they will have to then conform and introduce a 90 kph speed limit? I am just trying to clarify that.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I don't think that is the intent. I think the intent is to work to get community agreement on these things. We are not talking about, as it were, going around the back door. It is easy to put constructions on these things. We have an administrative power to slap signs up and lower speed limits. We can go along and say

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we have this evidence that says it should be so, so it will be so, but that would go against the whole point of where the minister has gone - that we do need to take the community on the journey appropriately, recognising, as we thought we did at the beginning, that there are some tricky issues in here.

You will recall that the model that we first brought in was not a purist model. We did not just take the criteria and go bang anywhere. We recognise that this is important for communities and there are different issues at play.

Ms RATTRAY - That position was actually your second position. The first position was a complete blanket and then it came back to where there was consultation about the quality of the roads.

Mr RUTHERFORD - We had the sort of work that had been done looked at again because it would have seriously affected a lot of the main network and hence efficiency and journey times for Tasmanians. I think that was an entirely appropriate thing to do.

Ms COLLIS - That came out of the consultation back at the end of 2010-2011.

Ms RATTRAY - But initially it was a blanket ban.

Ms COLLIS - It was all hundreds to 90, that was the proposal from the Road Safety Taskforce.

Ms RATTRAY - I remember going to the uninvited meeting that they held at Scottsdale.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It is important that in our policy development the Road Safety Councils focuses on road safety. It's when you bring it into a broader public policy debate that you have to look at other considerations. I think our process works quite helpfully like that. I don't want a public service that always gets it right first off, frankly; I want a public service that puts ideas forward, engages with the community, engages with parliamentarians and arrives at something Tasmanians want.

Ms RATTRAY - But initially the Road Safety Council were going around selling that concept saying that they had arrived at that position. It wasn't with community consultation at all.

Mr COLLIS - I can't speak for the Road Safety Council, they are a separate body who cross the department.

Mr MULDER - When we were having this debate the last time about the effect of increasing rural speed limits, I think some of the documents that were produced afterwards, 'The Effect of Increasing Rural Interstate Speed Limits in the United States,' the report by Patterson, Frith, Povey and Keall, do you recall that?

Mr COLLIS - No.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I can recall the title without recalling the content.

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Mr MULDER - For *Hansard* I am passing Mr Rutherford a copy of the paper to see if he recognised it.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I'll have to speed read it.

Mr MULDER - It is all right, I will read out the relevant bit.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Yes, read out the relevant bit and then I will know what I am looking for.

Mr MULDER - The document, for the benefit of *Hansard* titled 'The Effect of Increasing Rural Interstate Speed Limits in The United States,' is a copy from the Transport NSW Library, 29 May 2013. The authors are Tui L Patterson, William J Frith, Lynley J Povey and Michael D Keall.

CHAIR - Yes, it has already been tabled.

Mr MULDER - This demonstrates the ambivalence about trying to drag science in to arguments about human behaviour. The studies by Reading Green in 1997 and the NHTSA, the National Highway Transport Safety Administration, the United States body, in 1998 indicated that despite large speed limit changes, mean speeds did not change substantially immediately after the states raised their speed limits. This is the likely reason the number of fatalities in the States that raised their rural interstate speed limits did not increase dramatically following the speed limit changes.

That would seem to be a counter-factual point to what your reasoning is. The final paragraph of this report then goes on, '... nevertheless, it is the increase in speeds following the speed limit increases that is the most likely explanation for finding that the number of fatalities increased significantly in states that raised their speed limits when compared to the states that did not change their speed limits.' I wonder, through all of that, what on earth are we to make of these studies when they can come up with basically one line that says, 'The change in the average speed did not dramatically increase the accident rate.' and then says, 'Nevertheless, the change in the accident rate is put down to the change in the speed limit'.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Without defending the learned authors, in a specific sense I can tell you that it is a common thing in behavioural studies to have a hysteresis phenomenon, by which I mean you get a lagged effect on past behaviour. It takes time; people do not adapt to change. Indeed, to put the reverse, and which I think has been influential, one of the issues over whether you will get compliance or not undermines the model, is that by lowering the limit, we would have been asking people to change behaviours abruptly. If they had not believed in it as policy, so that we didn't take the 95 per cent we want, then we would have non-compliance and that undermines the system. That hysteresis effect when you are moving downwards relies on a compliance model. Clearly it is asymmetric when you lift them upwards, because then habit persistence will mean that people do not immediately start driving faster, but over time one would expect that they would. Academic papers are -

Mr MULDER - Written by academics.

