

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON TUESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2008.

Mr PETER RONALD TODD, GENERAL MANAGER ROADS AND TRAFFIC, **Mr DAVID HAMILTON PETERS**, DEPUTY SECRETARY INFRASTRUCTURE, AND **Ms PENNELOPE ELLEN NICHOLLS**, ACTING GENERAL MANAGER LAND TRANSPORT SAFETY, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Welcome. Would you lead off and we will deal with your submission and any other matters that you may wish to.

Mr PETERS - Firstly, road safety is an essential element of DIER's core business and is a focus across the whole department. The core business of the agency in road safety represents the accumulation of what were new initiatives once upon a time that have built up over an extended period because they are known to assist in reducing fatalities and injuries on our roads and are continued on an ongoing basis. The work carried out by the likes of transport inspectors, community road safety officers, driver testing officers, crossing guards, the work done in heavy vehicle safety and public transport safety with vehicle maintenance inspection regimes and over-mass permits are all aimed at road safety. Road safety is more than a set of initiatives that is developed for a particular period of time. Having said that, the Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2007-2016 relies on all areas of DIER working closely together and with other government agencies to achieve its road trauma reduction targets. The 2007-2016 Road Safety Strategy does represent a change in approach to that which has been taken in previous strategies, and I will explain that in more detail later.

The approach taken by the department is strongly evidence and research based. One of the most important parts of our armoury in this area is our statistical collection. For crash statistics we rely on the reports from Tasmania Police that are prepared at the time of crashes and this is a similar approach taken to other jurisdictions. This information is placed in a computer application and referred to as the Crash Data Manager. This is a spatially-based application as well as an information-based system which enables a high degree of analysis of the information to be made both by ourselves and Police and from this we develop policy solutions. Data is collected on crash type, location, vehicles and, of course, people. So that is largely objective. There is a small subjective element to this approach and that is in the fact that we rely on the professional police officers that they have to make a judgment at the scene on what the causal aspects of the crash are. The crash causes do have an element of subjectivity to them for that reason. Where available, coroners' decisions are also used to double-check and crosscheck that information.

In the statistical database, although we do keep statistics on all crashes the focus is on serious casualties, and by serious casualties we mean fatalities, serious injuries being injuries that require at least 24 hours of hospitalisation. Any fatality is a tragedy of

course. Tasmania has a statistically small number of fatalities each year, which makes comparative analysis potentially misleading. For that reason primarily we do focus on serious casualties, which is the fatalities and serious injuries, because it provides a more statistically reliable number to deal with. Serious crashes are also by their very definition serious, and it is very important that we focus on the causes and the mitigation for them.

We have a copy of some of the statistical reports that we receive by way of a document if I could table that.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr PETERS - This is a trend analysis statistical report that was based on police data.

CHAIR - The first document is headed 'Distribution of Fatalities and Serious Injuries for 1 January 1977 - 31 December 2007'. That is the first document we take into evidence.

Mr PETERS - This shows the trend over the last 30 years and you can see from that that the trend, although bumpy at times, is strongly in a downward direction. In 1977 there were 1 236 fatalities and serious injuries and by 2007 that is 375. This particular report shows that there is a correlation between some major step changes in the regulatory regime for road safety - seatbelts became compulsory in 1973, exceeding 0.05 and random breath testing came in in 1982, road safety cameras in 1992 and the 50 kilometre urban speed zone change in 2002, and each of those initiatives, we believe, has contributed to the trend going down. Of course during that time there is no doubt that we have had better standards of road and better standards of vehicle with more enhanced safety features.

Ms FORREST - In relation to the road safety cameras there, the red section on the graph, it appears that that is pretty flat - one year it was a little bit lower than the others - but it seems that the downward trend is very minimal compared to the others. Are you saying that that was an effective measure or not?

Mr PETERS - We believe it was an effective measure. Certainly there is research that shows that it did modify driver behaviour in that you had to be more careful because there could be a speed camera out there, so research has shown that it did modify driver behaviour. As the document clearly shows, the trend line did not make a dramatic drop at that time but it is still the trend to maintain a downward direction.

Ms FORREST - Was there anything else between 1993 and 2001? Did we see some safety features in cars more widely available at that same time?

Mr PETERS - I do not have that information with me but we could check to see if there was anything.

Ms NICHOLLS - **I do not think the enhanced safety features in vehicles would have featured through that period of time.**

Mr TODD - The other thing of course to note is that there is a significantly larger number of vehicles on the roads so as a proportion the trend line is even steeper in a downward

direction because we have a lot more vehicles on the roads now than we did 30 years ago.

CHAIR - Would you be supplying us with statistics showing the trends in fatal accidents separately from serious injury crashes?

Mr PETERS - The statistical reports we have here today do not distinguish between fatalities and serious injury but we can provide that information from our database.

CHAIR - I put some details on *Hansard* when we were debating the motion to establish this committee and the information I had I think came from your department. It showed that in the last five or six years there has been significant downward trend in the number of serious injuries resulting from traffic crashes but fluctuating, continuation at about the same level of fatal accidents but no significant decrease in the number of fatalities but there was in the case of serious injury, so this table combines both and it does not show that trend.

Mr PETERS - I have a document here that is the latest progressive report on road fatalities for the last 10 years. Your observation is correct; the trend in serious injuries over the last, say, decade or even longer is demonstrably in a downward direction. The trend in fatalities certainly over the last 10 years is not demonstrable because, as you say, it jumps up and down. In the last 10 years the smallest number of fatalities was in 2002 when it was 37, the previous year in 2001 it was 61 and, and from memory, I think that was the year we had the bus crash. You are right, over the 10 years it varied between 37 and 61. There is no trend that we pick through that and, as mentioned earlier, regrettable as any fatality is, one or two multiple fatalities in a year can significantly skew on a percentage basis the variation from year to year. That is just the statistics of it but your observation is right - there is no identifiable trend in fatalities.

CHAIR - No, thank you. You will be providing us with that information?

Mr PETERS - I can table that if you like.

CHAIR - Thank you. So that is Road Safety Road Fatalities report, progressive from the years 1999 to 2008.

Mr DEAN - How are these statistics compiled? If there is a fatal accident, for instance, and there is also a serious injury in that fatal accident, is that identified simply as one statistic?

Mr PETERS - I will take advice but I believe that is considered a fatal accident. This is not the number of people injured in accidents. If there is a number of accidents -

Mr DEAN - No, I just want to get the number so I can get clear on the accidents.

Mr PETERS - If there is fatality and a serious injury in an accident I am fairly sure but I will check that that accident is referred to as a fatal accident.

Mr DEAN - That skews the figures and that is what I want to know and I have asked this before in Parliament. That skews the figures because we do not get the correct number of serious injuries if that is the case. It is taken as a fatality.

Ms NICHOLLS - A fatality is recorded and a fatal crash is recorded.

Mr DEAN - But a serious injury coming out of that is not recorded.

Mr PETERS - We don't, we have -

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes it is.

Mr DEAN - Is that right? So I am right?

Ms NICHOLLS - Sorry, no, it is recorded.

Mr PETERS - We do not keep statistics on the number of people injured in the accidents. We record only the accident, if I am correct.

Ms FORREST - So the multiple fatality at Round Hill with five young women, are you saying that was recorded as one fatal crash?

Mr PETERS - There were five fatalities in that crash.

Ms FORREST - In this chart are we looking at the number of people that died or the number of crashes?

Ms NICHOLLS - We are looking in that chart at fatalities and serious injuries.

Ms FORREST - So we are looking at the number of people -

Ms NICHOLLS - So we are looking at the people.

Ms FORREST - In whatever year that was, I cannot remember -

CHAIR - We are looking at the people, are we? I thought that was contrary to what Mr Peters said.

Mr PETERS - I misspoke there, by the sounds of things, Chairman. I was obviously looking at different reports. I apologise for this. So the number 375 in 2007 is the number of people injured or the number of accidents in that year?

Ms CONWAY - This one is people - fatalities and injuries.

CHAIR - We might need to swear this lady in if the comments are to be recorded in *Hansard*.

Ms ANGELA JANE CONWAY, MANAGER, LAND TRANSPORT SAFETY POLICY, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Ms Conway, would you please repeat what you said before.

Ms CONWAY - It is a bit confusing. We record crashes, information about crashes so we can count the number of fatal crashes that occur or the number of serious injury crashes that occur but when we are doing our road toll, when you see it reported, that will be about the number of fatalities, which is the number of people killed. In a year you might have 30 fatal crashes but that might have resulted in 35 fatalities because you had more than one person killed in that crash.

CHAIR - So it is the number of people killed.

Ms CONWAY - That particular chart is about the number of people killed and injured over time.

CHAIR - If two people are killed and three were seriously injured in the one accident you would record two deaths?

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

CHAIR - Would you record the serious injuries?

Ms CONWAY - And three serious injuries.

CHAIR - So the statistics we have on the last document admitted to evidence will include the number of people in each case?

Ms CONWAY - Yes, that is people as well. That is the number of people killed.

CHAIR - And seriously injured?

Ms CONWAY - No, that second one I gave you is just the fatalities.

CHAIR - I see.

Ms CONWAY - Because you were asking about just fatalities.

CHAIR - But on the first document tendered it is the number of people.

Ms CONWAY - Yes - killed and injured.

CHAIR - Killed and seriously injured.

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Does that clarify that, Mr Dean?

Mr DEAN - I am still trying to figure out whether it does or not. It conflicts a little bit with the answer given at the beginning.

Mr PETERS - I apologise. I was searching for advice from Miss Conway on that. The document in front of you is, as you said, the number of people injured or killed in road crashes in that year.

Mr DEAN - Right. Just so I am perfectly clear: again, if there is a fatal accident and we have one or two killed and we have five seriously injured, that records as seven.

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

CHAIR - In the first document?

Mr PETERS - In this document, yes. That is correct.

CHAIR - And two fatalities in the second document?

Mr PETERS - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - David, can I take you to the yellow bars and with the introduction of 0.05 the numbers stayed pretty high until the 680 in 1990. Are you aware whether any particular measures were introduced in 1990 that finally saw a consistent reduction?

Mr PETERS - Again, if I could refer to Ms Conway.

CHAIR - For the purpose of *Hansard* we will refer to the name of each witness as they begin to answer the question.

Ms CONWAY - I am not aware of anything additional that occurred during that time. That is not to say there was not something else that happened but I am not aware of it.

Ms FORREST - Is that something provided along the lines of the question I asked related to the speed cameras - if there were other initiatives, whether they be with vehicles or people focused?

Ms CONWAY - The vehicle improvements would tend to be showing in the last 10 years probably because of the really significant improvement that are towards the right-hand side of that chart.

Ms FORREST - The last 10 years, you are saying?

Ms CONWAY - I would say so, that is when we have really seen a big increase in improvements in the technology.

Ms FORREST - That includes half the red section then in this graph?

Ms CONWAY - I would say probably that you are starting to see it, but bearing in mind it is only in new vehicles you get the new technologies so it does take a little while for that new technology to filter through into the general vehicle fleet because not everyone drives the newest car, obviously. There could have been changes in the amount of enforcement hours maybe. I do not know. That is something that we would not know.

CHAIR - While we are dealing with statistics, for the purpose of moving the motion to appoint this committee I had some research done about statistics. I had information from your department on fatal crashes by State and Territory, and some, I think, from the ABS. In terms of the number of fatalities they varied to the extent of about 12 in the year 2006. One set of figures said 42 fatalities in Tasmania in 2006. The other - I think, from your department - said 54. Are you aware of any disparity in the numbers between your statistics and the ABS? I assume the others were from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. I must say yours showed a higher number so there is no suggestion of any attempt to disguise the numbers. Your figures were higher than the other.

Ms CONWAY - I will have to have a look and see if I can glean where they came from.

CHAIR - In the document that I am showing Ms Conway now, your department's figures are written in.

Ms CONWAY - These may have come from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. I cannot exactly tell where they came from. Sometimes there might be a lag in our data. You may have seen that road fatalities bulletin that comes out every month - we actually provide the data to the Commonwealth who compiles that document. Sometimes there may be a lag in some data coming through. Without knowing exactly where that came from I probably cannot definitively answer your question. Our figures, I would say, would be the more up-to-date and accurate ones for this purpose. There could be just a data lag for that.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any further questions, Mr Dean?

Mr DEAN - Statistically, one of you said that there is a small number of fatalities each year in this State. I thought that per head of population in this nation Tasmania ran very high in the number of fatalities compared with Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia.

Mr PETERS - If I can deal with that in two parts, Mr Dean. The statement I made about statistically small number of fatalities was in relation to the base number of fatalities, meaning that any one change or particularly a multiple crash will make a major statistical variation on the number. So, if you are running at 40 fatalities and you have something like the terrible incident at Round Hill, a five-fatality crash, then all of a sudden you jump by 12.5 per cent in one crash. That was what I meant by a small number. I think we are higher than the national average in the number of fatalities per 100 000 drivers.

Ms CONWAY - We are higher than the national average. But, again, the national average, as you are aware, is referring to the actual fatalities and not the serious injuries as well. Between October 2007 and September 2008 the number of road fatalities per 100 000 population in Tasmania was 7.7. The national average was 7 and that is sourced from the Road Deaths Australia, a monthly bulletin.

Mr DEAN - Okay. In relation to the 50 kilometre urban speed zones there appears to be a decrease in that area. Do you have the figures for the previous six to seven years on the number of fatalities and serious injuries in the same zones, in the 60 kilometre zones that only the 50 kilometre an hour speed limit now applies to? There is a big difference in the two because you still have some 60.

Ms CONWAY - I do not have anything here with me now but I can provide some information about that.

Mr DEAN - Mr Chairman, could we get that because that gives the true situation in relation to the reduction to 50 because we still have a number of 60 kilometre an hour speed limit streets in cities and built up areas.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms CONWAY - One of the interesting things that happened with 50 kilometres an hour was that it caused a reduction in speed across all urban speed zones. It is called the halo effect; that is how it is referred to in the literature and what it means is that when you know you have to slow down in a 50 kilometre zone and because the traffic is slowing down generally a little bit, it just slows down everywhere a little bit. So it has slowed down in 40 kilometre zones and in 60 kilometre zones as well. From the 50 kilometre urban speed limit reduction, we have seen a slight slowing down of traffic through all those urban speed zones and that is what has given us the crash-reduction effect. Even on the 60 kilometre zones people are driving a little bit slower. It just means a few less crashes. You only need to drive a small amount a lot more slowly to get a crash reduction.

Ms FORREST - Is that because people do not know where they stop and start, do you think, with the 50 kilometre zone?

Ms CONWAY - No, I think it is just a general behaviour thing of traffic being slower and you drive a little bit slower everywhere. It is just a flow-on effect.

Ms FORREST - A fear of being in a 50 zone when you are in a 60 zone?

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, following that then, with that revelation, has the department made any assessment of the likely effect on fatalities and serious injuries if the speed limit across the State was reduced to 100 on all open roads, rather than 110 in some and 100 in others?

Mr PETERS - Yes we have. A speed zone review was conducted the year before last, I think, and the general research shows that if you lower the speed limit you will lower both the likelihood of a crash and the severity of a crash if one happens. If the speed limit were lowered from 110 to 100 then you would expect a reduction in crashes.

Mr HARRISS - With that reality can I also then ask you, and I will come back to that in a moment, what has been any measurable effect with the trial in the Kingborough

Municipality of the 90 on open roads as opposed to 100 and even less than that on gravel roads - 80 on gravel roads?

Mr PETERS - The Kingborough trial first evaluations came out just recently and the one thing that we have not been able to assess in the six months report is the effect on crashes because there is insufficient data in that short period of time. It certainly has shown that awareness in the community of the changed speed limit is high and the average speed that a driver is driving on gravel roads is significantly lower than it was before the trial. We have a control population in another municipality that we will be comparing it against.

In Kingborough driver awareness of the speed limit is high and the average travel speed, particularly in gravel roads, has shown a marked decrease. What we do not have is any statistically reliable information on crashes at this stage. The 12-month assessment is about to be carried out now; it started in September last year and that may throw up something more on crashes. The trial is continuing.

Mr HARRISS - In the Northern Territory until recent times there was pretty much open slather on open roads. They are still at 130 maximum, and of course that met with quite a deal of community concern because they had been used to hooning around all their lives.

As soon as you introduce a measure like that there are some political consequences but if we are fair dinkum about addressing serious injuries and fatalities then the information you have just given the committee is pretty compelling and the committee will decide upon that.

What about the matters of reduction of greenhouse emissions with a reduction of speed? I refer to things like tyre wear, so therefore we are not throwing extra tyres into incinerators or whatever it might be, and the actual greenhouse emissions from a vehicle which is doing 100 as opposed to 110. Is that a matter that is easily measurable and able to be reported?

Mr PETERS - Our focus has been on safe practices and safer vehicles rather than environmentally improved practices and vehicles, although others in government are dealing with that.

Mr HARRISS - Who would they be, David?

Mr PETERS - The Tasmanian Climate Change Office has carriage of these types of issues. We are working with them on what we can do to assist in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The classic example is the current government fleet requirements where, as part of the road safety strategy initiatives that we have put in this current year, vehicles have to be ANCAP 4-star rating, which is a safety rating, or if it is not a rated vehicle it has to have certain safety features in it before it can go on the contract. At the same time the Climate Change Office worked up a proposal that says they also have to be green vehicles and have a greenhouse rating of 5.5 or higher. So we are working together on initiatives such as this but our focus has been on safety.

Mr HARRISS - That is essentially the term of reference for this committee as well but I just thought that was an interesting side benefit.

Mr PETERS - It is certainly something that is being actively considered.

Ms CONWAY - If I could just add to what Mr Peters has said, there is a little bit of research coming out of Sweden where they have actually looked at the greenhouse benefits of slowing vehicles down and they have made some attempt to measure it. I am happy to provide a reference for that if that would be of assistance. It certainly is an ancillary benefit from the road safety benefit of slowing vehicles down.

Ms FORREST - Just to follow on briefly from that, in the second reading speech on the climate change bill that we debated recently there was comment made that all departments would be required to consider climate change impacts on all decisions that they made. Regarding the Climate Change Office looking at the greenhouse gas emissions side of it, won't that become more a role of your department?

Mr PETERS - It will.

Mr DEAN - If the national statistics demonstrate that we are higher than the national statistics, what are the other States doing better than what we are doing to keep their number of serious-injury accidents and fatal accidents lower than ours? What are they doing that we are not doing? Have you looked at that at this time?

Mr PETERS - I can say that the answer to whether we have looked at what the other States are doing is a very strong yes. The current Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy involved both an analysis of our statistics, what is happening on Tasmanian roads and where the problem areas are. It has also looked at best practice in other States and overseas based on research and evidence and essentially we have selected those that we believe will give the best return for effort in reducing fatalities and serious injuries.

Mr DEAN - What are they?

Mr PETERS - We have a copy of the strategy that we can table, though I do believe the Tasmanian Road Safety Council included it in their submission but we are happy to table a second copy here today.

The focus of the strategy is essentially split into four areas - safer travel speeds, best practice infrastructure, increased safety for young road users and enhanced vehicle safety. Regarding safer travel speeds, we are looking at a range of initiatives and the action plan is attached to those strategies. The strategy is deliberately a 10-year strategy so it is giving a long-range direction that we are following in road safety. However, the action plan is in three-year chunks and we will be reviewing how we are going next year, which is the third year of the current three-year action plan, as part of developing the second three-year action plan. At all times we are monitoring what is happening interstate.

Regarding best practice infrastructure, and again I have not referred to it yet, we are taking a safe systems approach which is an approach along the lines of the Vision Zero approach in Sweden where although it is not acceptable to have a crash, we do accept

that crashes do happen and given that crashes do happen then what can we do from an infrastructure point of view to mitigate the effects of that crash when it does happen. The most obvious view that has been taken in the first part of the current strategy is wire-rope fencing on the side of roads and in medians where it is intended to mitigate the consequences of run-off-road crashes or to prevent head-on crashes.