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Mr RUTHERFORD - Yes, written by academics. I will tell you another time about one I wrote last year that caused me enormous grief. I was lured back into doing it against my better judgment.

Mr MULDER - That, then, leads me on to another point which was raised, we were constantly told that this will have this effect. I am more concerned about a comment that was made a couple of times during the evidence; one I recall was by Mr Gledhill, that we were at the end of the tether; we had done everything; this was the only thing left to do. I think if that is the rationale then I am more than happy to proceed with your trials over time, provided we measure them. I am really concerned that when cornered on this that that becomes the 'do something', 'we have to do something' and this was the only thing left to do.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I think to be kinder, because I think you have tried to lure me into saying it was a silver bullet the last time.

Mr MULDER - No, no, the chair of the Road Safety Council projected a slide up there that said 'silver bullets'. I lured you into nothing; that is your road safety man.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I did not see it. The point I would make over that is that if you can implement something like this successfully, and we have been having a debate here about whether the preconditions exist, then it offered the prospect of the sort of step change that we achieved in the past. It does not mean, and I completely agree with you, that there aren't a lot of opportunities for iterative changes that improve things. I would expect and be confident that if we can get a successful refresh of the drive to the conditions message, leveraged off the improved signage that we all want, that of itself should lead to a significant improvement, but possibly not of the sort that we were talking about if we could have brought in a successful change of the other sort. That assumes ideal conditions, which -

Mr MULDER - There is also the issue here of the law of diminishing returns. I mean, 2008 to 2005 did not get half the jump.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Yes, quite, I completely agree.

Mr MULDER - Therefore, I think some of us have deep concerns about the law of diminishing returns when it comes to 100 kph to 90 kph.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It goes to the heart of that issue when you get down to low levels. We were talking about keeping the community focused. All injury is individual and we need to remember that. Statistics are one thing; it is the trauma inflicted on individual families that matters.

Mr MULDER - And those who had to go and scrape people off the roads.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Absolutely. Completely.

Mr DEAN - As I understand it, this was the Road Safety Advisory Committee's initiative, or was it an initiative of -

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Ms COLLIS - The Road Safety Advisory Council.

Mr DEAN - Right, it was their initiative, and I would take it that now the minister just did not come off his own back and make this decision to turn about on this, so there had to be a discussion, I take it, from you to the minister; is that right? As I asked the question previously, where does the Council now fit into that decision? They must have been consulted, I would have thought, by either yourselves or the minister prior to the minister making that announcement today. Can you tell me how that happened?

Mr RUTHERFORD - You will need to take that up with the minister.

Mr DEAN - Did you take it to the minister and say, 'Our advice is we haven't taken the community along with us'?

Mr RUTHERFORD - No, the department did not take that kind of advice to the minister. The department did report back, and I reported back, after the previous interchanges here, the tenor of the argument. It would not be seen as a departmental -

Mr DEAN - I want to cut you off there because that was well and truly before the estimates process.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I am not claiming that the minister changed his mind.

Mr DEAN - I am trying to work out what has happened. During the estimates process - and that was well and truly after all that evidence came out, and now with questioning of yourself and others - the minister was very strong on his position of maintaining the course of action you wanted to take on the rural road speed limits. So something has happened between the estimates process, which was only a few months ago, and today. What has happened? Did you go to the minister in the last few weeks and say, 'All the evidence does not stack up' and/or, 'We haven't taken the community along with us. We believe we ought now not proceed with that'? Has the Road Safety Advisory Council been involved in that process? The minister is not going to do it off his own bat.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I believe this minister has made this decision with the broader perspective you have as a minister about the views of the community. We gave the sort of advice we had been consistently giving about the benefits of the change. He has made a judgment, informed by a broad range of community interaction, not to proceed. I can't speak to the connection with the Road Safety Advisory Council. We have not had any interaction with them suggesting it should not proceed in the way we recommended. I am fairly used to ministers making decisions that weren't absolutely what the department put forward. That is what they exist for, to a large extent.

CHAIR - With all due respect, I understand the line of questioning but I think some of those questions perhaps are for the minister and the Road Safety Council to answer.

Mr DEAN - They will, Chair, and they will be raised with them, but I thought Mr Rutherford may have known some detail. He said DIER didn't, so that has answered my question.