The third leg is increased safety for young road users. The two most obvious initiatives of that is the changes to novice drivers where we are effectively extending the time it takes for a driver to go through the learning and training process before they get their licence, although from the regulation it is still going to be 50 hours at this stage of supervised driving before you get a licence. It is a two-stage process so you will have to pass a test to show that you can actually handle the car before you then start your 50 hours of supervised driving. That will help with the education process of young drivers and also there are a number of changes to sanctions, sanctions for poor behaviour by novice drivers and also a reward for somebody who gets through their two years on their P-plates without an offence. They will get the cost of their licence for those two years rebated to them. Part of that is obviously a financial incentive but a large part of the research shows that it is an esteem thing with young people, 'I've got through my two years with a clean licence' and it is something we think they will aim for.

The fourth area is enhanced vehicle safety. As I mentioned earlier, we have already arranged with central agencies that regarding the car contract for all government vehicles, the cars have to be ANCAP 4-rated or at least have minimum safety features before they can go on the contract. That has a flow-on benefit because most government vehicles are around about two years old or have travelled 40 000 kilometres before they get turned over. That means that these ANCAP 4-rated or safety-feature-enhanced vehicles are flowing into the community for general use. They are the sorts of things that we are looking at in the current strategy and that has been picked up from research and looking at what other States are doing.

There are other things that are happening that the research hasn't come down with definitive benefits for that we are still monitoring because if new ideas are shown to work, we will bring them in. In a small State with the resources available for road safety purposes we can't do everything and we are not really in a position to take leading-edge trials in areas unless we are fairly confident it is going to show a benefit. Following on from research measures that are taken overseas and interstate is a very cost-effective way of us picking up good ideas and implementing them without taking the risk that they are not a good idea.

Ms NICHOLLS - May I just add to that that the safe-system approach that we are taking to underpinning road safety is also a similar approach that has been taken by most other jurisdictions, particularly Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales.

The four key strategic directions that are outlined in our road safety strategy, that David has just referred to, are also in the main the focus area of other jurisdictions. Angela attends frequent meetings with her national counterparts, road safety managers in other jurisdictions. We are regularly discussing issues, picking up ideas, having the discussion, finding out where the latest research is through those mechanisms that we bring and take into account in our consideration of policy issues here in Tasmania. There is a strong road safety network that we are plugged into nationally.

Mr DEAN - In relation to the gradual reduction, which is good, across fatalities and serious-injury accidents, this also corresponds with climate change, the number of wet days that this State is currently experiencing - the lack of - what statistical data do we have to show what impact that is also having on fatal accidents and serious vehicle accidents, the fact that we have far fewer wet days, wet roads and that sort of thing?

Ms NICHOLLS - I think it is a very relevant comment that you make. This year our serious casualty data is trending down. While we don't have any evidence of a way of capturing it, we certainly recognise that that might be due to petrol prices, high petrol prices on travel patterns, maybe people are travelling less and have reduced exposure, which leads to a reduced number of crashes. What is a result of that, as distinct from road safety initiatives, it is hard to separate the two.

Ms CONWAY - I have not particularly analysed the weather conditions. We do collect that data. When police attend a crash they fill out the road and weather conditions, whether it is wet, dry, icy. That is recorded. I don't know whether we have found that to be a particular issue through our fatalities. I do know sometimes we get stretches of road where we can see that there is some interplay between maybe the road surface, the weather and types of crashes that happen. I know certainly that Peter Todd's area would look into those from a road perspective and make sure that if there are places where that occurs, action is taken to mitigate the risk. I do not know if Peter wants to add any more to that?

Mr TODD - That is a very important point. The bulk of the maintenance funding which is directed to our roads has a road safety focus. I estimate that 80 per cent of that is about keeping the road in a safe condition. Ms Conway referred to our skid resistance strategy. We do test the road with a very sophisticated piece of equipment, which you may see travelling around from time to time, which has a tyre which goes onto the road, water is sprayed in front of that tyre and it measures the resistance of that tyre. It is on a very large truck with a very big water tank and we actually measure the skid resistance of that road. We measure it in both wheel paths and we actually analyse the roads and that informs our areas for resealing, particularly skid resistance, because when we come to road safety the interaction between tyre and road is absolutely fundamental and so that is a very big focus. We have a significant resealing program, around \$8 million a year, and a large portion of that is targeted to ensuring that the skid resistance of our road is up to standard and is delivering a resistance that a driver should expect on the road.

Maintenance, while often it does not come under the thinking of road safety, is fundamental to what we are doing in road safety and so when we look at our maintenance funding and our dollars, I have a hierarchy of safety first; asset integrity, keeping the asset in good order; efficiency, in terms of people moving around; and, finally, amenity, how it looks. So safety is number one and that is where our first dollar goes in with all of our maintenance investment.

Ms FORREST - One of the strategies you talked about was the divided road, like putting wire barriers up, and I just go back to the Round Hill incident. There was a lack of a barrier at that time, it has since been put in place and recently the road, and I assume it probably included some skid resistance assessment of that road, has seen a lot of changes made with the resealing of the road and the wire barrier but we are still seeing a limit

there of 80 kilometres an hour rather than the 100 kilometres that it was. I am not saying that it is right or wrong, I am just asking why it has not been reviewed in view of the work that has been done. It probably has been reviewed but why that decision?

Mr PETERS - This might be a good time to introduce Mr Simon Buxton. Simon Buxton is the chief traffic engineer in the department and was personally involved in making that very decision.

Mr SIMON ROBERT BUXTON, DIRECTOR, TRAFFIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - For the record, Mr Buxton, would you please give your occupation.

Mr BUXTON - I am the Director of Traffic and Infrastructure in the Roads and Traffic Division. One of my titles, amongst others, is Chief Traffic Engineer.

CHAIR - Thank you. You have heard that question and if you would be good enough to give your answer.

Mr BUXTON - Would you mind repeating the question for me?

Ms FORREST - In view of the crash that killed five women on Round Hill, the coroner's report recommended a number of changes, most of which were implemented in that a barrier was put in place to divide the two carriageways and resurfacing of the road was undertaken. I assume it was on the skid resistance assessment of that. The speed limit remains. It was reduced at the time to 80 kilometres per hour until that work was carried out and it remained at 80 and I am just wondering why that decision was made when it had been 100 kilometres per hour and, to my knowledge, there have not been any serious crashes in that area since, but I might be wrong.

Mr BUXTON - Several years ago the limit was 110 kilometres per hour.

Ms FORREST - But you had to hang on at that time.

Laughter.

Mr BUXTON - That's right. Times change and our engineering culture changes and the community have demanded lower speed limits and we are following that as best we can whilst trying to keep the communities together on the issue of speed limit changes. A lot of the community want to keep them high and a lot of the community want to keep them low so it is always a balancing act. So it used to be 110 kilometres per hour but we were able to bring it down to 100 just through normal processes and input from interested people. When the fatal road crash occurred obviously the first thing we wanted to do was to contain the situation, to calm things down. A young gentleman had a similar crash shortly after that fatal one in similar circumstances so we lowered the limit to 80. The intention was to do some work at the site. We dealt with the coroner on what kind of work we might be doing and then to reconsider the limit and possibly bring it back up to 100.

In speaking with local police and in analysing crash data, once we lowered it to 80 the crash history disappeared; there were no more crashes that we were aware of of any significance - certainly no injury crashes. In consultation at a grassroots level between myself and local police we slowly but surely over time came to the thought that it should remain at 80 kilometres per hour. There has been some local input in terms of trying to get it back up but we have stayed fairly resolute and have determined to keep it at 80.

One of the important things to bear in mind is that some of the design elements you would be aware of are already under a 75 kilometre per hour advisory limit so it is prudent to keep it at 80 for the balance of the road through that area.

CHAIR - Will you be providing us with statistics of a comparison of the number of fatalities in Tasmania compared with other States and serious injuries?

Ms NICHOLLS - The fatality information is already available publicly and we can give you the latest information that ATSB has collected.

Ms CONWAY - There is actually no national comparison of serious injury data available -

CHAIR - Only fatalities.

Ms CONWAY - Only fatalities data and that is because of the slight variations in the way each jurisdiction classifies and reports serious injury data. So that means that you are not comparing the same thing.

CHAIR - Yes, that was the next point I was going to raise. Will you be providing us with any information about the causes of fatal accidents and serious accidents?

Mr PETERS - Yes.

Ms CONWAY - This is just a very short report that provides an overview of serious casualties. So this is fatalities and injuries combined. We can also separate them out. There is so much data we collect that we can present it in many different ways. This will just show you for the last four financial years. It will give you a comparison on the back of that, it will show you what we call 'crash factors' and they are the elements that police identify at the time of crash as contributing to that crash. They can tick more than one so they may identify five factors that contributed to one particular crash.

CHAIR - Thank you, we take that for evidence, statistics providing an overview of the serious casualties for the last four years between July and June. One of our terms of reference relates to the extent of the detail in determining contributing factors but we will probably need to deal with that in detail at a later time. But just generally, Ms Conway, can you give us an indication of the depth of the investigation by police and whether they usually apportion the various factors, the percentage appropriate to the crash?

Ms CONWAY - A fatal crash is investigated in detail by the coroner. The findings that come out of the coronial investigation usually have quite a detailed examination of factors that have contributed to a crash. So when you are looking at fatalities that is the best information and the most detailed analysis available is the coroner's report.

CHAIR - And does your department analyse that and apportion it?

Ms CONWAY - We do not apportion; what we will do from a coronial report is look at what the police have recorded and if the coroner has recorded something additional we add that into our data so that we make sure that our data has the best possible information in

it. However, at the roadside, as you would appreciate, the police are coming there to an emergency situation often. They probably deal with the situation and talk to witnesses and then fill out this crash form that is provided to the department. When they do that they do not apportion weightings to factors that contributed to the crash. All they do is say, yes, they believe excessive speed played a part and they believe the driver was inexperienced and there are a number of different boxes that they can tick. I suppose it is a subjective process. They have to use their best judgment at the roadside often at the time and from that, that is the data that we then enter into the database and use. That is a similar process that other jurisdictions use.

Primarily it is to do with the volume of data that we do collect - 400 or so serious injuries a year and thousands of other types of crashes. We also collect information about property damage crashes. So, for police to do a lot more would be a very time-consuming process, so that is the limitation of the data we collect.

CHAIR - Thank you. Are there any questions on that particular topic? The one-hour time period has expired but I am sure we have many more questions that we would like to ask you. Would you be agreeable to come back at some mutually convenient time in the future to complete this?

Mr PETERS - Of course.

CHAIR - I think we would like to spend quite a lot more time with you and we appreciate what you have been able to tell us this morning.

Yesterday, a representative from the *Examiner* newspaper phoned to say they were not able to be here this morning because the Assembly is sitting, but they wanted to get some indication of your evidence. Would you have any objection if they contacted you or somebody from your department later in the day to get some idea of your views? It is not permissible under the Standing Orders for anybody to give specific information to anyone else about the submissions made here or the evidence, except in general terms about views on matters that have been discussed. Would you be agreeable or prefer not -

Mr PETERS - Yes, it is standard departmental practice to provide advice to the Press on issues such as this. I do not see that as a problem. I was going to ask how that related to your procedural rules.

CHAIR - Perhaps I can read from the document provided here. Everything that any witness has said this morning is protected by parliamentary privilege, which enables you to speak freely here. However, once you have left the committee room, you are not to specifically discuss your written or verbal evidence with anyone until the committee has made its report to the Legislative Council. You are free to speak generally about any issue to anyone but please do not refer specifically to anyone else the evidence you have given to the committee until the report has been published by the Legislative Council.

Mr PETERS - We can certainly respond in general terms to an inquiry from the newspapers.

CHAIR - Yes. Do they contact you, Mr Peters?

Mr PETERS - For the purpose of the exercise, yes, me.

CHAIR - What telephone number?

Mr PETERS - 62333879.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Thank you all very much for being here and we look forward to having further discussions with you at a later, mutually convenient time.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Mr SCOTT LESLIE GADD, SECRETARY, AND Ms SAMANTHA MAY WILSON, MANAGER, POLICY AND PROJECTS UNIT, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, PARKS, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thank you for your submission and the accompanying documents. Could you just speak to that and deal with the main points as you see them, please.

Mr GADD - Obviously we have fairly broad terms of reference in relation to the issue of road safety in general and I am really only here to comment on the issue of off-road and recreational vehicle use as that is something that I have been involved in personally, and the department has for a few years now. About four years ago we had a particularly bad summer in relation to incidents, shall I say, in relation to four-wheel drive and off-road vehicle use. There were some deaths, there were some accidents, there was some conflict. It just seemed to be a particularly bad summer. I do actually have a selection of press clippings that we took over a six-month period which basically covers everything. It was the summer those kids were killed on the Climies Track just south of Granville Harbour, and a whole range of issues. It was also about the time I had to make a decision as Director of Parks to close Southport Lagoon from off-road vehicle use.

It said to me that there is a whole range of factors at play here and that, if we did not try to get on the front foot, this thing was going to overtake us. We have been involved in this for about four years, particularly looking at some of the drivers. In more recent times we have begun to explore some of the solutions. If I can just go back to where it all started - Southport Lagoon. Southport is reserved for some particularly endangered species: one in particular, the swamp eyebright, which only exists at Southport Lagoon. Over the years there has been some massive incursion into that area through four-wheel drive and off-road vehicle activity. In recent years it has become a preferred haunt for what we call mud runners, which are the extreme type of vehicle - the highly modified four-wheel drive with the massive big tyres. You often see them on the road covered in mud. They have been going down to Southport and it got to the point where really I had no option. In order to uphold my statutory responsibilities I had to shut off access to that area. That was a big decision because it is a favoured area, as you would know, Mr Harriss, for fishermen and local recreational activities. People go canoeing down there on the lagoon and fishing, as I said. Ultimately we have had to shut everybody out in order to let the area regenerate. My advice was that if I took that drastic action, within 10 to 15 years the area would rehabilitate, largely of its own devices.

I will show you some aerial photography of what I am talking about. Southport Lagoon, 1975 - the yellow marks indicate the tracks that existed then. In 1984 you can see still only two or three tracks in the area but if you come through to 1995 we start to see a marked difference in that decade. In 2002 we are seeing major impacts in Southport. This is about the time when it started to get onto our radar. I also have a photo of the sort of damage that those lines indicate. You can see we had bogs up to potentially 600 metres wide. Every time a track became impassable a new track was created. It got to the point where it was such a bog that it then became a preferred destination for these mud-runners. I need to highlight that they are driving registered, legal vehicles and they are pursuing a legitimate activity. It is not an illegal activity. What makes it wrong is the fact that they were doing it on reserve land where it is not allowed. Having been on

the ground and met some of these people, they didn't know that they weren't allowed to do that sort of stuff. They just assumed that because everybody had been doing it for so long that was the place you went and went mud-running. We have a huge issue there with education.

Southport was the trigger to start to take some action. As I said, I had to close that area and I was conscious when I closed the area that I didn't solve the problem. What I have done is move that problem somewhere else. Southport is now being rehabilitated and it is going quite well, but the reality is that I have pushed these people down into the southern forest and into the Snug Tiers and onto the west coast of Tasmania. So I have not achieved anything. That is the point I am making there.

I looked at this and then I looked at the west coast of Tasmania. What we are seeing particularly on the west coast of Tasmania is that there is anecdotal evidence that on some weekends up to 200-plus interstate motorbikes predominantly but often ATVs and other four-wheel drives as well are traversing through the area in one weekend. They are coming off the ferries in huge numbers, often in organised groups, blitzing the west coast and getting back on the ferry at the end of the weekend and going home. Whilst this is a great thing for tourism and it is a good economic driver for the west coast, I am sure, the problem when they are coming in such large numbers in an unchecked manner is the sheer destruction that 200 bikes can create over a weekend, particularly if it is a wet weekend. I have been in the Arthur Pieman myself. We inspected the Arthur Pieman and then we had anecdotal evidence that a couple of groups went through, so I went back five weekends later and there was a phenomenal amount of damage. Tracks that were probably two to three cars wide were up to six or eight cars wide. Some of the bogs had been filled up with tractor tyres - I am talking huge tractor tyres, just giving an indication of the size of the bogs, in order to assist vehicles to traverse them. The reality is this is gaining momentum. There is increasing availability of these vehicles. We know ourselves that there are a lot more four-wheel-drive vehicles being sold that are on the road now. There is a whole range of ATVs, motocross bikes and other off-road vehicles that are now freely available. There are a lot of cheap Chinese imports that are virtually being sold off the back of semitrailers in supermarket car parks, if you will, that are very inexpensive and very shoddily built. We have seen examples of machines where the differentials have been spot-welded with three-spot welds, whereas you would normally anticipate a fully welded diff for such a vehicle that is going to be put through extreme conditions. So there is a whole range of issues coming into play.

We have a heavy use amongst the under-age element, shall I say, the teenage element. Currently if they are riding on reserve land, roads in reserve land are legally the same as public roads therefore any child who is under 16 is not licensed and therefore they are not insured, they are not registered. This is an issue because as a father I personally do not see anything wrong with my son being able to ride trail bikes, ATVs, under proper supervision in the right area and do it properly. I would much rather they were outdoors enjoying that sort of adventure than sitting behind a TV playing a playstation, for example, but it raises the whole issue that these kids are not licensed therefore they are not legal. So I think the other side of this is that we need to look at how we are going to deal with the juvenile element because they are the predominant users and the main group we need to get to.

That raises a licensing issue. I am not sure if there is a system. I know my 12-year-old daughter has a provisional boat licence, she is allowed to come out under my supervision and drive my speedboat so I think we are going to have to come up with something like that - whether it is connected to organised minibike clubs or whatever but we are going to have to look at some system of legitimising their use because we are never going to get anywhere if we just do that is it, disenfranchise that group. We are just going to push them somewhere else and create more problems.

The other side is the vehicles, as I just mentioned. We have seen a proliferation of cheap Chinese imports. The motorcycle industry groups have shown me some figures and given me some graphs that suggests the sales of these things have gone through the roof in recent years. Most of them are cheap Chinese imports.

Ms FORREST - Do you have figures for that in Tasmania, the numbers that are being sold?

Mr GADD - No we don't but we could probably ask the industry to see if we could get them.

Ms FORREST - I guess a lot of them are coming across from the mainland too so it is not just what is happening in Tasmania.

Mr GADD - That is the thing, yes. Overall the sales are going through the roof. There are no design standards on these vehicles so we are also seeing in the parks and reserves these things are breaking. I think, anecdotally, that is where some of the injuries are coming from.

The other side to this is we need a registration and design standards at a national level to be able to deal with and perhaps I think curb some of these importations and perhaps to a degree restrict availability. I am finding that when you deal with the major manufacturers and their dealer networks they are prepared to cooperate, they are prepared to provide point of sale materials about ride responsibly, do the right thing, but what we are seeing now is all sorts of people selling these things and there are no controls whatsoever.

I think that is the other big issue. Within Tasmania we have formed a recreational vehicle working group, and I will table this. The red lines basically show where you can legally ride these things in Tasmania now.

CHAIR - We will pause there. First of all we will take into evidence the three pages of photographs of the Southport Lagoon area and now the map of Tasmania identifying areas of public land where offroad vehicle use is lawful.

Mr GADD - That is right. Principally you can still traverse large tracts of the west coast. We have major issues there that Aboriginal heritage is coming under threat and is actually being damaged. I will show you another photo. This is a photo of some dune systems on the west coast. You can see just in a quiet day's activity the sort of impact that can be had.

CHAIR - We can take that into evidence?

Mr GADD - Yes. We have seen that sort of impact on midden sites on the west coast. There is a midden site on the west coast which would have to be one of the biggest middens in the world. It is as big as a pyramid and there is a four-wheel-drive track straight through the centre of it - major destruction.

CHAIR - Up over the top?

Mr GADD - Straight over the top, yes. We have petroglyphs on the west coast that could be potentially as old as the Egyptian pyramids, 20 000 to 40 000 years old, and in some cases there are four-wheel-drive tracks within 10 feet.

Ms FORREST - Is this in the Arthur Pieman Conservation Area?

Mr GADD - Yes, it is.

CHAIR - You could have some camels there rather than motor vehicles.

Mr GADD - Perhaps that is the answer.

CHAIR - It could be a tourism gimmick. There are plenty of them in Central Australia.

Ms FORREST - I don't think campers would like the west coast weather conditions.

Mr GADD - I will just keep rolling. We are starting to see all these conflicts emerge as well, so it not just the dangers that are inherent in these things, and it is not just the fact that some of these riders are not legal and some of these machines probably should not be on the road. We are starting to see conflicts, and we are starting to see conflicts between different recreational groups.

If you are a fisherman and you are in the Arthur-Pieman and you are enjoying a nice fish off the beach, the last thing you really want is six or seven trail bikes whizzing up and down the beach. The other thing in the Arthur-Pieman is that we have four-wheel drives, we have ATVs, we have motorbikes, all in the same area, all on the same track. It amazes me that we have not had more head-on collisions, to be frank.

ATVs and bikes by their nature tend to be going at a reasonable speed. You come round a blind corner and there is a big bullbar. There is nowhere to go and it is only a matter of time before there are more incidents.

CHAIR - Have there been many so far?

Mr GADD - There have. We do not keep statistics because we only become aware if we are involved in recovery or rescue. A large number, I suspect, are never reported - they are dealt with by the families and friends that are with the people at the time. Then there is the official search and rescues which the police would have statistics on.

Ms FORREST - Just on that point, some of the injuries would obviously require medical treatment. Are you aware of the keeping of records related to this, either in the GP arena or the Department of Emergency Medicine?

Mr GADD - There obviously are because there has been a lot of media in recent months from orthopaedic surgeons and things, which suggests to me that we are only made aware of very few incidents, given the sorts of figures that are quoted in those stories.

Ms FORREST - It has not been a common practice, I understand, to keep that statistic. You get a kid brought in from those sorts of incidents, whether it be on a farm or whether it be out in a conservation area for example, and there is treatment, but there was no real tracking.

Mr GADD - I imagine it would be a nightmare to collate such data because your local GP on the west coast might deal with things, the Launceston General would probably deal with a whole stream - there would be all sorts, right down to the first aid nurses and a whole range of people. There would be a whole range of injuries that would be minor by nature.

Ms FORREST - Do you suggest that it is really important that this sort of information is collated in a meaningful way from whatever source, wherever the first port of call is?

Mr GADD - I think it would be useful, but I suspect that you would want to balance that with the logistical exercise in actually doing it, because it might take you six months to collate one weekend statistic, in which case they are not going to be a lot of use to you, given the diverse nature of where they are going to come from.

I think it is more use in terms off-road vehicles for us to head where we are trying to go, and that is trying to take a more proactive approach. I will get to some of the solutions that I think we need to put on the table, and I have mentioned some already in relation to design standards and licensing and maybe the use by minibike clubs and things.

CHAIR - Just before you do, I know you do not have any statistical information about the number of injuries, or the severity of them, but do you have any impression whether there are many, whether on public land the number they are not as great as has been reported, say in the northern area, and the number of injuries treated at the Launceston General Hospital? There were about 20 one weekend I think, not so long ago.

Mr GADD - I think there is a large number of them, and that we do not know. We know of some - some are reported, some are not, some get media, but I suspect there is a whole heap out there that we never know about - the sprained wrists, ankles, torn ligaments, cuts and bruises, abrasions that are just never reported or not dealt with.

The point I would make is what we do know is there have been deaths. We have seen young kids killed and we have seen a whole range of serious accidents, and in my mind one death makes it a fairly serious statistic.

This is a photo of the track at Granville Harbour now, where those kids lost their lives. That is a four-wheel drive traversing a part of it. It is a track where a bridge has been out for some years. The bridge was locked off and the track was marked accordingly. Somebody removed the barricades, drove across the bridge, the bridge collapsed, and that four-wheel driver was recovered. Since then the track has been closed but that does not stop people, so they have now forged a new route over what really can only be described as a waterfall. That is exactly the point where those young teenagers from

Ulverstone lost their lives and yet people are still going there. If that wheel goes over that edge - you cannot see it but that is a 60-foot drop straight down into the waters of the west coast.

CHAIR - Approximately when were those teenagers killed?

Mr GADD - It was back in 2006.

Ms FORREST - There was also an adult male with them who was also killed -

Mr GADD - That's correct. There was a father or an uncle.

Ms FORREST - A stepfather.

CHAIR - As you understand it, what were the general circumstances of their -

Mr GADD - There was a coronial inquest. They were trying to move ATVs across a creek that had a sheer drop on one side. It was subject to volumes of water coming down unnoticed. We don't know if there was a volume of water that rushed down as they were pushing their way across but a couple lost their footing; one or two went over; the others tried to save them; they all ended up in the water and I think only one survived.

CHAIR - So, it was crossing the water that actually caused the -

Mr GADD - It is crossing the creek right at this point.

Ms FORREST - It's where there used to be a bridge.

Mr GADD - There used to be a bridge. We are in the process of replacing the bridge.

Ms FORREST - You are replacing the bridge?

Mr GADD - We are; with some philanthropic support, yes.

Ms FORREST - Last time I asked about this, they weren't going to replace it.

Mr GADD - Well, we have had offers so we do intend to get in there and replace it.

CHAIR - So two boys and one adult were killed?

Mr GADD - Yes, it was Dillon Burgess, Reece Tobin and Dean Mott, so it was two 13-year-olds and a 34-year-old from Ulverstone.

CHAIR - Yes, I remember that.

Mr GADD - This was a horror summer. There is no doubt about that. This was also the year the residents of Trial Harbour were on the front page of the paper saying they wanted a fence around Trial Harbour to keep all the tourists out. So there is another dimension to the conflict; we have all these locals -

Ms FORREST - There are a lot of residents down there now, aren't there?

Mr GADD - Yes, and while I haven't seen this traditional use - you talk to these people and they say they have been going here for generations. Obviously, they haven't been riding quad bikes for four generations but ultimately it's the same sort of use.

Ms FORREST - They had camels then.

CHAIR - Horses.

Laughter.

Mr GADD - I have brought all these groups together. We had a little bit of a workshop. We used independent facilitators. We did a value management study and we produced a report which I am happy to table. I think we actually gave you a copy with our submission.

Ms FORREST - Cruising Without Bruising - is that it?

Mr GADD - No, this is our Recreational Vehicle Use On Public Land.

Ms FORREST - Oh, yes.

Mr GADD - That's a summary of the workshop. We had four-wheel drive groups, we had motorcycle clubs, we had Conservation Trust, we had police; everybody there. The most amazing thing at that workshop was that there was a lot of common ground. A lot of these users recognise that if we don't do something they're going to be locked out; they're going to be locked out of more and more areas. That's part of our problem - Victoria and New South Wales and South Australia have been taking that approach and hence that tourist boom we're experiencing in this area is largely as a result of those policy decisions in other States.

I will just highlight that. This is just a random publication; I have lots of examples of these. This is a trail bike magazine and this is a magazine that would often promote sensible riding. There is a story on the west coast of Tasmania under the banner 'Tasmaniacs'. This sort of stuff's appearing everywhere. It's fairly innocent but it's actually subtly promoting exactly the wrong message. It is saying this is the last frontier; this is your last chance to come out and get your rocks off.

CHAIR - So, it's promoting the activity rather than being critical of it.

Mr GADD - That's correct.

CHAIR - I see.

Mr GADD - Normally, it would promote sensible messages. I have four-wheel drive magazines and all sorts of magazines that would normally promote the right message but subtly they use banners like 'Tasmaniacs' and 'The Last Frontier' and it's actually sending a very strong message that this is the last frontier to come and ride unchecked.

CHAIR - Is it banned in most other States?

Mr GADD - It's heavily restricted in most other States. We have a proliferation of areas here compared to what's available elsewhere. That presents an opportunity -

Ms FORREST - Just before you move on - did you make any contact with the authors of that one?

Mr GADD - No, not this one, we didn't. There was another one that was particularly galling that was talking about the same tiers that we endeavoured to. I have made contact with industry and manufacturers through their dealer council to get them on board and we've also tried to get some of the key writers in this area because there is a small pool of writers that do this stuff, to start to pick up what we're doing through this advisory committee.

What I am trying to do is get everybody to agree that we have to come up with a system. I think, without pre-empting the work, the system's going to be a statewide system; it's going to have designated areas for designated uses because some of these uses are incompatible; it's probably going to have to be underpinned by a permit system so that we can control numbers; we're probably going to have to have a system that allows for locals, west coast shack owners and the like, to have some sort of preferential access; we're going to have to do the work to say what is the holding capacity of the land or the reserve - can it take 10 vehicles a day, 60 vehicles a day? That sort of thing. I am going to have to back that up, I think, with some national work on design standards and we are going to have to take on this licensing issue of young kids and work with a system of hopefully private providers to develop minibike parks and minibike clubs like Greg Casimaty had done at Acton. It is a fantastic example there where he has taken some degraded rural land that was pretty marginal and he has turned it into a minibike park, got all the proper accreditation through motorcycle council and he runs a completely organised event with the whole system of accreditation and bike-riding for kids right through to adults. We need more of that.

Ms FORREST - You are saying kids but these kids are not licensed obviously?

Mr GADD - That is right.

Ms FORREST - So does he get around that?

Mr GADD - It is private land. They have proper accredited trainers and the kids have to get accreditation to get to various levels. So it is a very well-organised model. That is what we are going to have to pick up. Otherwise, as I said, these kids are potentially acting illegally and unchecked. As a parent I do not have a problem with it being supervised. It is probably a good thing to do if it is done responsibly. It is a great way to engage in the outdoors. It is a great way to generate environmental awareness but it has to be done sensibly.

CHAIR - What do you suggest in terms of licensing of juveniles?

Mr GADD - We have not done a lot of work there yet. I will be led probably by the police and justice departments as part of our committee. But if we can do it for kids on

speedboats, if you can get a provisional motorboat licence at 12 years of age provided you are under supervision, provided you have done x, y and z then maybe we can have a provisional licensing system that says that provided you have done so many hours or so many courses or got to a certain level in a minibike club and you are under supervision, then you are licensed to ride on reserve land.

Ms FORREST - You need to carefully define 'supervision', I would imagine.

Mr GADD - You would have to be with an adult. It is going to be hard on a trail bike, admittedly. They are out there now. I can take you. You would know, we can go to the Arthur-Pieman any day of the week and I can show you a bunch of kids on trail bikes having a ball. Good clean fun, generally. When they are educated about the values, the natural values and the Aboriginal heritage values most people do the right thing. Most people are in it for the enjoyment. Most people want to do the right thing. It is the same old 5 per cent of ratbags that do things like Southport Lagoon that make it difficult for the rest of us. I think Tassie can lead the way here. We have enough reserve land, we have enough land around this State that we can probably, I think, come up with a system. Two weeks ago I was up in the Snug Tiers. Admittedly I have displaced some of the Southport issue to there but the difference with the Snug Tiers is it is a dolerite base. It is fairly hardy territory. There is not a lot of erosion. There is not a lot of damage they can do up there. So I am thinking that is probably an area where we should legitimise some use. We should put a couple of loop tracks in. We should designate one for four-wheel drives and one for motorbikes and we should legitimise the activity because the area can cope with it.

CHAIR - Where was that place again?

Mr GADD - Snug Tiers which is -

CHAIR - Snake?

Mr GADD - Snug.

Ms FORREST - The member for Huon's electorate, is it?

Mr GADD - Mr Harriss's. Right in the heart of his electorate. It is heavily used now by motorcycles. It is not illegal but it will get to the point where there will be so many that we will have an accident because there are no directions, they can go anywhere they like. We are going to have to fix that. These guys themselves accept more regulations. They do not like it but that report tells you that ultimately that is what they came up with. And the other thing, if I just put my environmental hat on for a minute, having spent some time at Savage River and Mount Lyell and a range of other mine sites, there is some prime opportunity there too with degraded mine sites. These days, as we shut down a mine like Savage River we make it safe. We make the proponent make it safe before they walk off the site. There is an opportunity there, I think, to create some four-wheel-drive parks.

Ms FORREST - Savage is not shutting for a while, though.

Mr GADD - No, I know. I do not want to spook anyone by suggesting that. If you know what I mean, as you move around Tasmania there is a lot of land that is heavily degraded, has been heavily mined or heavily farmed that could potentially be converted, under a commercial framework, to provide opportunities as well and I think that is part of the solution.

Ms FORREST - I see the merit in what you suggest but there is still that - I hate to use the word 'mentality' but I will - mentality, 'I don't want to go to where everyone else goes and that is where it is organised. I want to go to this wilderness area where I can be the only person there'.

Mr GADD - There is no doubt it and that is where all my problems come from. It is that small percentage that are actually escaping the watch of somebody. They are actually trying to get far enough away so the law can't get to them in time so they want to get out there and drink bourbon or smoke pot or whatever it is they do.

We are always going to have them but at the end of the day if somewhere like Savage River is legitimised, it is pretty bloody well out of the way. They could go there, they could potentially rent a big enough space to still have their isolation and do whatever it is they have to do as long as they are not bothering anyone else and I believe there is a thing called Landcruiser Park in Queensland where you do actually rent like 5 or 10 acres for the weekend and off you go. But you are right, there is always going to be that element.

The other side of course to this is that if we get a system in place I have to enforce it. I have to have people on the ground to back it up.

Ms FORREST - There is a resourcing problem for your department.

Mr GADD - That is right. The big answer there I think is to utilise the existing clubs. The four-wheel-drive clubs and motocross clubs are generally very well organised, very sensible people. They could potentially be our eyes and ears. They could potentially be guardians of certain tracts of land or they could manage the permit system or whatever but as we go forward we have to try to embrace that as well because there are a lot more four-wheel-drive club members out there than there are probably rangers on any given day.

Ms FORREST - So there is some sort of benefit to them if they were charged with the responsibility of that patch being under their watch, I guess; any benefits that come will feed back into development of that area? Is that the sort of thing you are thinking about?

Mr GADD - Yes. If at the end of the day we end up with a permit system - and I like the permit system because I can put a fee on it - the clubs tell me their runs are always organised well in advance so there is no issue with pre-planning or paying a bit of a fee. The idea would be 100 per cent of that fee would go back into track maintenance so if, for example, the Four Wheel Drive Club of Tasmania or, say, the North-West Four Wheel Drive Club wanted to take some ownership of the Arthur-Pieman, provided it did not disenfranchise any other users then maybe they could run the permit system or something and therefore manage that fund to support their working bees, that sort of thing, in partnership with us so that the proper planning and stuff is done.

We are starting to do it anyway now and Forestry have already set up a partnership with Four Wheel Drive Tasmania in the southern forest along those lines so we are starting to get there. The whole point of the advisory group is to start to drive some of the recommendations of this forward in a collective manner so that we get agreement because ultimately it is going to mean more regulation.

CHAIR - Do you consider there are suitable areas in most of the main populated areas of the State or accessible to most of the main populated areas of the State for this type of activity to be made available?

Mr GADD - Without having done the on-ground assessment, yes, my hunch is there is enough in Tasmania with the one proviso that I do think the one activity that is incompatible with our reserve system - and any land I manage is reserved for a value and if it is unallocated crown land it is in DPIW, there are some opportunities there - is the mud-running. I think to be honest that is the one activity that I can't sustain in the reserve system. It has a massive major impact.

Ms FORREST - Because of the size of the tyres?

Mr GADD - Yes. The whole point of it - and I do not understand it, I will freely admit that - is to get the vehicle as dirty as possible and take as long as possible to get across the shortest possible bit of mud. I have sat down at Southport and I have watched them do it and I have watched them drive for five minutes, get bogged and then the next guy pulls him out and then he gets bogged and then the next guy pulls him out and on and on it goes. Meanwhile they are all covered in mud and I don't get it, I am sorry, but there is definitely an element out there that love it. That is the one activity I think I can't accommodate but there is degraded agricultural land, there are mine sites, there are other areas where people could potentially make a dollar out of providing access.

Mr DEAN - Just on the users, you are saying that there are quite a few from the mainland now that are coming across here. What do the *Spirit of Tasmania* figures identify to us of the numbers coming across here with these mud-running vehicles and so on?

Mr GADD - The best I have got is a comparison. In 2001-02, 16.5 per cent of vehicles entering Tasmania on the *Spirit* were four-wheel drives.

Mr DEAN - You cannot break that down?

Mr GADD - No. By 2005-06, so within four years, that percentage had grown to 25.7, and I can't give you a breakdown on bikes.

Mr DEAN - And despite the fuel increase and so on this has built up, this activity has continued to build.

Mr GADD - Yes, albeit we have not seen the results because the fuel increase has really spiked in the last 12 months so we are seeing a curve like this. I suspect it will have an impact but the horse has bolted in a sense and these things to do not use a lot of petrol, that is the other thing.

Ms FORREST - The bikes don't?

Mr GADD - No.

Ms FORREST - It's the big four-wheel drives. What about the mud-runners, do they?

Mr GADD - Everything from little Suzukis right through to big Land Cruisers, so there is the whole range, and they are heavily modified. These guys spend tens of thousands of dollars on these things.

Ms FORREST - And a bigger fuel bill doesn't bother them.

Mr GADD - No, that is right - to have the experience.

Ms FORREST - To spend \$10 000 on your tyres you must have a bit of disposable income.

Mr GADD - More often than not they break them. You hear some of these stories where they brag about breaking the diff and blowing up the motor up and -

Mr HARRISS - **You see what you are missing, Mr Chairman?**

CHAIR - I have never heard of it before.

Mr GADD - I will have to down you down there, Don, it is a sight to see. Next time you see a four-wheel drive on the road covered in mud just think about that.

Ms FORREST - Is there an issue of spreading weeds and things like that in this activity?

Mr GADD - Absolutely, and the other thing is feral cats. Feral cats do not move through the bush so well but as soon as you open up a track they are off, so yes. We will never know, but they potentially have an impact on all sorts of things.

Ms FORREST - Seen any foxes out there?

Mr GADD - Personally?

Laughter.

CHAIR - So the mud-running is confined to the Huon area, is it?

Mr GADD - No, the main one was Southport. Over the years it had become an accepted practice so people were just unaware and it became a mud bath.

CHAIR - That's in Huon, isn't it.

Mr GADD - Yes. There is a bit of it on the west coast, in the Arthur Pieman. There are some fairly major bogs starting to open up. It only takes one or two ATVs - they fly up a track and into an offshoot, they get into a bit of a swampy area, do a couple of doughnuts and next thing you know there's a bit of a mud hole. The next guy comes along and goes, 'Oh there's a mud hole, that must be there for us to do that in', so they get in there

and do it and it becomes a self-perpetuating thing. Before you know it I have a kilometre-and-a-half-long track through the conservation area.

Mr DEAN - The Dial Range is another area that is being used consistently. I tried to pick it up on that map; I think it is identified there, is it?

Mr GADD - Yes, that is above Penguin. I have not been in to have a look at that one yet.

CHAIR - They have an established track there.

Mr DEAN - An established track, that's what I mean. I was just wondering how it was operating.

CHAIR - I think that is being well run

Mr GADD - I do not know, that is not one I have looked at.

Ms FORREST - That is the President's electorate. I am sure it is very well run!

Mr DEAN - My sons have been there and used it.

Mr GADD - That used to be a motor course, a speedway. In fact that is where I got my motorcycle licence.

CHAIR - Yes, I think the facilities are good there, and it is well run.

Mr GADD - That is what we need, we need more of that so that we are giving some of these kids the basic skills they need. Technology is amazing - these ATVs now, they are not like the farm bikes we are used to seeing; these are highly modified, extremely quick, and these things float. Most people don't realize but they float.

CHAIR - Amphibious?

Mr GADD - No, they are not amphibious but there is enough air in them and there is enough bulk in them that if you get into a creek or a river and keep the wheels going you can actually forge across it - they will actually float, so there is no limit to where they can get to.

We do not use motorcycles in parks, we use ATVs because in the right hands - if they are ridden properly - they can actually have the minimal footprint because the weight is spread out over four tyres. The tyres are generally deflated, so if you do not ride over the same track all the time the impact can be negligible. But of course if they are in there for recreational use they are not generally riding like that.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for that. It has been illuminating and very helpful. Do you have anything else?