Mr RUTHERFORD - No, DIER did not.

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CHAIR - Bob and Angela, thank you very much for appearing today under somewhat changed circumstances. We appreciate your frankness.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Mr BARRY McDONALD, COLLISION RECONSTRUCTIONIST, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Welcome, Barry. I am sure you are familiar with parliamentary committee procedure and the fact that you are covered by privilege whilst you are giving evidence but, however, when you go outside you may not be.

Mr McDONALD - Before we start, there is one correction I want to make and two small additional verbal submissions. The correction is on the last page which reads: 'when you travel the northern part of the Midland Highway in a 120 zone' that should read '110 zone.' My proofreader did not get it right. The comment that I wanted to put, which I discovered in addition to this, is that there are many states in the United States have increased their speed limits.

CHAIR - Sorry, Barry, could you introduce yourself and give your qualifications and your past history, if you would not mind, for the purposes of *Hansard*?

Mr McDONALD - I am a collision reconstructionist in a private capacity now. I reconstruct accidents to determine what happened and not now, but used to as a police officer, who was responsible. I did 20 years in the police force as a collision reconstructionist. In that period I attended over 200 accidents where there were fatalities and there were about 260 fatalities and as many again where there were serious injuries. I have done many courses on collision reconstruction, including human behaviour in vehicle driving and in collisions.

Mr DEAN - I think you were accepted as a police expert in that area, weren't you?

Mr McDONALD - I was for about the last 14 years of my career and I have been accepted in civil courts since.

Mr DEAN - That is right.

CHAIR - That is good. That sets the scene.

Mr McDONALD - Many of the states in the United States in recent years have increased the speed limit by 5 mph to 10 mph which is about 8 kph to 16 kph. In one of those states, Illinois, in their equivalent of our preamble to an act, they stated that one of the reasons they increased the speed limit was for safety.

One area that received a lot of attention in the press in regard to this is the section of road between Orford and Sorell. If you change the speed limit from 100 kph to 90 kph, you only increase the travel time of about three and half minutes. There is not a real lot of difference in the time travel. Or if you reduce to 80 kph, it is about seven minutes. There is not a lot of difference in the time but there is big difference when you get to those long, straight sections of road, as I have referred to in my submission, of frustration of people when the road is relatively safe at 100 kph and here I am, sitting back, crawling at 80 kph or breaching it and being booked.

Ms RATTRAY - I think a lot of people can relate to that evidence, Barry.

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Mr FINCH - That is interesting that you said that some states in the United States are increasing their speed limit. What did you make of that; what do you read into that or what did you find in your investigations?

Mr McDONALD - I have not seen the all of the legislation. I know of the preamble in Illinois where they specifically stated that they are bringing in a balance between getting people from A to B conveniently, in a reasonable time and safely. It is a balance. Let's say we go to what may be again become the open speed limit in Darwin. An open speed limit gets them there a lot faster but if you get up round 180 kph or 200 kph, I would not like to be rolling a car at that speed.

Mr FINCH - Your reflection on that and the way it resonates with you, as a collision reconstructionist, does that resonate with you as being positive in respect of safety?

Mr McDONALD - The current speed limit?

Mr FINCH - No, the one in America where they are increasing the speed limit.

Mr McDONALD - Yes. It is different types of road, so I do not know what their road are - presumably a lot better than ours - and I do not know what they went from to, but they did increase it by 10 mph.

Mr FINCH - It did resonate with you, the thought that they are doing it for safety reasons, for economic reasons and other reasons but it did not ring alarm bells to you that they are creating some sort of speedway there where more people are going to die?

Mr McDONALD - No. You get the situation here - I do not care what speed limit you put, you are always going to get people who are going to breach it and breach it, on occasions, a lot over it. I do not care what impediment we put in their way, they are always going to be doing it. Apart from taking them off the road, I do not know how to stop them.

CHAIR - Barry, do you have a view in regard to the trials that were done in the Kingborough municipality and also in Tasman? They were in the context of the rest of Tasmania in that topographically they are pretty constricted areas anyway, so you are not going to go at huge speeds.

Mr McDONALD - I didn't even know it had been done down in Tasman, but certainly the Huon one - sorry, the Kingborough one - every time you saw those signs coming in there it did make you think; it did make you slow down. I do not know whether it was enforceable or not, but it certainly made you slow down. There are some sections on that road as well where - not a real lot but some sections - where 100 kph is safe.