Mr GADD - No, but if I can leave you with the parting comment that I think I can get it right in Tasmania. In terms of the land management issues I think we can get that system right. That is the easy bit. We just have to work together with the groups, so over the

next two years I think we will bowl that one over. The hard bit is the design standards, which do need to be elevated to a national agenda. This licensing issue of kids and how we are going to deal with that, that is going to need a bit of a bigger-picture approach.

Ms FORREST - That must potentially have other benefits though for on-farm use and things like that. If you could get kids who do ride ATVs - my kids did and still do - to go through a process that enabled them to be safer riders then - you see them and they are on big, heavy vehicles.

Mr GADD - What parent would not support that? We open parents' eyes on the west coast when we see them riding with their kids all the time. Often they do not have helmets and things when you see them and we say, 'How old is little Johnny?', 'He is 14', 'Do you realise if he has an accident you are not covered by MAIB? Or there is no guarantee you will be covered?' 'Really?' Suddenly their whole thought process is changed.

Ms FORREST - With the licensing regime, that could then be -

Mr GADD - It has to be linked. We have to get MAIB involved. There is not a lot of consistency from what I can see as to whether people get covered or not. But it has to be linked into insurance, and registration and licensing.

Ms FORREST - So then you come back to the fees of such a licensing regime because the MAIB premium is not insignificant.

Mr GADD - That is correct. But at what cost? It is always that trade-off, isn't it? I am not normally one to advocate more regulation and I guarantee that the participants in this workshop did not come here thinking that they were going to agree at the end of this.

Ms FORREST - Is there a list of participants in that document?

Mr GADD - There is. It is towards the end. At the end of the day they all agreed.

CHAIR - These workshops that you are organising are really very effective, aren't they? I am thinking of the one at the Tamar River. That was different.

Mr GADD - Yes, I used a different consultant. I used a value management team on this. It was the perfect model for this because you have a group of very diverse interests. I would have to say, Sam, and you would probably agree, that this worked exceptionally well in this case. If you have a look at the report and you will see the sort of stuff that came out.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for that and for everything that you have been good enough to tell us. I appreciate that.

Mr GADD - My pleasure. Thank you.

CHAIR - You heard what we were saying about the evidence and that if anybody from the media wanted to talk with you about it you would be happy to talk with them, would you?

Mr GADD - Absolutely. I will only give general comments, obviously.

CHAIR - That would be good, to get that sort of message in the community.

Mr GADD - And we are always keen to do that. We are going to continue to try to ramp this up over the next year. I have good support and a bit of momentum otherwise we are going to be forced to react. It is only a year or two away and we are going to have another horror summer.

Ms FORREST - Plenty of people do not want to be locked out, as you know.

Mr GADD - Exactly. I have to deal with all of that as well.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, Scott.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr ROBIN ALAN ECCLES, AUSTRALIAN DRIVER TRAINERS ASSOCIATION (TASMANIA), WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Welcome. Would you please state your occupation?

Mr ECCLES - My occupation is a manager of a driving school and a professional driving instructor.

CHAIR - Would you please give us some details about your association?

Mr ECCLES - The association was formed about three years ago. It is an affiliated body with the Australian Driver Trainers Association. We represent 33 of about 44 professional instructors in Tasmania.

CHAIR - We welcome your views.

Mr ECCLES - Driving instructors around the State have for the last two or three years been very concerned about the standard of driving test for novice learner drivers. You are obviously aware that learner drivers under supervision during the learning period have a very low accident rate. It is about 20 per cent of what a fully experienced driver would have. On the very day they pass a driving test the accident rate goes up about 20 or 30 times that figure, so they are at a very high risk. Under 25s generally are way over-represented when it comes to fatalities, injuries and collisions. The major group are the provisional drivers when they first get their licence and start driving solo. There is a lot of research going into this over the last probably 12 months and while there are lots of reasons emerging, there seems to be three main ones; two major ones in that having learnt to drive with a supervisory driver and been assessed by a professional assessor the learning stops as soon as they pass this driving test, so the learning period slows down and all they do is learn by experience and evidence suggests that, at that stage, they don't learn much by experience. The other reason is that the driving test or assessment could be faulty so that they're being assessed to a standard which isn't correct and they're being put on the road before they have actually got the safe driving habits and skills that they need to do solo driving. This is our concern.

A little bit of background; about seven years ago the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources commissioned a Tasmanian, Alex Jerrim, to design a driving test. He designed a two-part driving test based on a graduated licensing scheme where learner novice drivers actually do two driving tests. So, they do a driving test and then they do further training and they do an exit test to get their provisional licence. It was never adopted by Tasmania; it was shelved. Western Australia took up the driving test but they took the first test which was originally designed to fit between an L1 stage and an L2 stage. Western Australia took it as an exit test to get a provisional licence. That test was never designed to do that. I think later on during the hearing you might hear from a gentleman called Alex Jerrim. He is actually the guy that designed these driving tests.

Tasmania adopted, from Western Australia, that test and it was introduced in Tasmania about five years ago. So, the current test we're using to put provisional drivers on the road was never designed to assess safe driving behaviour. What it consists of is four

very short drives of about three or four minutes and they do what they call scenarios, which is all turning around in a street, parking your car in a supermarket or reverse parking. So the amount of actual driving in traffic is very, very minimal. When the test was designed, it was designed to assess that at this particular stage a driver had got the basic car handling to a stage where they have what we call 'spare thought' so they could think about other things while they're handling the car.

But this test was never designed as an exit test to put novice drivers provisional driving solo. This is a test we have been using for four years.

Ms FORREST - Can I just clarify, then, the test that was implemented about four years ago was taken out of a bigger picture process assessing one particular aspect at a particular point in time. Is that a fair description?

Mr ECCLES - Yes. So the test was never designed to do what it is doing now.

Ms FORREST - Are we still using the same testing regime?

Mr ECCLES - We are still using the same driving test. Research in Victoria shows that provisional drivers are most at risk of rear end collisions, doing right hand turns at intersections and going through intersections straight through. That is in urban suburban areas and the driving test we are using now does not assess safe driving practices, especially in those particular areas. What is happening at the moment is we are getting people who are good safe drivers with low-risk driving attitudes and everything else and they are failing the test quite regularly; I believe the pass rate at the moment is around about 25 to 30 per cent. That is not the worry; the big worry is that we are putting people on the road who can handle a vehicle but they have not got safe driving attitudes. They are actually being penalised on the test for safe driving behaviour. I can give you examples if you wish.

Ms FORREST - Actually, I have heard this from a young P-Plater. When she went for her test - I can't think what she actually did - she did something that was then criticised even though she had been taught that by a training driving school.

Mr ECCLES - What driving instructors are having to do now is that we are teaching people to pass the test because that is what we get paid for. We are a commercial proposition; people pay us to get them licensed and we are actually teaching people the wrong thing to pass the test. So we teach people the right thing and they say but when you go for your test -

CHAIR - The wrong thing to pass the test?

Mr ECCLES - Yes.

CHAIR - You teach them the right thing to pass the test but the wrong thing in terms of safety?

Mr ECCLES - I will give you an example. If we are teaching learner drivers, we teach them to plan ahead. If there has been a green light - it is what we call a stale green light - that has been green for a long time, a good driver would do what? He would slow down, be

prepared to stop, check behind to see what is behind him in case he has to stop, maybe even look for an escape route if he is worried. If you do that on the current driving test you get penalised for obstructing traffic - what they call flow. So you get penalised for that. If you get a red light up ahead we would teach people to check your mirror, ease off early, reduce your speed, it is good economically, you are safer behind and with any luck at all you might even get a green. So that is safe. If you do that on a test you get penalised for flow again. You obstruct. Speed limits - you are expected to do the speed limit. Do not worry where you are. There are situations where a speed limit, if you want an example, say coming down Regent Street, Sandy Bay, where you have got a fairly narrow road, very blind intersections - we go up here with testing officers. But to do 60 kilometres an hour down that street is dangerous. It is a very high-risk occupation.

CHAIR - Even though signs on the open highway say 110 is the limit not a challenge.

Mr ECCLES - That is true.

CHAIR - But that is inconsistent with popular practice in -

Mr ECCLES - But it also says on television do 10 less than the speed limit. If you do that on a driving test you get penalised.

Ms FORREST - It is not one of those automatic failure ones but it gives you so many points, a body of points, that would add towards your lack of passing the test.

Mr ECCLES - They are not points, you get little ticks and crosses and then you add the ticks and crosses up and down and if you get the right number of ticks and crosses you pass your test and if you do not you fail.

On this driving test there is actually a column built into the test on the assessment form which is 'response'. We have argued for two or three years that response is the cornerstone of safe driving; you have to see something, which assesses observation; based on what you can see you assess what you can reasonably expect to happen, and then you come up with some formula about what you are going to do if it does happen. So to me response is very critical. Yet on the sheet 80 per cent of the time it is just left blank.

How do you do a driving test when you do not do any responsiveness? Their argument is that there is so little driving in the test that they cannot assess responsiveness. This is the problem. You are not out driving through intersections judging speed of approaching traffic, doing right-hand turns, left-hand turns, give way signs. There is very, very little driving. The total driving time where you are actually driving in a driving test these days would be 10 minutes if you are lucky, probably less than that on some tests and yet we are putting these people out on the road.

CHAIR - And it would not indicate their capacity to handle a vehicle in a skid, on a gravel road, in wet conditions or at night?

Mr ECCLES - You will never assess that, not on a novice driving test. Other jurisdictions have tried emergency stopping and they have got some very scared testing officers in

very dangerous situations. We tried it in Tasmania about 15 years ago. It lasted for about two weeks, I think.

Mr HARRISS - Robin, if your association has some concerns, with what regularity have you drawn those concerns to the attention of the relevant authorities and what have been the responses?

Mr ECCLES - We have consistently over two years drawn them to the attention of Anne-Maree Mills, she is Manager, Driver Licensing Unit, and Richard Fowler, Registrar of Motor Vehicles. We talked about alternative ways of doing it. Anne-Maree Mills actually introduced the test. She was in charge of the novice reform group. She was responsible for introducing this test so it is very difficult for her to turn around at a later date and say it just does not work. Richard can see the drawbacks in it but we have tackled it piecemeal. Every time we get complaints about the test we go to testing officers, we go to the senior testing officer but we are getting nowhere.

CHAIR - What course of instruction would you like to see? Do you see any merit in having a course available or required to be undertaken by learner drivers, in addition to learning to physically drive, along the lines of being shown films about what to do in emergencies and skids et cetera, perhaps three or four hours of instruction additional to the actual training to physically drive?

Mr ECCLES - We have looked at other jurisdictions and a little bit overseas on a limited basis. The model that we would like to see is currently in place in South Australia and in the Australian Capital Territory. It is called Competency Based Training and Assessment. What happens under this system is that a learner driver can go to a professional instructor and they can undertake a course of tuition and they must meet whatever number it is set down, say 32 criteria which describe safe driving habits. So you do a course of tuition. When the professional instructor feels the person is performing these 32 criteria consistently safely they can then do an assessment which can be audited by a government department. So you notify the appropriate authorities that you are going to conduct an assessment at a certain place at a certain time with a certain person. An auditor may turn up or may not turn up. You then do the assessment and then you make your decision based on that assessment whether you feel the person is a safe driver. If they are then you issue a certificate to say they have passed the assessment and they go to the appropriate authorities and they are issued with a licence.

Ms FORREST - How long does that assessment take?

Mr ECCLES - About an hour. It is a good system because the learner driver knows out of the 32 criteria they might do an hour's driving lesson. At the end of that you will run through the 32 and say, 'On these seven criteria you are okay. We have these criterias still to work on', so the learner/novice driver knows where they are weak, they know what they have to do. They can see this progressing through a training course so they know how far they have got down the track and the professional instructor also knows, they build a relationship with the person and they know what needs to be done to get them to the final stage.

The final assessment is a little bit academic because you spend time with these people. You already know before you start the assessment where they are weak, where they are good. In theory they should be good in the whole 32 criteria.

Ms FORREST - What is the cost of this process to the individual?

Mr ECCLES - You are looking at around about \$50 an hour. The other States run a government testing scheme similar to what you do here but they vary considerably. The public has a choice of either doing competency-based training and assessment or they can go through a government system.

In South Australia they have logbooks and you will go to a professional instructor. You might have one lesson and they say, 'This is what you need to practise'. They go away with a supervisory driver, practise, come back. You can tick them off if they have done the correct practice and say, 'Right, we will move on to the next couple of criteria, this is what you need to do, go away with your supervisory driver and practise'.

You do not have to pay for the whole 50 hours in the logbook or whatever it is - that would cost you \$2 500. It might be five sessions with a professional instructor.

Ms FORREST - In South Australia and the ACT, how long have they had these methods?

Mr ECCLES - I am not sure exactly. In South Australia it would be I think about five or six years, maybe even a little bit longer, about seven years. In the ACT is a little bit less. I think it is about three or four years.

Ms FORREST - Particularly in South Australia, are you aware of any statistics involving younger drivers and crashes, 18 or whatever it is when they get their provisional licence through the next five years or so?

Mr ECCLES - Well, you know statistics. We have different statistics. It depends who you get them from. We get them from driving instructors in South Australia and then we get the government statistics and there is a bit of a gap in between. The ACT is a bit of a problem because there is a big influx of drivers from the surrounding States into the ACT and ACT provisional drivers go out. But the ACT statistics prove almost conclusively that there is a big increase in performance. It is a much fairer system and it is flexible.

Ms FORREST - Are there fewer young people involved in serious crashes?

Mr ECCLES - In serious crashes.

Ms FORREST - Has that been the case in South Australia?

Mr ECCLES - Yes. It does not matter which statistics you look at, it has reduced quite considerably.

Ms FORREST - It would be worth getting those statistics.

CHAIR - Yes. Are you familiar with the Rotary scheme that they have for schoolchildren?

Mr ECCLES - Yes, and I have participated in this.

CHAIR - What is your opinion of that?

Mr ECCLES - We actually do a session on defensive driving in that section. It cannot do any harm at the worst. At the best I think a lot of the kids who attend treat it as a bit of a day out and I am a little bit suspicious about what comes across.

Exercises where you do braking exercises to show how quickly you can stop a car, skid control, I would stay away from because what happens with those sort of courses is that you get an attitude shift. I am also President of the Institute of Advanced Motorists. We use the Police Academy skid pad and we do courses there about seven or eight times a year. We had a lot of conflict when we started doing this about 30 years ago in relation to attitudes and we are very, very careful about the attitude people come off with. If you come off with the attitude, 'I've done a course in skidding therefore I can now go into corners faster and take risks', it is a negative. There was a lot of research done in America about 15 years ago that proved that they were actually negative. But it depends on how you present the course. If they come off with the attitude that skids are not very pleasant things and 'I don't want to get into a skid therefore I am going to drive more carefully especially if it's raining or wet or whatever' it is worth doing. So you have to be a little bit careful.

CHAIR - Creating the right attitude is very important in terms of road safety, isn't it?

Mr ECCLES - It is 100 per cent.

CHAIR - Do you not think that showing learner drivers films and giving them instruction in a room collectively and advice -

Mr ECCLES - Shock-horror films do not work. It has been proven around the world. So showing people bleeding and smashed-up cars does not work.

CHAIR - I am not suggesting that. But tips about what to do in a skid.

Mr ECCLES - No. Worthless. Not worth it.

CHAIR - Why?

Mr ECCLES - We take people to the skid pad, which is a practical session, and we actually get them into skids at fairly slow speeds and they have experienced skids. They have experienced skids in their own car. There is no relationship between doing that and how to react in a real situation when it is unexpected.

CHAIR - You cannot have all the learner drivers going through a skid pan, can you?

Mr ECCLES - No, you cannot but what you can do -

CHAIR - But you could let them all see a film encouraging good driving habits, the importance of giving signals before turning.

Mr ECCLES - The trick with road safety is to stop people getting into skids and to stop people getting into trouble.

CHAIR - That is right.

Mr ECCLES - When things go wrong you have a second, a second and a half, two seconds at the most to actually do something. Training does not affect your behaviour.

CHAIR - But why not have films showing them how to stop getting into a skid and showing them all these things, giving them advice?

Mr ECCLES - You could but it is the type of advice you give them. What you said about how you tell people how to avoid getting into skids is different. There is some value in that.

Ms FORREST - A lot of the newer cars have ABS braking - all new cars do - but we are getting to the point where a lot of the cars on the road have it. I remember the first time I felt it. I thought there was something seriously wrong. I thought that the front end was going to drop off the car. Until you have actually felt it you do not realise what it is. I did have a problem with it in one of the cars that I had and the service guy said to me, 'It sounds like the ABS braking'. I said, 'It could be. I don't know'. Then when I did use the brakes heavily one day and felt it I thought, 'That's exactly what it is'. That is important.

Mr ECCLES - I have no argument with that. They found this in America. When it starts to vibrate on the pedal, quite a few people thought something was not right and took their foot off the brake.

Ms FORREST - That is right. It sounds like crunching metal. That is what it feels like under your foot, a bit.

Mr ECCLES - Severe shuddering.

Mr DEAN - Robin, with the licences, the testing, you are saying that the flexibility is not there for the instructor to use discretion in some of those situations. In other words, if the speed limit is 60 and you use Regent Street and a novice driver drove down there at, say, 50 or 45 you would have to deduct points. Are you saying there is no flexibility?

Mr ECCLES - The testing officers - government-employed testing officers. There is no flexibility. They have a written-down standard and they must adhere to that standard. But being human beings they are a little bit flexible but officially it is very unflexible. A lot of the decisions that are made on the test are pedantic, stupid, nothing to do with road safety decisions. For example, you are asked to turn the car around and there are no buses behind, the road is absolutely clear. They will stop on a bus stop, which technically is illegal, and some testing officers will fail somebody for doing it. How far can you go up a driveway? We have had people fail tests for going past the letter box on a driveway when they were using a driveway. There is no legal answer to it. We have made inquiries and you can go up a driveway as far as you want to but people have actually failed for that.

Ms FORREST - That was the reason for their failure, going past the letterbox?

Mr ECCLES - I could give you a list this long of pedantic, stupid entrapment. The courses that you use on tests are set up to fail people.

Ms FORREST - Is there a fundamental problem with the test then if a person is failed for that sort of reason, that that driving tester can say that this person is not ready to be out there on the road with the other cars - 'They haven't done anything seriously wrong here but I know they are not ready so I will fail them for going past the letter box.'? Could that be the situation?

Mr ECCLES - No, no they come back. They have to debrief driving instructors when they come back - they have to give a reason. It has to be on the sheet why they failed - it is in writing. It is all pedantic stuff. There is a car park near the university - the speed limit is 10 kilometres an hour, which is very rare even in a car park - and if the kids do 15 kilometres an hour it is immediately failure. So they go down there a lot; it is entrapment. I can give you lots of examples where it is entrapment.

The courses are designed to fail people.

Ms FORREST - Is there a benchmark they have that they can only pass so many people in any one sitting?

Mr ECCLES - They will not admit to it, and I do not think there is because we had a waiting list of six months to get a driving test and they were still failing two-thirds.

CHAIR - Why do they do that, why do they entrap them?

Mr ECCLES - It is a culture within testing officers. Testing officers get together. They are a fairly isolated group. They are isolated from upper management or middle management. They get together with their peers and they say things like, 'I found this place down so and so. Everybody fails to stop there at a stop sign'. It is like a culture; they get an ingrown culture.

Ms FORREST - How do you know that?

Mr ECCLES - Because I have been around for 35 years and I know most of the testing officers. I know what does on, we know what goes on in tests.

CHAIR - What qualifications do they need to have, if any?

Mr ECCLES - They are usually ex-clerks, or they used to be - they used to be ex-clerks from Service Tasmania who thought they would have a go at it. The training is almost non-existent. They go through the paperwork, they go through the standard in a classroom, they sit in the back seat while the testing officer does tests for about two or three days, then they sit in the front. They get a peer assessment from the back seat at the end - they actually conduct the test. So it is about a week's training.

They have actually a certificate in workplace training and assessment. Driving instructors also have it - it took us eight months to do it - they did it from

nine o'clock to 12 o'clock one Wednesday morning, and that included morning tea. They never get assessed on their knowledge of road law. They never get assessed in a vehicle until they put some new testing officers on about three months ago because the waiting list was so long. They were actually assessed - and I am not allowed to use hearsay, this is anecdotal - by somebody who knows driving and they were assessed as being not very good drivers, but nothing ever happened after that.

I am not allowed to give you anecdotal evidence but I know the person who did the assessment. It is this culture within the group - we knock people back. To give you another example, on a test a learner stalls on a hill and then they get the thing going again and then they are off. On the sheet the testing officer would put, 'flow, movement, path' and you fail that section virtually. We say if a learner driver stalls a car they keep control of the car, they identify why it stalled, start the car and take off within a reasonable period, say five, six, seven seconds, we think of that as a positive, not a negative, but they see it as a negative and they are going to fail somebody on a test. We think they should get bonus points for stalling and knowing why it stalled and fixing in fairly quickly and taking off smoothly. We have completely different attitudes.

CHAIR - Do you know what percentage of learner drivers would be taught by driving instructors as compared with family and friends?

Mr ECCLES - It is about 20 per cent. They have some contact with a professional instructor. It is very rare since logbooks came in that we teach people from whoa to go. Eight years ago, prior to logbooks, we used to teach people who had never driven a car in about 15 hours, go for test and past the test, and my opinion is that we were putting much better drivers out in those days than now with logbooks where people do 50 hours with parents and friends. But quite often people come to a driving school to learn how to reverse-park a car- that is the favourite. Parents ring up and they say, 'She's a good little driver but she can't reverse-park a car' so we get a lot of business out of that. I think every second parent tells me that, they are good little drivers but.

Some people come just at the tail end, just before they go for a test. They might have one hour so they will ring and say they want to book a driving lesson and she has her test booked next week, the next Wednesday, and could she use our car for the test. That is pretty common, so that goes down as contact with a driving school.

Ms FORREST - You might not be able to answer this but do you find that a lot of the 50 hours is taken up driving automatic vehicles? A lot of families have automatic vehicles -

Mr ECCLES - It does not matter.

Ms FORREST - I appreciate that but if they are then coming for their one-hour test with the driving school and using that vehicle for that test that is a manual, to get a manual licence -

Mr ECCLES - They usually specify what sort of car they want to have the lesson in and do the test in.

CHAIR - So only 20 per cent have a full course with a driving instructor. What percentage would you think never have any contact with a driving instructor?

Mr ECCLES - It would be about 75 per cent.

CHAIR - Would it not be an advantage to cover cases like that in particular to have some course that all learner drivers are required to do - not for physical training but just to advise them about essential matters that friends and relatives may not be aware of or not think to tell them?

Mr ECCLES - You have heard of Keys to Drive? It is a federally funded program. It has been running in Western Australia for a few years under the auspices of the AAA, the Australian Automobile Association. The Federal Government has funded it to the tune of \$19 million. Driver Safety Tasmania has actually got the contract to put this in place all round Australia. We are just starting accreditation for Tasmanian driving instructors and we will run a pilot program in Tasmania. A learner driver with their supervisory driver will have one hour paid for by the Federal Government. It will not be a driving lesson teaching people how to steer and use a clutch, it will be working with the supervisory driver setting a standard, a benchmark to say this is what you should be teaching your learner driver. So the instructor will actually be driving for a lot of it, setting the benchmark. In Victoria and Western Australia the parents have said it is a different standard than they drive at, so it transfers more work to professional instructors. That is a step in the right direction.

CHAIR - But that is physical driving isn't it? That actual driver training is in driving a car.

Mr ECCLES - Yes, actually in the car.

CHAIR - I am talking about advice and information that learners would not otherwise get to encourage the right attitude, that you have to follow this practice or that.

Mr ECCLES - Experts have looked at the word 'attitude' and they cannot work out what it is, but everybody talks about this attitude business. If you meet Alex Jerrim he has done a lot of research into this word attitude and it seems like your world view comes into it. Your optimism, pessimism, bias comes into it and it is a very, very complicated thing. You can give people basic skills very easily, like stay three seconds from the car in front and you reduce the chance of having a rear-end collision. There are basic things you can teach people: drive through an intersection, do not assume people are going to stop and give way, scan the intersection, save the brake. There are a million skills but attitude is a very, very different thing. These people whose attitudes you are trying to change, their attitudes are based on family environment and the attitude of their parents. They have been exposed to that for 16 years before they get in a car so it is very difficult to change.

CHAIR - It is all they are subjected to when they are learning. With about 70 or 80 per cent not having any driving instruction, surely however you define attitude it is desirable to have some system where people are informed about the basics -

Mr ECCLES - True.

CHAIR - by film or in a meeting situation of instruction.

Mr ECCLES - We could talk forever. The Road Safety Task Force spend a lot of money on enforcement - do the speed limits, do not drink and drive, and this sort of stuff, and yet they have not actually done what you have just said. They have never put on television that the most common form of collision is a rear-end collision and if you go on to be involved in this collision this is what you do. You could put that in a commercial. They do not do that. They do not tell you have to avoid an intersection collision.

CHAIR - Surely that is some of the information that learner drivers should be getting.

Mr ECCLES - They are not getting it.

CHAIR - If they are not getting it through there and they are not going to get it from friends and relatives, surely there should be some minimum requirement to have that instruction. Do you agree?

Mr ECCLES - I agree, 100 per cent.

CHAIR - If you were in charge of the system of testing for drivers licences in Tasmania, had full control, what would you do to improve the situation that you find, understandably, unsatisfactory?

Mr ECCLES - Well, the driver trainer industry in Tasmania is fairly small and we're all good friends so I would get four people together who are personal friends of mine and we would sit down and have a talk about it to start with. We all, basically, 80 per cent agree on what should be done. The test we're currently using we would scrap altogether. The graduated licensing scheme we would keep. The current test that is putting people on provisional we would move back to where it was originally intended, between the L1 and the L2 stage. That's where it belongs; that's what it was designed to do. Then we would come up with a new test which assesses -and it's already been designed and is sitting on a shelf somewhere - ask DIER - I would then introduce that test. We have a few reservations that would have to be modified slightly because it's about six years old. That assesses what they call higher-order skills. That puts you on your provisional.

There is this huge great peak in accident collision rates. The very hour you go on your provision alllicence your accident rate goes up by 20 to 30 per cent, so you've got to blur the boundary between being a learner and being a licensed driver. What I would do is give somebody a provisional licence; they'd have restrictions on them as far as speed, alcohol and all the current things that are on there then I would say, right, now before you come off your provisional licence you'll have to demonstrate to somebody that you've reached a higher level. So you stay provisional until you've demonstrated that you've met a set of further competences, the higher-order skills. That could be anything; you could do the skidpan training; you could do theory sessions; you could do anything like that. But you have to demonstrate to somebody. What that does is, instead of going I'm a learner, I'm a licensed driver, it blurs the boundaries so when you go provisional you know that you have to undertake further training to get off your provisional.

In New Zealand they've headed in that direction a little bit.

Mr DEAN - In your position and from what you've observe done of the greatest causes of accidents in the State, and I think nationally, is inattentive driving -

Mr ECCLES - Yes.

Mr DEAN - and it comes down to attitude, again. What do you see as a factor that's creating that problem and what can be done about it?

Mr ECCLES - Well, the problem is that cars have become entertainment systems. Cars are ultimately safer than they used to be and in the future they're going to get safer and safer but the problem is, and I can remember even in my generation when you had a radio in your car; now there are radios, CD players, DVD players, GPS navigational systems, not to mention other stuff that you bring with you in your pocket such as mobile phones, hands free. That was the biggest blue ever made - to let people use hands-free mobile phones in their car; it's dangerous; it's lethal. It's not a case of having one hand to hear; it's where your brain is. It's the same whether it's hands free or it's held to your ear. It is ridiculous. So your car is now an entertainment system and that's just part of the distraction.

So that's the problem but how do you stop it? Car manufacturers build these things into cars.

Ms FORREST - And we start to expect them as normal.

Mr ECCLES - Yes. I'll guarantee that if you took radios out of cars the DVD players and GPS navigational systems and you banned mobile phones in your , your collision rate would probably drop about 20 per cent.

Ms FORREST - I want to ask about the process that you described as being an appropriate way, as you see it, for the learner provisional transition. Do you think there is a need perhaps for learner drivers at some stage, whilst under supervision, to have the opportunity to drive above 80 kilometres per hour, like 100 or 110 kilometres per hour?

Mr ECCLES - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Do you want to elaborate on that?

Mr ECCLES - I taught my three boys to drive and they all did over 80 kilometres per hour. I got caught by the police once and he let me off because he thought it was a good idea. The first thing is, I think, restricting provisional drivers to 80 kilometres per hour is dangerous. I live at Kingston; I come up the Southern Outlet in peak hour traffic in the morning; here's a little P-Plater doing the right thing with his P-plate up and he's doing 80 kilometres per hour; the left-hand lane is blocked off. You get cars trying to get into a crowded right-hand lane of traffic. It is dangerous. I would much prefer to let them experience speeds, the normal speed limits, and this 80 kilometres an hour does not apply in every jurisdiction. Some states in Australia you can do them at the speed limit so I am dead against it. Let them experience while they are under supervision.

Ms FORREST - I have asked this question quite a number of times about this particular issue because a car handles differently at 80 kilometres than it does at 110. I have taught three children to drive and supervised them quite a bit too but -

Mr ECCLES - The thing is you get your learner's licence and for at least a minimum of 12 months you cannot drive over 80. You do your first year provisional, so that is two years you have never done over 80 kilometres and then one day, all of a sudden, I am off my Ps.

Ms FORREST - Have you spoken to anyone in DIER or the relevant minister at the time about this matter?

Mr ECCLES - We did not get as far as the minister. Yes, we have talked to people about it. We have made suggestions.

Ms FORREST - What has been the major objection to that? Have they provided you with some sort of evidence that suggests that it is not a good idea?

Mr ECCLES - They feel that if a collision does occur your chance of being killed at 110 is much greater than at 80.

Ms FORREST - That is the only reason?

Mr ECCLES - That is the only reason, yes.

Ms FORREST - I accept the significance of that point but if a young person has never experienced driving at that speed they did not seem to acknowledge that that was a lack of experience issue as much as a speed issue?

Mr ECCLES - I guess you guys drive to Launceston quite often, do you?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms FORREST - All the time and further.

Mr ECCLES - All right. Keep your eyes open up the Midland Highway and if you see a P-plate, ring me up and I will send you a \$50 cheque.

Ms FORREST - See a P-plate?

Mr ECCLES - Yes. You don't see P-plates up on the open road.

Ms FORREST - I actually do.

Mr ECCLES - Very, very rarely.

Ms FORREST - You do see a few and they are generally going at 80 when they have got them up.

Mr ECCLES - I mix around with kids. What most kids do is they take the P-plate off. Your chance of getting caught is very, very slight.

Ms FORREST - With a speed camera you won't get caught.

Mr ECCLES - You won't get caught on a speed camera. The only way you will get caught is maybe if you get pulled up for another offence and he checks your licence - 'Oh, you're provisional and I just clocked you doing 110 so you've done the lot'.

I know lots of kids who go between university in Launceston and Hobart's two campuses. They take their P-plates off, they do 110, and the chance of getting caught is pretty slim. Any punitive legislation like the graduated licensing scheme that has just come in, so if you get caught doing 10 kilometres over the speed limit, on the mobile phone or having had any alcohol, you are going to restart your provisional and all that. Things that we have not introduced like curfews, passenger restrictions are only as effective as the policing and a lot of these things are almost impossible to police.

Ms FORREST - The number of passengers is another issue that has been talked about. With the requirement from the Government now to consider climate change and all things we consider and the cost of fuel and the imposition on families with young kids - and I have teenagers - to be able to go together in a car particularly if one is going to be the designated driver for the night and they are out and wanting only to have one driver, we could potentially create a whole series of other problems.

Mr ECCLES - That is absolutely correct. The other problem they have in Victoria and Queensland where they brought curfews and passenger restrictions in is that you can get exemptions. But they then put out so many exemptions that the thing is just falling to pieces. It is almost impossible to administer.

Ms FORREST - So you do not think that is a workable option either then?

Mr ECCLES - If you could make it workable to reduce the number of collisions. As you said, things such as the designated driver are affected quite seriously but there is evidence that if you reduce the number of passengers in a car the number of collisions do reduce.

When you put restrictions on provisional drivers there is 85 per cent provisional drivers who are law-abiding, safe, intelligent young kids and who do the right thing. We have a problem with the top 10 per cent. If you bring all these punitive legislative changes in to punish these people, the law-abiding majority will abide by them and they are punished for the other 10 per cent's behaviour. The 10 per cent you want to get hold of are going to keep doing the wrong thing anyway so your legislation has no effect on the problem group.

Mr HARRISS - Robin, does your association have a view about some form of ongoing assessment of all drivers post-licence?

Mr ECCLES - Yes, every 10 years; issue a licence for 10 years and you are retested every 10 years.

Mr HARRISS - Regarding the extent of that testing, do you have any documentation as to what that should go to, what form of a test?

Mr ECCLES - What form of a test? It does not have to be very long. There is what they used to call the old test which was the test that existed before this Mickey Mouse testing. You could modify that very slightly. So about a 30-minute drive and a manoeuvre to demonstrate your judgment and car control in a fairly confined area. It would be about 30 to 35 minutes.

Mr HARRISS - While using your mobile phone, that type of thing.

Ms FORREST - Yes, that is right. And changing the CD.

CHAIR - Does this happen in any other State?

Mr ECCLES - No, it does not happen anywhere in Australia.

CHAIR - Other countries?

Mr ECCLES - No, not that I am aware of.

CHAIR - So it is quite a radical suggestion?

Mr ECCLES - It is radical and I am a little bit suss about it. You would pick up the people who have deteriorated with age. We have a driver-knowledge test which does not work very well at the moment - a very simple computer test you can do in five minutes. You know, like a touch screen: who do you give way to? Stuff like that. Just basic stuff. I think people get very rusty on road rules.

Ms FORREST - They change, too.

Mr ECCLES - In two weeks I have to go for my 10-year assessment. I think you get people doing a little bit of homework and brushing up. That is one of the big benefits.

Mr DEAN - I am interested to know, Robin, whether your association has ever been engaged by the Government to provide input as to development of driver-training courses and assessment.

Mr ECCLES - Yes, and they fell through on the promise.

Mr DEAN - So you have been -

Mr ECCLES - Totally ignored.

Mr DEAN - But your association was given to understand that it would be engaged?

Mr ECCLES - When they brought in the graduated licensing scheme there was a committee put together. I was on the committee. We had to release the first phase. I did not have a lot of input into that. We were promised that we would have a blank sheet - that was their very words, 'a blank sheet' - to develop a test from L1 to L2. My association put a lot of time and a lot of effort into getting stuff from interstate, overseas and thought about this a lot. We have not had a meeting yet. It is due for implementation. Again, anecdotally, I believe that the test has already been designed by - I can tell you the name

if you want me to but it has been designed. It is going to take 20 minutes. It is a dumbing-down of the current test - very dumbed down. It is useless. It is a golden opportunity missed because this is the test you do before you start your logbook. To me, at this particular test, you should show somebody you are not perfect but you are showing an inclination to having all these higher-order skills. Once you do that then you say, 'Right, now you can start your logbook. Practise that for 50 hours and then you go for your second test to get your provisional'. This is not going to happen. It is just a very basic car-handling test with no higher-order skills at all.

CHAIR - You would agree, I think, that the first time most learner drivers get behind the wheel of a car is on a public street?

Mr ECCLES - Not necessarily. A lot of car parks get used.

CHAIR - That is classified as public.

Mr ECCLES - On a public street.

CHAIR - I mean that is public. Do you think there should be areas in the main centres of Tasmania where learner drivers can go and get the feel of the vehicle, not expensively equipped areas, just open spaces?

Ms FORREST - Paddocks and the like.

CHAIR - Paddocks, yes.

Ms FORREST - That is where my kids started.

CHAIR - So they can get a feel of the car before they actually go out on the road.

Mr ECCLES - I have not really thought about this a lot, I will be honest. But I do not think it would be cost-effective because most people who are going to train a learner are very selective where they start off. They will either start off in a private car park, a public car park where there are no obstacles, no trees or they pick a very quiet street. So my original thought is it would not be cost-effective. It would be nice to have if you did not have to pay for it.

Mr DEAN - Robin, has your association looked at the young people coming from the rural areas as against those in city areas? Are there any differences there?

Mr ECCLES - There is a lot of difference. There has been a trend over the last probably four or five years that most of the fatalities are now swinging to open-road driving. It used to be intersection collisions and stuff like that. It is inattention, excessive speed on country roads, either wrong side of the road, loss of control or loss of control running into trees and furniture at the side of the road. That is the biggest killer for rural people. But the good thing is that most rural kids grow up riding on mowers, tractors, trucks, the old man's ute, so that when it comes to handling vehicles - they have been out in the paddock doing donuts and wheelies - you find that they are generally very good car handlers at very young ages. All they are doing is making mistakes.

Rural children's problem is when they come into the big cities. This is where they start having some little bumps. They are not getting killed, but they are having rear-end collisions and accidents at intersections from failing to give way and collisions like that.

CHAIR - Good. Thank you very much. Are there any closing remarks you would like to make?

Mr ECCLES - I would like to thank you for having me. To be quite honest, I was scared stiff of coming here, but I have enjoyed it.

Laughter.

CHAIR - We are very grateful to you for coming and giving us the benefit of your expertise. Thank you very much indeed.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr VINCE TASKUNAS, GENERAL MANAGER, PUBLIC POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS, ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF TASMANIA, AND **Mr STUART BRIDGES**, CONSULTANT TO THE ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF TASMANIA WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Gentlemen, I will be looking forward to hearing your evidence based on the submission that you have been good enough to provide us with.

Mr TASKUNAS - If I could briefly give a bit of a summary about the organisation. Whilst the club is fairly well known in terms of its public profile and amongst the media, for the purpose of the committee we would like to establish what the roles of the RACT are and then those that pertain to the terms of reference.

The RACT, the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania Limited, is the largest and strongest community service organisation in Tasmania. We have around 186 000 members, taking into account commercial arrangements and membership relationships. Our membership continues to grow year on year and our magazine, *Motor News Journeys*, the latest edition of which has just come out this week - and those of the committee and attendants who are members would have received their edition this week - is distributed to around 113 000 households every two months in Tasmania.

CHAIR - I have read it.

Laughter.

Mr TASKUNAS - So the organisation has a fairly large reach in Tasmania. That's good to see, Mr Chairman, that you've read it. It's the super-duper edition; it has the annual report in it, so that's good.

The RACT was formed in 1923 so it's a fairly long-serving, continuous organisation in terms of Tasmanian history. In terms of the terms of reference for the committee clearly road safety and issues surrounding road safety are core constituency issues for the members of the RACT and its motoring membership and constituency.

The structure of the club itself is probably less well known. A lot of people look at the RACT as a provider of personal insurance, as a provider of roadside assistance products and, from time to time, a public advocate for motorists' needs and the public policy issues around road safety. The club has a very strong grassroots structure. We maintain three regional advisory committees which are, in the Tasmanian tradition, centred around the north - of course, Mr Chairman, the most important one first - the north-west and the south.

Ms FORREST - In that order.

Laughter.

CHAIR - You'll get on.

Laughter.

Mr TASKUNAS - Indeed. Originally, the advisory committees were for the north and the north-west with the origins of the organisation in the south, et cetera, but recently, in the last three years, we have also included a southern regional advisory committee.

CHAIR - I served on the northern one for about 14 or 15 years, I think.

Ms FORREST - Really?

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes. Did you get that on *Hansard*? Good on you, I appreciate your services.

CHAIR - I've been a member for about 47 or 48 years.

Mr TASKUNAS - There you go.

CHAIR - I was very young when I joined, obviously.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, your mother joined you up.

Mr TASKUNAS - As a lot of parents do, Paul; Mr Harriss, that's exactly right, a lot of parents are joining their children up to the RACT and that's great. The three committees meet regularly, every couple of months. They are constituted of financial members who volunteer their time to the committees and are made up of a number of retired and still employed or serving local business people, people with expertise in terms of the car club, former engineers, serving and retired police officers, emergency services workers.