CHAIR - I think the minister and the department are now saying they have changed tack in the last couple of hours, essentially, to improve road safety, on-road line markings, better interpretive signage, would you agree that they are probably better ways of going down the track rather than the proposal we have been looking at?

Mr McDONALD - Yes, and I heard the minister today mention that 'end speed limit' was going to be eliminated, which is great. Another area I would like to see would be similar

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to Victoria where - and we have them in a couple of places here in Tassie - where it says '60 speed limit ahead'. In a lot of places in Victoria not only did it have a sign, but it had it on the road warning that there is a speed limit coming up.

Mr FINCH - There was one coming into Brighton, I noticed today.

Mr McDONALD - We have it in two or three places around Tasmania, but not many.

Mr MULDER - There are a couple of issues that we have often had here and I would just like to explore them with you. The veracity of the investigation by Tasmania Police of a lot of these accidents on rural roads; I notice in your new life as a collision reconstructionist that you would be having an opportunity to review a lot of those accident reports. I wonder what weight you give to the opinion of untrained police officers attending an accident in a remote location, particularly in regard to their assessment of the cause being speed.

Mr McDONALD - I gave evidence along these lines to a Legislative Council committee about four or five years ago. There are two levels of accidents where police investigate: the minor accident where it is just done as a very basic investigation by an untrained officer; when you get to more serious accidents, and I am talking about serious injuries or fatalities, the experts come in and you get a more thorough investigation. You get an investigation that tends - I do not say it always does - but tends to get towards the truth.

I might give you an example of a fatality up on Fingal Main Road about 15 years ago - head-on fatality between the Midlands Highway and Fingal. A relief constable from Launceston attended the accident. He was not a trained accident investigator, but he was the de facto investigator on the day. On television he said, 'Given the amount of damage to the cars I would not have any idea what went on.' If I saw that much damage to cars, it is easy as anything to work out. It was giving the impression that because there was so much damage you could not tell anything. The more damage the easier it is to work out what occurred.

Ms RATTRAY - The more damage, then obviously the higher speed, is that what you are saying?

Mr McDONALD - Usually, yes. There can be other reasons, but usually, yes. You take two cars either closing at 80 kph or 100 kph. That is 160 kph or 200 kph coming together; it is a big force.

Mr MULDER - A lot of these accidents are cases of cars running off the road. In your experience, how often the fact that they have run off the road at a corner attributed to excessive speed, whereas there may be other factors, such as inattention?

Mr McDONALD - There are a lot of factors in it but the usual run off the road one is a single vehicle. Quite often they do not get injured. The others are unlucky; they find a hydro pole or a ditch, but others run off and are not badly injured. It is usually tiredness or alcohol. Falling asleep through one of those.

Mr MULDER - In the reports that you have seen over the years, are a lot of those incidents put down to excessive speed when in fact there are multiple other causes?

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Mr McDONALD - They probably are when in fact the speed would, more often than not, be well under the speed limit. I am talking about the very heavily drunk driver - very seldom do you see them speeding. They are just about going to sleep at the wheel and the car will quite often stop before it comes off the road. It might just stop and roll over. It doesn't happen very often, but there are some occasions - and I have dealt with them - where you have a combination of speed and alcohol, but that is mainly in the younger people. It is a real tragedy.

Mr MULDER - You have said in your evidence - and you might confirm that I have understood you correctly - that although some collisions are caused by excess speed, we are now finding that maybe some accidents are being caused by the frustration of low speed limits.

Mr McDONALD - They probably are. Accident investigation people do not attend minor accidents, and police officers are not trained to work through an accident and reconstruct it. Quite often they will just tick the first box - speed - whether speed was a factor or not.

Mr MULDER - So how do you estimate the speed a car was travelling at?

Mr McDONALD - There are many methods. It can be from the skid marks, from damage to the vehicle, the distance a pedestrian is thrown - there are a lot of ways of estimating it.

Mr MULDER - It is a question of pure physics isn't it - just getting the momentum and other details and reconstructing?

Mr McDONALD - Yes.

Mr MULDER - I note from your CV that you have done a fair bit of work for defendants, who are using your expertise. How are the accident reports the police are presenting to courts in prosecution matters stacking up now, with their capacity to investigate?

Mr McDONALD - There is a big discrepancy. You get some very good ones from the experienced investigators, but there are not very many experienced accident investigators in Tasmania. I do not believe the police are doing enough training, but that is another matter. And you get others where the file shows the inexperience of the officer who initially attended the incident.