CHAIR - You accept retired police officers too?

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes, that's right. For instance, David Paton, PSM, is a member of our Southern Regional Advisory Committee, and a very active one. We also have serving police officers, which is very helpful in terms of our integration with the agencies. The committee members are committed people who do this out of their own time. Each of the advisory committees has a board member or two from the RACT Board who act as the liaison between the next level of the club's structure, which is the Road and Traffic Committee, which is a committee of the RACT's board. As General Manager of Public Policy and Communications, I attend each of the committees and act in a secretarial function and take back the matters from committees and progress them through our structure.

In terms of the committee, the regional advisory committees are important for us because they give us local issues feedback. We rely on them to advise us about changes in terms of roads, speed limits, junctions and everyday issues that are affecting people on the roads in their areas. They have a charter which is part of the RACT's constitution which speaks of, and I quote, 'considering road design and traffic management issues within the region and to liaise with and make recommendations to relevant local authorities for improvements and also to make recommendations to the RACT Board about road safety, public education and enforcement policy issues. The committee is a very important part of our structure.

The club has appointed me and has dedicated extra resources to advocacy and public policy this year. This is a new direction for the club and signals an increased focus on public policy and advocacy issues. The club is represented by its senior staff in a number of organisations across Tasmania regarding road safety - organisations like the Tasmanian Road Safety Council; the RACT has a seat at that meeting. We are also a member of the board of the MAIB Road Safety Task Force and on a number of working groups like authorised inspection stations, novice driver reform reference groups and we also take part in a lot of the activities of the community road safety partnership organisations across the State. I think the club is quite well connected in terms of the grassroots of road safety issues and the organisations that deal with road safety.

CHAIR - We accept that. It is very well known.

Mr TASKUNAS - At a national level the club liaises with its sister clubs around the States and the Territories. We are also a constituent club member of the Australian Automobile Association which is the mother ship, if you like, and the Canberra-based secretariat for road safety and transport and infrastructure of mobility issues. The Australian Automobile Association has as its members the clubs and we send delegates to national working parties on public policy and we also as a club provide funding to national programs that are run by the Australian Automobile Association.

CHAIR - Your credentials are well known as an organisation and we look forward to hearing your views.

Mr TASKUNAS - We have a view, if you like a philosophy, which we refer to as the Safe System View. It is most easily remembered in terms of the phrase 'Safer Drivers in Safer Vehicles on Safer Roads'. That is the philosophy of the club and of the Australian Automobile Club as a whole. What that means with respect to Tasmania and the road safety issues that the committee is examining is that we concentrate on those three elements when we are looking at policy and when we are looking at the issues in Tasmania in terms of the terms of the reference of the committee.

With regard to safer drivers, one of the key issues that we have lobbied for for a number of years and we continue to do so is that there should be a compulsory system of road safety education in schools in Tasmania. This is detailed in the submission. In 2006 the Government made a commitment to establish this. The club understood that it meant that there would be compulsory road safety education in all schools but that did not happen. The program that was established is a voluntary program. The resource that is available for schools is called the Road Risk Reduction resource. It is a terrific package that was developed with Tasmanian Government funding after the 2006 election. The club continues to believe that it should be used in all schools and in the submission the club says that our latest information is that programs based on or using the road risk reduction curriculum resource are being taught in approximately 60 per cent of government and non-government schools. That is our latest advice from the Infrastructure minister. The club's target for road safety education in schools is 100 per cent. We had hoped that it could be in grade 9 and grade 10. The philosophy behind this is that students are approaching but not quite yet into their novice driving year and that this was the best opportunity to change and influence the behavioural side of attitudes

towards road safety and driving issues before young people actually get out on the road and start learning.

It is a philosophy which is shared in other jurisdictions. There are other school-based programs around Australia that the committee could see and take evidence about if they want to, and you could probably liaise with the other clubs around the country to do that.

The club continues to hold to its position that we want to see the road risk reduction program being used by all students in all schools. We do not want that 40 per cent of students across Tasmania who are not currently being taught it to miss out on what we think is a terrific program.

Ms FORREST - How is the decision made? Who makes the decision within the school that it will be a program run in that particular school?

Mr TASKUNAS - Our chief executive has written to the Premier, who is also the Minister for Education, a number of times and we have a number of responses on the record from the Premier. His position is that it is up to principals, that it is up to each school to decide and principals to decide in relation to what I think he described as putting the student at the centre reforms that the Government's philosophy is based around. So it is up to each individual school. And that is based around, I think, the philosophy that nothing - or very little - is mandatory in schools and that curriculums are quite full at the moment.

Ms FORREST - Have you approached any principals of schools that have implemented the program to -

Mr TASKUNAS - Not in a formal sense. We have consulted with a number of groups on this, including parents and friends associations and their representatives from all of the different kinds of schools. We have also spoken to the union involved, but we have had no formal discussion with principals. We have spoken recently on the advice of the Premier to senior Education department bureaucrats about this.

My most recent meeting was with Dr Irene Gray, who is in charge of curriculum and is based on the eastern shore of Hobart. But no, not with principals, but we will in our continuing campaign. It has been running for a number of years now.

Ms FORREST - So is the 40 per cent that are not participating spread around the State or is it all in one area?

Mr TASKUNAS - The advice that I was given is not detailed to that level. Perhaps that is something for the committee to have a look at. I simply have been informed by the minister's office that around 60 per cent of students are now being taught road safety education based on or using the road risk reduction resource.

The club understood prior to the 2006 election that the commitment from the Government was that this would be brought into all schools and that it would be expected to be part of all schools' curriculum - that is government schools - and that the Government would use its considerable position to be able to influence and lead,

amongst the non-government schools, and perhaps share the government fund and pay for resource with the schools - the non-government schools - to encourage them to do it.

They have shared it and a number of non-government schools are using it. We would just like to see all government and all non-government schools in Tasmania having a section of a curriculum devoted - even just year 10 - to the sort of attitude and behavioural issues as opposed to actually getting out and driving cars.

CHAIR - How much time does it take?

Mr TASKUNAS - How much time?

CHAIR - Does it take say a week or a month?

Mr TASKUNAS - It differs. Again, the school decides. It could be taught in a one-hour type per week or every fortnight scenario or it could also be using a focus, as they call it - have a one day focus on it.

CHAIR - Could you give us an outline of what is involved? I am not quite sure.

Mr TASKUNAS - It is quite a substantial document, and I should have brought it with me to show you. You have class-based teaching, theoretical stuff on issues like responsibility, personal responsibility, and about driving as being a privilege and not a right, which is a philosophy the RACT is very strong on. The road risk reduction resource is staged into modules so the school can teach as much or as little of this as they want. Then you move on to issues like pedestrians and interactions between humans and machines. Then you look at safety and issues about safe behaviour - that is behavioural issues as opposed to technical. Then there is, of course, road trauma and the results of that and those sorts of things. It is interactive; there is a DVD available and the department is paying for special training sessions for teachers to go and get professional development to be able to teach this and we are strongly supportive of that and that has been part of the commitment. It is possibly something that you might need to get a specific briefing from DIER about so that you have it from the horse's mouth as opposed to ours.

CHAIR - Yes, good. Thank you.

Mr TASKUNAS - So compulsory road safety education, novice driving has been an issue in the safer drivers side of things. That is why the club supported the national Keys 2 Drive program which was an initiative of the clubs with the Australian Automobile Association and funded by the Federal Government to the tune of \$17 million to bring in a national novice driver program to encourage supervision. I am sure Mr Eccles who was here before talked about supervision and the value of it.

If you have a look at the web site [Keys 2 Drive.info](http://Keys2Drive.info), which is a temporary web site, you will see the progress that is being made. Keys 2 Drive is a national program but it is being driven at a local level here by Driver Safety Services which are Cambridge-based. Are they a witness, Mr Chairman?

Mr HARRISS - Yes, later today.

Mr TASKUNAS - No doubt Mr Ling or Mr Jerrim will give you details about what they are doing with Keys 2 Drive. The lobbying for that and the advocacy was driven by the clubs and a lot of it was developed here in Tasmania. Mr Ling, of course, being previously super chief engineer of the RACT, that was one of his projects which he worked very hard on at the national body level as one of the constituent clubs.

The philosophy of a better understanding of drivers' own limitations is why the club has lobbied very hard for more road education funding and perhaps a hypothecation of speed camera revenue to be directed to more education programs. Of course, the Motor Accidents Insurance Board's Road Safety Task Force does a lot of public education and awareness work which is fantastic and this is funded by the MAIB. But perhaps more needs to be done about the specific driver and their own limitations rather than blaming the other idiots on the road. That has been a constant theme of the club's public advocacy over a number of years.

In Western Australia, I understand, all of the revenue of speed cameras goes to full hypothecation to road safety education and awareness as opposed to building more roads or building more infrastructure. So you could perhaps speak to the RACWA about that.

CHAIR - Have you been able to find out what revenue the Tasmanian Government receives from speed camera fines? You would be doing well if you have, I think.

Mr TASKUNAS - We haven't and we have not asked for it.

CHAIR - We have and we do not have it either.

Mr TASKUNAS - It is probably hard to separate out some of that data given the way it is collected and there are one or two technological issues being experienced at the moment. There might be some difficulty with that but I am sure that -

CHAIR - I do not think that is the main difficulty.

Mr TASKUNAS - I am sure that if we asked we would be given information. The club has a very good relationship with Tasmania Police.

CHAIR - I suggest you try that and perhaps let us know if you succeed.

Mr DEAN - I know the relationship between you and the police is very good but does the RACT hold a position in relation to speed camera placements in and around the State?

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes.

Mr DEAN - What is your position on that? Are you able to share it?

Mr TASKUNAS - We have a specific policy and that is - if you do not mind me turning to my little index here - we have held a position for a number of years certainly about their placement.

Mr DEAN - Because this is all about road safety and that is the reason.

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes. The club supports the use of radar speed cameras provided they are utilised in speed deterrence programs operating in areas with known excessive speed-related crash rates. Sites should be restricted to areas with high crash rates.

Mr DEAN - Bridgewater Bridge does not fall into that.

Ms FORREST - It is always there, though. You know it is going to be there, Ivan, every time.

CHAIR - And the northern section of Campbell Town?

Mr DEAN - It has gone off there a bit now. Bridgewater Bridge has taken over. It is there just about all the time, or a big part of the time.

Mr TASKUNAS - And hand-held radar devices should be utilised for enforcement of speed limits in school zones in particular. We have a specific policy about school zones. We want more enforcement and certainly the flashing lights which have been introduced in March, I think, or April this year.

CHAIR - Very effective.

Mr TASKUNAS - Very effective but we have made it plain to the Tasmanian Road Safety Council and to the minister that we think a three-year implementation for those signs is too long. When they were announced we asked for an 18-month implementation period. A lot of people who have driven through them say, 'Fantastic. When are we getting ours?' We want them out more quickly than that. I know that the department is looking at that and they have to go through proper tendering processes et cetera. All of that is being done properly but we want the role out not to be out in 2011 or something like that. So, yes, certainly the club has advocated against placing speed cameras at the bottom of hills and things like that. However, if there is data which is freely available from the department to support these areas, even on highways where there are known crash risks, then perhaps the departments needs to look at lowering speed limits in some of those areas or enforcing those areas but not higgledy piggledy. They have to be based on evidence and reductions along stretches of highway like you have seen outside Burnie where the speed limit has been lowered for a reason.

Mr DEAN - Would you then say that the placement of, say, speed cameras on the Bridgewater Bridge for a long period could calm speeding, speeders and so on? Would that have a calming effect on drivers, like the calming effect on drivers on the open roads and so on? What effect would it have on a driver?

Mr TASKUNAS - The club has called, in the past, for permanent speed cameras in more places than are being used at the moment. They are used internationally. Large numbers of speed cameras in England are fixed but they must be appropriately signed. We believe that signage warning drivers should go with any permanent speed cameras. The club does have an initial list of sites. It has discussed with police commissioners in the past and received support from police commissioners about permanent speed cameras with appropriate signage. If the Bridgewater Bridge was shown to be an area where the tests that they use - the 85 percentile of speed - is excessive in comparison with other sites - and DIER can do all of these tests quite easily, they have all the equipment - if

those excessive speeds were shown to be the case in that area then the club would support that based on the evidence, absolutely. More enforcement, greater enforcement obviously resources allowing, the club is very much strongly behind and particularly our advisory committees in the north-west and the north are often calling for greater enforcement and more high visibility enforcement so we applaud Tasmania Police and the Government for recent high visibility operations increasing. We have seen this, we have been monitoring it. High visibility operations have increased significantly and the blitz on the weekend was fantastic. The more of those the better.

Ms FORREST - There has been a suggestion in some quarters that rather than spending too much more money on speed cameras that you get a few dummies and put them out. I can spot a speed camera fairly often on my travels around the place and even if you have signs up saying a speed camera is operating in this area and people do not know which are the real ones and which ones are not - people may figure it out eventually, I do not know. You could not do it with static ones because people would realise if they went through at 100 kilometres and did not get a ticket, they would know that was a fake one, but with the ones that move around is there any value in that?

Mr TASKUNAS - Over a number of years we have advocated there should be more permanent speed cameras and those sorts of scenarios. We would probably have to go back and have a look at some of the research about those sorts of issues but we would certainly be interested in having that discussion because we believe that high visibility and greater enforcement leads to lower offences.

Ms FORREST - There is often a speed camera out at Somerset near the old drive-in there. Nine times out of 10 it will be there, and one of the residents back up the road near the BP service station has put out a sign now that says 'Speed camera ahead'. It is just a little hand-painted sign and I do not know whether the police know it is there. They probably do, but at the end of the day it slows people down from that point where the sign is because they are not really sure exactly where the speed camera is. You can usually guarantee where it is but -

Mr TASKUNAS - There is scientific evidence and there is evidence-based stuff but there is also commonsense and ordinary-person perspective. The ordinary-person perspective, our members' perspective, the ones that come back to us regularly and through our advisory committees is just let us see more blue-and-white-striped uniforms out there. That slows us down.

CHAIR - And vehicles.

Mr TASKUNAS - And vehicles. I know there are positions that have been put by different parties about high visibility and I think the term used is 'candy cars'. However that is a terrific suggestion.

CHAIR - It is a deterrent.

Mr TASKUNAS - The deterrent is there. I think you could probably talk to the Road Safety Task Force about their focus group work that they have done about seeing more of the booze buses and more of the blue-and-white stripes out there. We would like to see it and if there are innovative uses of the difference between the number of machines

available and the number of sites being used then that may well be an approach that could be considered as well.

Ms FORREST - I think a visible police presence is very important. I have talked to a number of police officers working in the more remote parts of the State that I represent and they have told me that they often go out and get a coffee and the newspaper and go out on the side of the road, the Murchison Highway or somewhere, and just sit there and have their coffee. They do not have a speed gun or anything with them.

Mr TASKUNAS - And you see the people slowing down.

Ms FORREST - Yes, everyone slows down because they see them sitting there and they are usually only having their coffee, they are not actually doing anything.

Mr DEAN - In a situation involving a fatal accident, for example, does the RACT, look at that to see what you could identify as some of the causes or reasons for the accident?

Mr TASKUNAS - No.

Mr DEAN - The other question I ask is in relation to that. You would be aware of the accident that happened at Devonport about two years ago now where a car went through a speed camera site. It was a semi-concealed speed camera and about 300 metres up the road. The crashed and three people were killed - the driver, I think his wife or partner and the young person in the back seat. Three people were killed as a result of that. Seeing that, would you agree that - well you have already mentioned that speed cameras ought not be concealed. Do you have that position?

Mr TASKUNAS - We don't. We have a position about their placement being based on evidence and being based on crash history and obviously road. I think it is important not to put the two together in terms of a potential offence and then a crash. If crashes occur at a particular corner at 70 kilometres an hour and the limit is 90 kilometres an hour then that is saying something about the road in some respects, the design and perhaps that corner and whatever else as opposed to speeds.

With regard to your first question, do we look at fatals and do we form views about those, we do not have access to that sort of material. If we needed to we could go to the Coroner; and we have a relationship with him. We do have a regular meeting with Tasmanian Road Safety Council, which we are on, and we are presented with all of that information and the different crash factors involved and whether fatalities are going up or down and what the factors involved are.

We have formed a view using some of that evidence about defects and safety defects in vehicles and used some of that evidence to support our position that we believe that there should, potentially, be a system of inspections to try to net out some of the safety defects that we are seeing in the fleet, using a number of different sources such as the information from the crash factors and fatalities and our own inspections every year, our winter safety checks that we provide free and also police numbers about discontinuance or defect notices.

So we do use the evidence that we get through the Tasmanian Road Safety Council to form views but issues about fatalities and their causes are necessarily and correctly the coroners court's responsibility. It is certainly not our position to form views based on that.

CHAIR - Fine. Please proceed.

Mr TASKUNAS - I understand we have some competing commitments coming up with different inquiries.

Mr BRIDGES - We have talked about safer drivers to a great extent, the other thing in our armoury is safer cars and safer roads. Vince might like to very quickly address those as well.

Mr TASKUNAS - In terms of safer vehicles the club has lobbied very strongly for the Government to lead by changing its specifications for its own fleet and recently they have done that. We are very pleased that they have done that to ensure electronic stability control and head protection et cetera and that these sorts of technological advances are built into the government fleet.

The philosophy behind that is that the majority of those vehicles are sold back into the private fleet in Tasmania and there is a trickle-down effect to private vehicle ownership increasing safety and therefore road safety on that basis. So governments can lead and they are doing it with their approach to emissions reduction as well in Tasmania. The Government has an opportunity to lead in a number of ways and we will continue to advocate that it builds technological advances into its own fleets as they come on line.

I have made reference in the submission to the Victorian Parliament's road safety committee report which has come out just recently. In that they make a number of recommendations about vehicles and they look very closely at road safety and vehicle safety and the technological advances that are in the system now or are going forward.

The Government and the RACT both contribute to the Australasian New Car Assessment Program, which is fairly graphically represented there on the cover of one of our mags. They crash test and provide consumer information to the motorist about survivability. That is an important program that is run at a national and international level and the club continues to advocate for consumers to use ANCAP safety ratings to increase road safety. As I have mentioned, with regard to vehicle inspections and safety defects in the fleet, the RACT Board is currently considering a draft proposal for a policy that we should have inspections on cars over five years old at the point of resale. The bogey in this debate is annual inspections and mandatory annual inspections which are proven to be too expensive or not cost effective for the reductions, however we believe and we're advocating to our board which hasn't signed off on it yet, that this over five years old at the point of resale is a place to go with inspections; to have a safety certificate. The Queensland jurisdiction is doing something similar so we're looking at them and what they're doing.

Ms FORREST - In your submission you talk about electronic stability control for vehicles and some of the vehicles like in China - only 6 per cent of their cars having that. Reading some coroner's reports at different times, it has been identified as one thing that

could have prevented such a serious crash result. Do you think we need to be particularly strong in that area?

Mr TASKUNAS - Absolutely, and I think we're lucky in as much as a lot of the cars that are being purchased in Australia are not coming from producers that are not putting it in. ANCAP is working in terms of its lobbying effect. Hyundai have announced this year that all their cars will come standard with ESC -

Ms FORREST - Even the lower-base models?

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes, and that's a very high volume sales vehicle in Australia. It's something that should be front and centre in policy making from the Government's perspective but it has certainly done it in mandating a period in, I think, about two-and-half or three years' time when the fleet that they purchase will all have ESC.

CHAIR - Does the club have any statistics to suggest that the condition of vehicles is a contributing factor to many accidents?

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes we do. It's in the submission, Mr Chairman, and I will quickly quote from it. Perhaps I didn't put it in there, but we certainly do -

CHAIR - Perhaps you could let us have those if they are not in the report.

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes.

CHAIR - Some years ago the statistics said that it was not really a factor.

Mr TASKUNAS - Well that's right. It's in the measures -

CHAIR - Safer cars.

Mr TASKUNAS - It's not under that; it's under 'In the Future, Vehicle Defect Safety Certificates'. A lot of the time, Mr Chairman, this is not referred to as important because it's not seen as a large percentage but what we've noted is that vehicle defects is listed as a contributory factor in fatal crashes; nine times, or just under 10 per cent, in the year to date figures for this year and 12 times, or 10.9 per cent, during the same period in 2007. That's based - that's on page 12 of our submission.

CHAIR - Yes, I picked that up.

Mr TASKUNAS - So, whilst it's only a small percentage and critics will say it's only reducing an even smaller percentage of opportunities, we like to try to save any life. What we've noted is that in the past it has been a lower number and it has been increasing. The police statistics show that during May-July an average of 123 defect orders, discontinuance offences, per month were reported in that period of time, so that is a lot of defects that the police are picking up. In our most recent free annual winter car safety checks that the club runs at locations all around Tasmania a few months ago, we picked up a startling number of defects, a lot of them based around visual inspections of tyres, which suggested that perhaps the Government could look at enforcing tyres condition and improper inflation a bit more. The other one was child restraints; we

found that this is a definite road safety issue, that many of them were poorly or incorrectly fitted or illegal during these winter car safety checks.

So we have a spread of different evidences that we're using for our position. One of our sister clubs in Queensland ran a very exhaustive survey on this as well, which informed our position and showed that the vehicle defects based on their inspection reports were going up over a certain age, and it usually coincides with warranty periods. A lot of newer cars are offering extended warranties; they get checked regularly. Also, service stations not offering service anymore, just selling product, so people aren't getting basic maintenance in the driveway. They are only doing it every year or every six months. So it is an issue.

Moving quickly on to safer roads, I would draw the committee's attention to the part of our submission which talks about the Australian Road Assessment Program - AusRap. The main point to draw out of this is that safety dividends can come from simple, cost-effective road engineering solutions, things as simple as sealing shoulders or covering up roadside trees and separating two-plus-one highways with a barrier, such as up in the north-west, so that we could stop cars simply crossing the lanes on unseparated roads and causing crashes like we have seen recently, tragically on the Huon Highway.

CHAIR - And on the Midland Highway.

Mr TASKUNAS - We have seen the preventative value of separation at Round Hill where, not reported in the press but we know, the club knows, there was a horrific crash in the past. The treatment was applied. The wire rope barrier was put down the middle. A similar crash happened but instead of crossing over to the other side of the road and causing the head-on and side-on collisions the car was averted by hitting the wire rope barrier. No doubt there is a number of anecdotal examples of that around Tasmania now where the Government has rolled out wire rope or extra safety barriers and similar crashes have been prevented.

Ms FORREST - You do hear a lot of criticism from the motorcycle riders about the wire rope barriers. And we know about the Lillico strait incident, which was not just the wire barrier obviously. What view do you have as far as motorcycle riders go?

Mr TASKUNAS - I will not speak on behalf of Shaun Leonard and the TMC but we do have support for the Government trialling the stack cushion and the rub-rail stuff which they have recently done. The fact is that effective barriers, whether they be steel or wire rope, save lives. Roadside furniture, roadside trees too close to the road end up being significant in fatal and serious accidents.

Ms FORREST - What about the entrance markers at Blinking Bill? There was a letter in the *Advocate* the other day. I imagine they would push over fairly easy. I do not know.

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes. We need appropriate signage.

Ms FORREST - This is not signage. This is the coloured markers, the entrance markers. They are putting a whole new lot up on the way into Burnie from the west.

Mr TASKUNAS - I have not been there for a week or two weeks.

Ms FORREST - They have been there for a little while, since last November, I think.

Mr TASKUNAS - They are not significant enough?

CHAIR - What are they?

Ms FORREST - They are big rusty steel with coloured panels on them. They are much bigger than the ones at Cooee.

Mr TASKUNAS - Are they reflective?

Ms FORREST - No, they are not reflective but if you ran off the side of the road - mind you, you are just coming out of an 80 kilometre zone -

Mr TASKUNAS - Are they advisory or are they there to -

Ms FORREST - Decoration.

Mr TASKUNAS - Okay. We certainly would query things that are by the side of the road. There is a 3 metre number - 3 metres from the side of the road.

Ms FORREST - From the white line on the side of the road?

Mr TASKUNAS - From the edge of the sealing of the road.

Ms FORREST - No, they would not be that far out.

Mr TASKUNAS - Which is in the literature about engineering of roads. There is a 3 metre area which is the safe area.

Ms FORREST - They may be pushed over if something hit them. I do not know, and I was not going to try.

Mr TASKUNAS - People are often surprised that a super-duper highway is not necessarily the answer, or a new stretch of road, to making things safer. Sometimes it is as simple as proper line markings. For years, the RACT has addressed this issue through its budget submissions and asked for more money to be spent on these sorts of issues - sealing shoulders, more visible line marking in a number of areas. But the science or the scientific approach is there in the Australian Road Assessment program. It is there. It is a national program which is supported financially by all the clubs. It is about mapping the roads for crash risk and for the actual physical risk of the roads. The Victorian Government has taken the lead and spent extra Victorian money on mapping its State road networks using the AusRAP philosophy.

Mr BRIDGES - I think the point you are making is that this is a Federal mapping program, isn't it? We have mapped the Federal road system but we have not actually mapped the State road system.

Mr TASKUNAS - So the AusRAP system has been used to map the AusLink network but in Victoria they have gone one step further and they have used Victorian funds to map the State roads.

Mr BRIDGES - And in New South Wales.

Mr TASKUNAS - Yes, and some of New South Wales. We would like to see the Government look at the AusRAP philosophy, look at mapping more of Tasmania's State roads of which there is lot, using that.

CHAIR - You would be aware that some motorcyclists and organisations are concerned about the design of some of the wire rope barriers. Does the club have a view on that?

Mr TASKUNAS - The club has been put in the difficult position in the past and our response has always been we do represent motorists. The fact is that motorists are well protected and roads are safer with separation whether it be steel or wire rope and road signs. We have had a number of discussions with the motorcycle lobby group about this and we have also asked the Government to use as much as it can use mitigation measures like the stack cushion and the rub rail.

CHAIR - Good. You have the program for schools. Do you have any views about the desirability of a similar program of instruction, perhaps with the use of DVDs or films advising learner drivers about what risks to avoid and giving hints about safe driving, a course to be undertaken - no examination - by all learner drivers. Do you have any views about such an extension of your program in schools?

Mr TASKUNAS - Absolutely. More training for novice drivers would be very much welcomed by the club and I know that there are some very good courses available. There are some very good training available. Certainly the stuff which has been done by Driver Safety Services, the crash-free courses. There are companies and corporate bodies that have put their whole fleet through. For instance, Aurora have done this and have noticed savings in terms of their drivers and their fleet. So it must work and for novice drivers more training. The Keys2Drive program is there. That would integrate with other programs and novice drivers at school or out of school, absolutely, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR - Thank you. Time is marching on. Are there any questions?

Mr DEAN - I have a quick question and you probably heard Mr Eccles refer to it. Inattentive driving is one of the greatest causes of fatalities and serious injury accidents in this State. How does the RACT see that. Mr Eccles referred to too many gadgets in cars and that causing problems and so on, and a decrease in those could see probably a decrease of 20 per cent in fatal accidents and serious vehicle accidents. Does the RACT have a position on inattentive driving and what ought to occur?

Mr TASKUNAS - Inattentiveness is, in my last crunching the numbers from the crash statistics, about 19 per cent of factors and it is the highest and most frequently noted incidence in the percentage. More than one crash factor can be listed in each crash report. It is a serious problem. The club has advocated in the past about fatigue and about the levels of fatigue and an awareness campaign about that. Perhaps it is time for

the Government to revisit that and have a look at how it can be communicated that fatigue and fatigued drivers are a road safety risk.

Mr DEAN - I notice you have a position here on mobile phones where you are saying that they should, I think, be used only in exceptional circumstances and you identify three or four reasons for their use.

Mr TASKUNAS - They are a difficulty. There is a large number of offences coming through police statistics about mobile phone offences. Our belief is that novice drivers do not need any more distractions than they already have, and perhaps that is somewhere the Government can look in the future and that is why it is in the future. We do not have a policy position on that but it is a suggestions that perhaps novice drivers and mobile phones can be disconnected by regulation.

Ms FORREST - Just on the mobile phones matter, I am not sure if it was in Tasmania or not, I heard about a company that has made a ruling for their workers out on the road, they do not have mobile phones on. They ring them on times to check and if they answer they are in trouble and if they get caught again they are fired , because of the concentration aspect of that. Do you have a comment on that? You are talking about novice and learner drivers, do you think it needs to be taken further?

Mr TASKUNAS - I think there is a role for us and governments and people to play in terms of bringing that issue up. I think corporate practice like that is to be commended, absolutely. People managing large fleets have a lot of these things in mind. I am not sure if Aurora fleet or anyone like that are a witness, but it may well be that the committee wants to get some evidence off some of the big fleet managers and see whether they are doing innovative practice like that.

Ms FORREST - Aurora have been doing that for a while, I understand.

Mr TASKUNAS - Right. I am not surprised because I know their fleet manager and they are very innovative.

Ms FORREST - Just one other point, you did raise the state of the roads, the lack of overtaking lanes. There are lots of highways, the Murchison Highway and the Tasman Highway, I understand, goes for many kilometres without any passing lane. Do you see this as a major risk?

Mr TASKUNAS - I would point you to the AusRAP philosophy which talks about overtaking lanes and it is one of the factors that AusRAP measures in terms of safety. It is a factor that they have worked out increases or decreases the safety of a road, and that is the amount of overtaking opportunities that you have.

Yes, where there is a lack of overtaking, safety is reduced.

Ms FORREST - Did they consider the road use in that assessment, the Murchison Highway, for example, particularly the big trucks taking ore now from Waratah to Renison? Do they look at that as well or do they just look at how many kilometres there are?

Mr TASKUNAS - You would expect that when you set up that framework you could involve those sorts of things. It is an interesting point. We asked about the movements on the Midland Highway recently and we were told that in the certain section we were interested in it was 5 000 vehicles a day, and 10 000 on the Bass Highway. That is why we need different infrastructure on the roads on the Bass Highway.

Interestingly enough, out of that 5 000, 30 per cent of those are trucks - almost 1 500 a day are trucks, and of course you have to look at the patterns of usage and when those trucks are driving on the road and that sort of issue.

If I could just say two more things. Firstly, regarding infrastructure planning, the RACT has for a long time now called for a single body through a number of our budget submissions, that there needs to be a view of this over 10 years and the 10 years upcoming in terms of the way of looking at it - 10 plus 10.

I note in the Garnaut report that Ross Garnaut talks about infrastructure planning being a 40-year window. There needs to be a long-term view and a single body to do it. We are not addressing it in this submission but we will in our budget submission.

The last thing is, we welcome the opportunity here and we note that the Victorian State Parliament has a standing rotating committee, which it has had for a number of years now. It may be something that the committee might like to look at, Parliament itself might like to look at and the club recommends that the Parliament looks at setting up a standing committee because the Tasmanian Parliament is in a unique position to commission and obtain reports and evidence and conduct inquiries like this.

There are a lot of bodies and the governments necessarily, by their executive function are not in the position sometimes to do it. Perhaps the State Parliament is an appropriate place to have a road safety committee in the model that is constituted in the Victorian Parliament which involves members of both houses. The club would urge the committee to have a look at that.

CHAIR - Good. Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here and for your helpful information and your detailed submission. We appreciate all that very much.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Mr JAMES INGLE NICHOLSON, STATE SECRETARY AND CHIEF EXAMINER OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Mr Nicholson, welcome back to a different Legislative Council select committee on road safety 20-odd years on.

Mr NICHOLSON - Thank you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR - I am pleased you are still taking an active interest in that and we look forward to hearing your views so you can proceed as you wish.

Mr NICHOLSON - I have said before, and you have already heard previous to me, that despite our activities over many, many years and in my case 40 years, we don't appear to have achieved a lot in driver education as such. Too little money, in my opinion, is spent on driver education. The money that is spent on education is enforcement education disguised as driver education and the money that could be used to perhaps send some messages to drivers as to the sort of positive things they could do to make themselves safer is spent to reinforce enforcement, such as speeding and so forth. If one looks at the road safety messages that are out and about in the media it is mostly about speeding, seatbelt wearing and drink-driving, which is to some extent enforcement education rather than education of the driver's ability to drive and why you should drive in a different way.

Again, a search on the Internet within Australia shows that nobody at this point in time is producing any worthwhile video or media stuff for driver education.

CHAIR - And you favour that being done?

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes.

CHAIR - Excellent.

Mr NICHOLSON - The last thing that was put out probably was the Decker series that Shell promoted 15 years ago. The old Federal office of road safety put out a training game 15 years ago and I have seen nothing since then.

Ms FORREST - I do not have any recollection of those. I was driving at the time.

Mr NICHOLSON - The Decker series was designed for high school driver education but it had such good messages in it on how to drive safely that we as a training organisation, the only one that has been around as long as we have, used a lot of videos or films to teach adult drivers who were already driving how to drive more safely, so that has been part of our source material. The trouble with it is when you get a group of people in a classroom talking about safe driving and you put on something with 15-year-old cars and hairstyles and fashions in it the younger people particularly say, 'Jeez, that is old' and they don't get the message.

Ms FORREST - They are too busy laughing to take in the message.

Mr NICHOLSON - They don't get the message, that is right. The only fairly current stuff we have is from the Institute of Advanced Motorists in Great Britain and it is a video following an advanced driving course for police officers at Hendon. They went in and filmed this three-week course and split it up into various departments for good driving. It has been very good but it is getting on to 10 years old now. Again, the young 17-year-olds are looking and saying, 'That is old'. The adults see the message but sometimes a lot of people just see the age of the material you are using. We can't afford \$10 000 to \$20 000 to make a nice little video on safe driving.

CHAIR - Can't we?

Mr NICHOLSON - We can't.

CHAIR - Oh, you can't.

Mr NICHOLSON - There is plenty of money around for all sorts of things but we haven't been able to access it just to get a film on how to drive safely.

CHAIR - Would you like to see all learner drivers doing some course and being shown things like that?

Mr NICHOLSON - Absolutely. The parents of the young drivers who come through our courses come back to me with the same message - why isn't this compulsory? The answer is the bureaucrats do not think it works.

CHAIR - Not only bureaucrats here but in New South Wales and I think in Sweden.

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, everywhere. They say it does not work.

Ms FORREST - What sort of things do you teach then?

Mr NICHOLSON - We just teach observation, hazard perception and risk acceptance - attitude.

Ms FORREST - Do you want to expand on those a little bit?

Mr NICHOLSON - Observation - people don't see things or they wouldn't run into them so obviously part of driver education and testing at the present moment is not observation. Seeing things and getting the big picture of driving as you drive along so if you see something you are less like to run into it. People don't look. They just drive along as though they have this little bit of the world to themselves and run into things and say they didn't see it.

CHAIR - And sometimes looking and talking to passengers.

Mr NICHOLSON - Distractions. I did not bring my mobile phone in. Probably the worst thing anybody can have in a car is a mobile telephone. Not hands-free, holding it is not dangerous, holding a conversation is what is dangerous but how can you legislate? Even Britain has spent a lot of money on this. They have not worked out a way to legislate to

not use a mobile phone, hands-free mobile in a car because a police officer can't say you were using a mobile phone when you crashed because you are not going to admit to it after the event. Because people talk to themselves, they are seeing -

Ms FORREST - Phone records will reflect that though.

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes but that is a lot of trouble to go to for a car crash which we regard as inevitable and they are all going to happen so let us spend the least amount of money we can on resolving these issues.

Ms FORREST - Wouldn't you agree, though, if you really believed that mobile phones are one of the biggest evils and one of the major contributing factors, it would be worth going to that extent?

Mr NICHOLSON - Ivan as a former police officer would know it is very frustrating to have a law you can't enforce practically, and that is the problem we have always been faced with. There are a lot of things we would like. I worked at the Transport Commission for 17 years in the traffic signal system so I have worked with a lot of police officers and worked in that field and seen the frustration.

Ms FORREST - Private enterprise seems to be able to do it. We have heard that Aurora's work force are not allowed to use mobile phones and their staff will ring, at random times, their workers out on the road and if they answer the phone they get one warning and they are sacked.

Mr NICHOLSON - I am glad to hear it.

Ms FORREST - Apparently it has had a significant impact, anecdotally. We have not actually received evidence from them in that regard but I have heard from a number of different sources now.

Mr NICHOLSON - So the Aurora people know that their management is on side and if they do the wrong thing it is their job at stake -

Ms FORREST - That is right.

Mr NICHOLSON - whereas if somebody is using a mobile phone in a car and gets a \$120 fine and a couple of points, they don't care.

Mr DEAN - I wonder what the statistics really tell us out there about mobile telephones since their introduction in relation to accidents and so on. We know that inattentive driving is said to be, on the statistics, the major cause of accident. It would be interesting to know how many mobile phone conversations or interferences were involved in that.

Mr NICHOLSON - To quantify is difficult. I know the research is on how distracting it is in any task, and that is well proven now, both in Newark in Australia and Monash, and there is a university in England called Brunel doing a lot of work with the Institute of Advanced Motorists which they are paying for. They are showing quite conclusively that mobile phones are very distracting from any task. But how do you prove it because

if a police officer has not seen it happen, there is no record in the accident records, as you would know, that it was a causal effect.

Mr DEAN - I wonder, Mr Chairman, if we could go through DIER to see if they have any statistical data on that because there are accidents where mobile phones have been proven to be at fault.

CHAIR - We will be seeing them again anyway.

Mr NICHOLSON - That could be interesting. But it is very difficult to say yae or nay. I guess in a serious crash there would investigations into the driver. When we get a group of people together, the first thing we do is take them outside and I ask them to tell me what they would do if they were driving along on this spot here and they reached an 'oh, my God' situation where they had to stop quickly at 50 kilometres an hour, normal traffic speeds. I get a couple of witches hats and say, 'Tell me where you want me to put the witch's hat to show where you think you would have your foot on the brake pedal' I get the shortest and the longest one and then I say, 'How far should I go?' and I put the witch's hat to where I stop at 50 kilometres an hour in good conditions. No-one ever gets it right. Everybody underestimates the distance it takes to do these things. But that gets their attention straightaway. There are basic things they do not know, such as how long it takes to think and how long it takes to stop.

Then we talk about, you would not run into something if you saw it.

CHAIR - Rotary do a similar demonstration in a different way.

Mr NICHOLSON - They just do a distance braking demonstration. We help with that one out there. We do the hazard-perception lecture in the classroom on those days. We do that for them.

CHAIR - Sorry, I interrupted you.

Mr NICHOLSON - That is okay. To me, to some extent, doing it in a car is not as effective because they still do not realise how much they have travelled until they get out and have a look at it. So we say, 'That is your normal traffic speed, you can do that'. Then we go in and relate it to accidents like the rear-end collision and the intersection smash, which are probably the two most popular crashes. With the rear-ender we talk about the whys and wherefores; people know why it is but they still tailgate. They know it is because people follow too closely because of reaction time and not looking far enough ahead while they are driving and they follow the car in front. We say, 'You expand your vision, you can see 15 to 20 seconds down the road in most cases so why not look down there because in 15 seconds that is where you are going to be, so it does not all have to happen to you'

Then we show them a bit of observation video from the London Metropolitan Police and the old one that was done at the Police Academy here. It is a very good film but it is 15 or more years old now and people are laughing at the fashions and the cars.

Mr DEAN - It was around when I was in the job.

Ms FORREST - You are probably in it.

Mr NICHOLSON - They are nearly all volunteers. That is the problem because the bloke driving the taxi is driving his own cab and he has the glasses and big moustache and the kids laugh and say, 'Look at him.' We try to get them to improve their observation skills. Then we take them out in our cars and demonstrate safe driving to them, driving into the city and back, how you can drive around in a city situation smoothly, safely, but keep up with the traffic so that they do not think that being safe is about driving slowly or not getting where you are going. If it is a one-day course in the afternoon, or a three-sessions course, we take them out in the afternoon and do a drive around the country. We work over at the Bellerive Adult Education Centre so we do the Cambridge and Richmond roads, Grass Tree Hill Road, back through Lindisfarne, having talked about safe, smooth cornering lines, demonstrating how you can corner more smoothly and more safely by positioning and getting your speed right and all those things, as you are approaching corners, and how you can recognise hazards and so forth as you are driving along, what things can be hazards to you. People are amazed at what they are not seeing. You get them in cars and talk about what you are doing, doing what we in the police call a 'commentary drive', and they are amazed at what they are not seeing that the driver is responding to. They have never been taught these things. They have never been shown how to drive. Most student drivers are never shown by their driving instructor how to do it properly. Quite often the driving instructor, if it is a family member, doesn't know.