Ms RATTRAY - So it is a very specialised field of work and needs a high level of training - is that your view Barry?

Mr McDONALD - To get to a competent level it needs a lot of training. I will put it in very simplistic terms. It is purely what we used to call in the old days 'physics' or in an engineering degree, a section called mechanical engineering. It is no more, no less than Newton's laws.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, can I ask Barry about his view on the 'standard of road' criterion? The department used the 'standard of road' to identify what they considered to be a safe speed - is that something you have spent much time on in your position as a collision reconstruction expert?

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Mr McDONALD - It is not, in that I have never been called on to do that. I certainly know of accident scenes where the cars are travelling on narrow roads, and I see some of them when I am driving the roads. I don't know whether anyone has been down to Sorell lately but they are putting a new bridge on the other side of Sorell going towards Port Arthur. The old bridge is just too narrow. I would hate to see two trucks - they do pass, but there is not a breath of room. Okay, they are improving areas but there are a lot of areas that still need a lot of improvement.

Ms RATTRAY - When you were assessing an accident in your previous employment you wouldn't look too much at the condition of the road, as such?

Mr McDONALD - Only in the specific area of the accident - not the road generally - but certainly there may have been some factor in the specific area of the accident. An example would be on a back road between Dunalley and Primrose Sands. We had a fatality there and the coroner and I forced the local council to put in a safety rail. The council did not think it was warranted because there had only been one death there. Bureaucracy gone mad.

Ms RATTRAY - So, just because there has not been a history of fatalities that does not mean there is no need to look at those sorts of areas and implement safety measures?

Mr McDONALD - For sure. In that case though, we had the fatality, but the council did not want to put the safety rail in. The coroner, Mr Madison, ended up forcing them to do it - not forcing but coercing. There are a lot of areas like that - many places around the state where safety railing would prevent vehicles running off the road. As a safety measure I prefer the wire fencing, which motorcyclists seem to hate, to the Armco. The wire fencing grabs and grips the car and it is not going to go anywhere. With the Armco, if you have two way traffic the car will bounce into it and bounce back to the other side.

Ms RATTRAY - That is interesting.

Mr FINCH - I am wondering what impact you think 'driving to the conditions' might have with the marketing and educative campaign that the government will proceed with. Considering your experience with human behaviour and accidents - the way people behave on the road - what advice would you give, in respect of getting that message through, to those people who need solid messages to improve their driving behaviour?

Mr McDONALD - It is very hard in that the core drivers you are trying to target are the teenagers and the early twenties. How do we get them to listen to the message?

Ms RATTRAY - Especially when they are ten foot tall and bullet proof.

Mr McDONALD - Yes, they all think they are. Most people, as we get more mature, or old as I am, understand these messages.

Mr MULDER - So, you have mellowed?

Mr McDONALD - Your comment a moment ago about being bullet proof and ten foot tall is exactly right. The terrifying part about the time I was working on these fatal accidents was that probably two thirds of them would be kids between 15 and 25. Life gone - just

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like that. I am not an advertising guru, but how do you get the message across to them? When I was with the police, I wanted to take some of my photos into the school room, but I was not allowed to - it might upset too many children. I do not want to unnecessarily stress them but I would love school kids - pre-licence kids - to see what it is like out there in the real world and what their stupid behaviour can do.

Mr FINCH - So you would suggest that the ones to target are young people who are first getting their licence, and are new on the road and those in their early twenties who have gained a little experience but still have a certain amount of bravado?

Mr McDONALD - There are problems with people in other age groups, but they are the core ones. Their confidence is up, their experience is next to nil, they just got themselves a brand new car and want to show it off to the girlfriend and the mates. And egged on by their mates as well.

Ms RATTRAY - With the motorcycle licence, when you first get your licence you are limited to riding bikes below a certain level of power. Is that something you have ever considered with cars? We often see 17-year olds with a V8 ute or V8 sedan and some would say that is too powerful for them when they might be wanting to show off a bit or are not quite as experienced. Is that something you think might be worth the government and/or Road Safety Advisory Council looking at?

Mr McDONALD - Maybe. We will go back to the motorbikes. They are initially limited to 250cc, I think.

Ms RATTRAY - That is all you can have when you first start.

Mr McDONALD - That is a powerful bike. It is very similar to the cars, you are talking about the high-powered car but -

Ms RATTRAY - You don't think it would make much difference?