CHAIR - What about professional instructors?

Mr NICHOLSON - Patchy. Like all groups of people, they're a mixed bunch. Some do it very well and some not so well.

Ms FORREST - Do you have any views on their current testing regime for provisional drivers?

Mr NICHOLSON - I'll give you an example. You've just left the testing officer up the top of Macquarie Street and come down Macquarie Street; the student driver is told to turn into Mole Street. Unknown to the student, because there are no signs, there is a 40 kilometre per hour speed limit in Mole Street now, from Davey Street down to Collins Street because Collegiate School now has a school either side of Mole Street. There is an all-day 40 kilometre per hour school zone through there, but there is no sign in Macquarie Street to tell you of this. As soon as a student turns the corner and gets up to 50 kilometre per hour, which they think is now the speed limit, they are failed. There is no sign.

Ms FORREST - I have driven down there and there is no sign.

Mr NICHOLSON - There is no sign. It must be deliberate because there is no sign.

Mr DEAN - There's got to be a sign in Mole Street somewhere.

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, but it's up the top. It is as you approach Collegiate; there is no repeater sign.

CHAIR - That should be stopped, shouldn't it.

Mr NICHOLSON - Driving schools have complained to DIER and it is still going on. You ask me what I think of the present testing regime and the problem is the testing officers are not trained.

Mr HARRISS - Ivan would know better than me but, Jim, isn't it true to say that if you were charged, having driven into there, you would have a defence and you'd most likely -

Mr NICHOLSON - A magistrate wouldn't find you guilty, but you would have failed your licence test.

Mr DEAN - He can't under the Traffic Code because you have to have passed a sign telling you it is 40 kilometre per hour.

Mr NICHOLSON - We know, but the student has failed.

Ms FORREST - And they go back to the end of the list and have a six months' wait.

Mr NICHOLSON - It is only a month now because they've put on these six new people, with no training. The other problem with it is there is no appeal system. If you are failed for something you think is unreasonable your parents can jump up and down, they can write letters, but there is no appeal system. You appeal to the people who have failed you and they will say, 'You did this and that wrong'. That is the most recent one. There are all sorts of examples of this sort of nonsense that poorly-trained testing officers use.

Ms FORREST - Moving on from that, aside from what appears to be appropriate, is the rest of the testing regime a test of a person's capacity to drive on their own out there?

Mr NICHOLSON - No.

Ms FORREST - Why do you say that?

Mr NICHOLSON - The new two-stage system theoretically is very good. The first time you check and make sure they can handle the vehicle, then you let them do their 50 hours, bring them back in and make sure they can drive safely. But, if your testing officers are not trained to recognise safe driving behaviour, how do they test? They look for little, niggly things. They are looking for ways to fail rather than good, positive driving behaviour because they're not trained as assessors.

Ms FORREST - I am just trying to be the Devil's advocate here. If you have a range of testers and one of the big criticisms could be that they are not consistent -

Mr NICHOLSON - That's exactly right.

Ms FORREST - in that this person goes for their test and then this person and this person and then they have a chat about who passed and who failed and it is clear that a consistent approach wasn't taken. So by having a check-list approach, you do this, you do that and whatever, would provide that level of consistency. How do you get around that if you want to make perhaps a subjective assessment at times?

Mr NICHOLSON - Subjective testing is not reliable because you have somebody's opinion. I've grown up subjectively testing people to join our organisation and become examiners and instructors. If you are relying on one person, it waters down as you go down the field. The concept of competency-based training and testing is very good as long as it is done correctly. I know the testing officers have some sort of a level for a certificate in assessment but they got it in half a day sort of thing, whereas it took me three weeks, if you know what I mean. There is a pressure on them always to get the certification quickly, whereas the driving instructors all had to do a certificate for driving instruction last year but again no-one was taken out on the road and tested as to their ability to drive or teach. They all got RPL on the basis that they have been doing it for 20 years so they must be okay. That is not how RPL is supposed to be.

CHAIR - Do they do any test?

Mr NICHOLSON - None of them were actually tested on the road by anybody as to their ability to teach or drive.

CHAIR - But theory?

Mr NICHOLSON - They went through a theoretical normal sort of workplace level 4 teaching and assessment. I did it a few years back myself.

CHAIR - What is RPL?

Mr NICHOLSON - Sorry, Recognition of Prior Learning.

CHAIR - I did not know.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, can I just take Jim back to the example he gave coming down Macquarie Street and turning left into Molle Street. Have you seen documents which have that as a cross and a reason for failure?

Mr NICHOLSON - No, not personally. I know the driving instructors have and they are not getting anywhere at getting it stopped at the moment. It is a hot issue now.

Mr HARRISS - If the committee was of a mind to somehow get hold of that documentation, do you have anybody that we could contact to prove for ourselves that people have been failed for not obeying the 40 kilometre per hour limit when they have not seen a sign?

Mr NICHOLSON - I think if you ask Robin Eccles who is coming before you tomorrow afternoon as President of the ADTA, the Australian Driver Trainers Association.

Mr HARRISS - He was here earlier.

Mr NICHOLSON - Oh, he was here today, was he? I thought he was coming tomorrow.

Mr HARRISS - We can contact him.

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, contact Robin. So it is likely that he might have some -

Mr NICHOLSON - He might have documents. They do not give out documentation at DIER when they fail you, though.

CHAIR - Don't?

Mr NICHOLSON - The student does not get a document.

Ms FORREST - DIER would have a copy, though.

Mr NICHOLSON - DIER would have it. Oh yes, you can get it from DIER to get that testing officer's report.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, we may well be able to go through the process and talk with Robin again and if he has some students that he understands failed because of that, we will go to the department and ask specifically. We do not need to know the person's name. They will block that out.

Mr NICHOLSON - It needs to be a transparent appeal system for someone who thinks they were unfairly treated by a testing officer. It is no good appealing to the testing officer's supervisor because of closing ranks, as people do. It is no good going up the range because there is another person above them and another person above them. It is getting a bit overloaded in there. They are top heavy in there at the moment. There are three levels of supervision above the testing officer now instead of one. None of them have had any experience in testing or driver training so you get these managers coming in.

Ms FORREST - If we had a test of who was quite experienced and was good at assessing safe driving and you had a candidate there going for their test and whilst they did things correctly, they were not driving in a safe manner and you could not fail them because this tick sheet would not allow it -

Mr NICHOLSON - No, there is always an overarching package of is this person driving safely? If the testing officer fails that person because of that, you then immediately arrange another test with another testing officer. That is how the system should work. If a testing officer fails somebody and that person feels they have been unfairly treated, an immediate test with another testing officer who does not know why the person has failed -

CHAIR - But knows that the person had been failed. Wouldn't there be a sense a camaraderie or club and supporting each other?

Mr NICHOLSON - Oh yes, but has applied for a reassessment. There always is but at least you have a chance. Doing three-point turns in driveways and you failed because you did not quite get your tyres in over the gutter because of some nitpicking concept that that is the difference between legal and illegal, that is rubbish. We are looking for people who can drive safely, not know every detail of the traffic rules. Not one of us in this room, including Ivan, would know all the details of the traffic rules at any moment in time. I have a set of them and I read them often.

Mr DEAN - Jim, on the driver testing, just to clarify, do you have a set area that you have to go in? Do you have to come down Macquarie Street?

Mr NICHOLSON - No.

Mr DEAN - It is up to the instructor?

Mr NICHOLSON - They can go anywhere they like now. It is up to the testing officer. A lot of this has come about of course since the days when the instructors were kicked out of the cars. There is no third person in the car these days.

CHAIR - Oh, I see.

Mr NICHOLSON - The testing officer sits in the front seat and there's no-one in the back seat.

CHAIR - So what are the merits or disadvantages of that?

Mr NICHOLSON - Well, according to DIER, the merits are that they had too many arguments with the driving instructors or the parents. According to the driving instructors our vehicles are at risk because they're ours and DIER won't take any liability for them. There's no independent witness.

CHAIR - Are they covered by insurance?

Mr NICHOLSON - Their own insurance only. They have to carry the risk if somebody's using their car and the testing officer is sitting in the front seat. DIER won't accept any liability.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, to pursue that a bit then, if the instructor is not permitted to accompany the person who he's been instructing and if that person fails, you would want to be there to simply observe these faults and get it right next time.

Mr NICHOLSON - Exactly. I would have thought so.

Ms FORREST - It would give the instructor a chance to engage that person in the areas they failed in.

Mr HARRISS - How productive would that be?

Mr NICHOLSON - Wonderful.

Mr HARRISS - As it always was.

Mr NICHOLSON - It's very much based on the New South Wales system where the driving instructor is expected to engage the parents of their students and take them out on lessons and the students then have an involvement with the parent and the instructor has an involvement with the parents, telling them that we've done this on this lesson and now their task between now and the next lesson is to reinforce that and do this

and that. There's none of that here and it's audited by the government department to make sure that the -

Ms FORREST - Where's that?

Mr NICHOLSON - New South Wales. The actual driving instructors actually do that; they have to log it, that they have talked to the parents and suggested to the parents things that they should be reinforcing for their student driver. There's none of that here.

CHAIR - What about other States?

Mr NICHOLSON - I don't know about other States. We just happen to have a new member of ours who has come down from New South Wales, having worked up there for about 17 years as a driving instructor after coming from overseas. He was horrified when he found out there was none of this done here in Tasmania. The driving instructors don't do it.

CHAIR - So, if they fail somebody, they don't talk to the parent or driving instructor?

Mr NICHOLSON - They may talk to a driving instructor. They don't like confrontations with angry parents.

Ms FORREST - Who thought their job as a taxi driver was over.

Laughter.

CHAIR - In New South Wales do they do that?

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes.

CHAIR - What is the result in dealing with parents?

Mr NICHOLSON - I don't know who does it there; what sort of appeal process there is.

CHAIR - Not the appeal, but the explanation.

Mr NICHOLSON - Well, if you've done the job properly and most parents would accept that if John didn't do it right they'd be glad that John hasn't been allowed on the road, even with the taxiing. They want John to be a safe driver, but if they see that John has failed because they didn't quite cross the gutter to get into a driveway and everything else was great or they failed because a sign was out of sight then they're going to be very hostile about that test.

Ms FORREST - If a driving instructor, when their student is going for their assessment, says no I am going to come too -

Mr NICHOLSON - Can't.

Ms FORREST - What do you mean, can't?

Mr NICHOLSON - Not allowed.

Ms FORREST - Who says not allowed?

Mr NICHOLSON - DIER. DIER won't allow them in the car.

Ms FORREST - Under what authority?

Mr NICHOLSON - It's an occupational health and safety issue; too many arguments between driving instructors and - there actually weren't, but that was the reason. In fact, Robin Eccles, whom I mentioned before, claims that they used to get on better with the testing officers before they were kicked out of the cars than they do now because they knew what was going on. Now they can only assume and listen to their kids; you've got a 17-year-old who's been told he didn't fail because of something and they only hear half of it, as you know with 17-year-olds, and they come out with a story and they can't find out what it is.

Mr DEAN - I am being the devil's advocate here; all of what you've said in relation to that, though, wouldn't that only make safer drivers? What would be to the detriment of the learner driver in that process? In other words, they've gone through that process; they have to come back, more driving, come back and go for the licence again; I would have thought at the end of this you would get a better driver, even though I don't agree it's absolutely fair, but that's another issue.

Mr NICHOLSON - Is it fair to use the testing officers as the driving instructors; that's what's happened. I know a 17, or 18-year-old boy now, who has given up driving lessons. He won't listen to his father; he won't listen to a driving instructor and he's continually going for driving tests and every time he goes he gets a bit better at passing the test. He's learning the tricks of the testing officer and he's no better now than he was six months ago but he's getting better at passing the test.

Ms FORREST - The question is too, then, for kids who actually are doing a good job why should they be penalised when they really have put in the hours, they have put in the effort, they've been through a proper process.

Mr NICHOLSON - There are good test instruments around that would sort out a person's ability to drive safely, which is what you want.

CHAIR - Instruments?

Mr NICHOLSON - That is the word out of the Workplace Training and Assessment. The thing that you use to test someone is called a test instrument or an assessment instrument. It is just a sheet of paper with blocks on it and -

CHAIR - Oh, it depends what the categories are.

Mr NICHOLSON - the way you make sure that is correct is you get the same three people or four assessors to assess the same person and if they don't get the same results from that test instrument then it is not right, it is not a good instrument.

Mr DEAN - Do you believe that the training that a novice driver goes through now is setting them up to be good drivers?

Mr NICHOLSON - No.

Mr DEAN - Do you think the system is wrong?

Mr NICHOLSON - It is still setting them up to pass the test, that is really all it is, because part of the test is not whether this person is safe and whether they have a holistic system of driving that is safe in itself. Never mind if they failed once to signal at the right time on the whole drive - you know that sort of thing? But if you failed once or twice to signal on the whole drive you might fail now. So they know how to do it but under the stress of the test they do not do it every time. If we all lost our licence because once in our careers we ran through a red light I think anyone who has been driving for any length would have failed because -

Ms FORREST - Or failed to indicate; a lot of cars seem to do that.

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes

Ms FORREST - A lot of cars seem to have a lack of indicators these days.

CHAIR - That's right.

Mr NICHOLSON - It is a Tasmanian thing.

Ms FORREST - It is a Tasmanian thing, you are right.

Mr NICHOLSON - The mainland drivers always say it is a Tasmanian thing.

CHAIR - Because they are not taught to do that.

Mr NICHOLSON - They are not taught to do it. We were never taught to check for blind spots. Kids are now, kids are much better at detecting blind spots than people of our era because it is part of the test now; it wasn't when we got our licence, you just had to obey the law and you got through.

CHAIR - Most people probably don't realise there are blind spots.

Mr NICHOLSON - That is the sort of thing that a good driving instructor and a good driving course will teach them.

Ms FORREST - When we did the John Bowe course that is one of the things he taught us. He had one of the people sit in the car with the mirrors and he walked away and you could see the point where you lost sight of him.

CHAIR - That's right.

Ms FORREST - It was a very simple demonstration that clearly demonstrated that issue.

Mr NICHOLSON - We had quite a nice little bit of feedback last Friday. Part of our course is, if it is more than two or three hours, we take people out twice in our cars and demonstrate safe driving. We use the same safe system that the London Metropolitan Police have used since 1934 that reduced their accident rate by about 40 times in about a five-year period. It is based on flying practice. The bloke who introduced it in London was a pilot as well as a racing driver and it has worked ever since. I think the police still use a version of it and it is used all over the world. It is called Hendon System because that is where London -

CHAIR - Which?

Mr NICHOLSON - The Hendon System of Vehicle Control.

CHAIR - H-e-n-d-o-n?

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, it is a suburb in London where the London Metropolitan Police College is. It is still going.

CHAIR - So that is the course you provide?

Mr NICHOLSON - That is the basis of what we do. That is a 15-day course but we usually have about six here to get some basic safe driving principles into these people. They are quite often the high-mileage drivers and we get people from corporate groups who drive 100 000 kilometres a year and who sit there at first and look at you as if to say 'Well, what are you going to teach me?' So I take them outside and get them to drop the witches hats. It is a very salutary lesson to drivers who think they know a lot about driving when you show them they don't even know how long it takes them to get their foot on the brake.

CHAIR - How long would you like to see the compulsory course that you recommend for learner drivers?

Mr NICHOLSON - Realistically one day ought to be the minimum.

CHAIR - A full day all at once?

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, or two half-days or three three-hour sessions. Because you can't keep 17-year-olds listening to you for a day you normally split it up into either three three-hour sessions, three Saturday mornings, which is starting up in a couple of weeks, or during the school holidays we have two five-hour days and you are struggling to keep their attention at the end of the fourth hour each day.

CHAIR - So if there was a course for nine hours - three sessions of three hours?

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes.

CHAIR - Running on a regular basis -

Mr NICHOLSON - Constantly.

CHAIR - in the main centres and accessible to learner drivers they could take the segments whenever they wanted to? Three weeks apart or successive weekends?

Mr NICHOLSON - Like all things you get 20 per cent who give you 80 per cent of everything you do. You know the old three-day principle and with our course we try to get the first two hours because if they don't come back they are probably half as likely to have a crash because we have taught them to do observations, about following distance, about reaction time and about creating a safe space around themselves. If you can get that into drivers you have made them safer.

CHAIR - But if they are required to do the three-hour course before they can take a test does it matter how much time lapses between the three?

Mr NICHOLSON - No, practising is good in between, as long as they know what they are practising. Practise does not make perfect, it only makes permanent so if you practise the wrong thing and you will see people like that who have practised something for 20 years and they still do not know how to do it properly.

CHAIR - So two half days or three hours you would recommend?

Mr NICHOLSON - Something like that. A couple of mornings. Anything that we started would be better than what we are doing now. Some driving instructors are capable of doing it and others would not have a clue because it is a mixed bunch. Some of them learnt nothing from the Certificate IV because they did not want to learn anything from it. They just wanted to get the certificate. They had to pay a certain amount of money and they got a certificate.

CHAIR - The funding, the cost of providing these courses, what do you recommend there?

Mr NICHOLSON - There is a lot of money in certain ways from drivers and there is no reason why that cannot be put in. A small percentage of the speed camera money could be diverted.

Mr DEAN - A levy.

Mr NICHOLSON - Regarding the levy on our licences, \$1.4 million a year we give to the task force and some of that could be diverted.

CHAIR - How much is that?

Mr NICHOLSON - There is at least \$1.4 million from MAIB premiums that we have to pay because it has been taken out of the MAIB premium's pool every year to fund the task force and they spend it on advertising mostly.

Ms FORREST - On enforcement advertising.

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, on enforcement advertising. Let us get some films together.

CHAIR - It is government funded so it is not paid for by the -

Mr NICHOLSON - I think politically it would have to be government funded because the politicians in government are very sensitive about doing anything else that will cost the student driver or their parents money. Also, access is a problem because, as you know, there are a lot of student drivers who do not have support.

Ms FORREST - Or a vehicle.

CHAIR - The Government receives many millions of dollars for registration fees, drivers licences, apart from the speed fines.

Mr NICHOLSON - Did you know driving licences were introduced to pay for traffic lights and traffic police? When I started at the Transport Commission we still funded the Traffic Police Branch separately from driving licence fees. It was a separate fund that paid the traffic branch and there were about 15 offices in those days. New Zealand did the same and I think New Zealand might still do the same actually but of course one day one head of the Treasury department said, 'That's a lot of money we don't control' and talked the Premier of the day into putting it into consolidated revenue and then funding the police separately and the Transport Commission separately. It was a good idea only a public servant was running it. The Commissioner of Transport was running the fund.

CHAIR - What you are saying is sweet music for my ears because I have been advocating compulsory courses for years.

Mr NICHOLSON - We tried it and I sat through the previous four years of the novice training thing. I sat in every committee, everything - the steering committees, everything that went. I sat nearly the four years that it took to introduce the current system that has just been changed, and they would not listen to compulsory training. 'You cannot prove it works and if you cannot prove it works we cannot introduce it' they said. Never mind about being entrepreneurial and trying something different here in Tasmania. I said, 'But they haven't studied a course like I'm talking about.' 'You've studied high school driver education in America where they let a 15-year-old go for a day where they learn how to skid a car and lock up the brakes and all that sort of stuff; of course they go out and have more crashes'.

CHAIR - It is quite insulting to young people to say they would not listen and it is a waste of time having the courses and that is what the bureaucrats are saying here and New South Wales and elsewhere.

Mr NICHOLSON - I am impressed with the 17-year-old kids that come to my courses and sit and listen. Most of them are sent, but once they realise they are learning something of value they listen and they shake my hand as they are leaving and say, 'Thanks very much, that was really good'. This is 16 and 17-year-