Mr McDONALD - I don't know that it would make a lot of difference because nearly all cars today can be pretty powerful. Some are a little bit more showy, with a noisier muffler and stripes along the top.

Ms RATTRAY - But often those old ones, Barry, don't have as many of the safety features as what the newer ones do so therefore you have young, experienced drivers driving older cars with less safety features.

Mr McDONALD - You take a 1960s car and it had no side barriers, it had no seat belts, a very solid steering wheel, sharp pieces on the dash, sharp sun visors, not laminated windscreens -

Ms RATTRAY - They didn't crumple like they do today, though, some of them.

Mr McDONALD - It is a lot better, the fact that they crumple, it is. If you take a car that's solid like that and you hit it and where is it going to go? It is going to take the driver and occupants full-on. If you let it crush down to there, there is that much slowing down or

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buffering that it's [? 3.26.07] not allowed to do. The fact that they do crumple is a safety factor.

Ms RATTRAY - I just thought they were cheaper to make, so there you go.

Mr DEAN - Barry, throughout this committee there has been evidence and statistical data provided and some statistical data not provided but what we have been told is that if you reduce the speed from 100 kph to 90 kph on these rural roads that have been targeted - the Tasman Highway and a few other highways - there could be a saving of 106 lives and/or serious injuries. Coming from that, and you might not be able to answer it, what would be your position on that, where you reduce the speed of a car from 100 kph to 90 kph? In your opinion and with your background, what would you say to that statement?

Mr McDONALD - For a start, I don't know where they come up with a specific figure like that.

Mr DEAN - That was over six years, I'm sorry.

Mr McDONALD - Yes, but the fact they come up with a statistic figure that it can be reduced by this, I don't know.

Ms RATTRAY - A Monash University study.

Mr McDONALD - Yes, I have dealt with Monash University. They are very good academics. Let's take two cars head-on at 100 kph and two cars head-on at 90 kph. There is probably a little chance of less injury at 90 kph but instead of having a person deceased you have probably got a quadriplegic - you have saved a life but what sort of life have you saved?

Mr DEAN - No, that's bang right on and that's why -

Mr McDONALD - The higher the speed, the more risk of injury at any time but if you take that as 180 to 200, it's very likely the same injury outcome but if not, you are going to have one dead and one badly injured for life.

Mr DEAN - The other area that I wanted to touch on, there is a dearth of information or statistics around in relation to speed of vehicles at the time of a crash. In other words, the question that I have asked and others have asked here is: how many deaths or serious-injury accidents have occurred on our rural roads where the speed limit has not been exceeded? That is a very difficult one to which to get an answer and that's what this is all about.

Mr McDONALD - I wouldn't put a percentage on it but certainly there are a lot where they were over the speed limit, but probably more under it. I'm just trying to think of a common factor and one I half spoke about earlier - the drunk who runs off the road either just goes into a paddock and does no harm, apart from damage to his car, or he meets a Hydro pole and, bang, dead. Usually they are not speeding. I could tell by the amount of damage very, very closely what the speed was. I have one down the Huon in my mind that was that very thing - off the road, straight into a tree and [*punches hand*].

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Mr DEAN - The other question coming from that is that the Road Safety Advisory Council have seen this as a strong way - I think they use the word 'silver bullet' or whatever it is - in reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on our rural roads. With your experience and background, do you see other ways this could be accomplished rather than proceeding down the path of reintroducing reduced speed?

Mr McDONALD - The cons outweigh the pros of reducing it. You get the frustration and inattention - all right, you have the lower speed but you have to balance it out with the frustration and inattention. You get motorists who say, 'These parliamentarians tell me I can't do 100 kph on the road here and I get booked for the same thing'. For the sake of trying to be do-gooders, are we getting the public right off side?

Mr DEAN - Barry, can you take that further? What are some of the things they probably should consider looking at? Do you have anything you have looked at or considered yourself that would go some way towards making -

Mr McDONALD - In some areas, such as the Mud Walls Road, they have the indication of a winding road. There are a lot of other roads where you come to those winding sections - I would like to see warning signs on all those roads where there is a winding section ahead, then they know to slow down.

Ms RATTRAY - There are some around but there needs to be more attention, in your view?

Mr McDONALD - Yes.

CHAIR - Barry, you may have seen in the Northern Midlands Council area, for example, that they have markings on the road when you are approaching a crest or a corner, which gives prior notice.

Mr McDONALD - It is a balancing act between getting people efficiently from A to B, conveniently and safely. We have to balance out all those things.

Mr MULDER - The member for Apsley was talking about learners. How do you get the experience into 17-22-year-olds when they don't get their licence until they are 17? They hit the road without any experience. I wonder if an idea that has been put out in the past, that perhaps we should issue learners' licences from about the age of 13. They can't drive by themselves until they are 18 but through those high school years they can be trained and by the time they get to 18 and are allowed in the car on their own or with their mates then they have at least that qualification as an experience.

Mr McDONALD - I would like to see it started out on the theoretical part - I don't know what stage you would jump into the practical part of it. Extending to the other end of that, where you said about having their mates in the car at 18, I would like to see provisional licence holders not allowed to have their mates in their car - just one other person or an adult with them. If you have a carfull egging him on to go faster, he is more likely to do it if he is encouraged by his mates.

Mr MULDER - Victoria outlaws that, doesn't it, more than two in a car if you are under -

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Mr McDONALD - It may have changed, it never used to be.

Mr MULDER - Maybe they were just planning to do it but lacked the political will. What are your concerns about a 13-14-year-old who is big enough and has the physical attributes gaining experience under that classroom instruction where you could more than teach them how to drive? You could start to create an awareness of the fact they are driving a tonne of potentially lethal metal. It would seem to me that a practical course with a lot of classroom instruction, like any other boat safety course, is an idea worth pursuing. By the time they are 18 or 20 and allowed to drive a car on their own, they will then have the experience that they don't have today.

Mr McDONALD - I don't about the 13-year-old, but certainly bring it down. The other problem you would have if you bring it down too far is if the kid is starting at 13 in that car, he is a learner for the another four years. It is a frustrating four years. I go along with you to a point, but is four years too long?

Mr MULDER - The point of the exercise is to get that learning started early and to get some experience under their belt before they hit those dangerous years on their own. One year provisional and one year learner's just seems to me that that is not achieving that.

Mr McDONALD - I agree, but I do not know about the 13-year-old.

Mr MULDER - Also the other thing is a lot of us were farm boys who were driving tractors around when we were 12 years of age and consequently we passed our licences pretty quickly because we had the practical experience.

Mr McDONALD - That was only farm boys.

Mr FINCH - Barry, the positive of this initiative by the government and by the Road Safety Advisory Council was about the gravel roads - reducing it from 90 kph down to 80 kph, so perhaps you might give us your thoughts from your experience of that move, which seems to have been a no-brainer.

Mr McDONALD - Gravel roads knock your tyres about a lot more, I can tell you. As far as driving goes the vehicle has - a dry gravel road, a wet gravel road is different - on a dry gravel road the vehicle has almost the same holding power as on a bitumen road, a good example being when we do skid tests to work out a factor we call how a vehicle grips to the road, we take the ABS off the car, we go to say 60 or 80 kph, lock the brakes up and let it skid to a stop and it lets us work out the coefficient of friction. On gravel roads and bitumen roads there was very little difference in that distance.

Although gravel roads do knock your tyres around a lot more. On a wet gravel road you don't have much control, but on a dry gravel road not a lot of difference. It makes a mess of your car but not a lot of difference to handling capacity.

CHAIR - Yes, it probably depends on the composition of the gravel a bit and also whether it has much loose stuff on the top or it is well compacted.

Mr McDONALD - Yes, it varies.

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Mr MULDER - Isn't that contraindicated by the number of foreign tourists who hire a car and used to have crashes on gravel roads to a point where the hire industry said hire cars are banned from gravel roads?

Mr McDONALD - The main basis behind that was tourists getting on any country road - not just gravel but any country road - they stop and look at something scenic; there is no traffic around they get back on the road and go to the right-hand side of the road. The next thing they come to a blind corner and there is a local car coming. They are all right when there's other traffic around, but when they're on their own they stop for something and they revert to their natural thinking.

Mr FINCH - That is interesting.

CHAIR - Barry, thank you very much for your evidence. We surely appreciate that in changing circumstances. We wish you well in your new role as a collision reconstructionist.

Mr McDONALD - Nothing new.

Mr MULDER - He has been having the same accident tons of times.

Mr McDONALD - I've been doing that for over 11 years since I retired.

CHAIR - Thank you very much and we appreciate it.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW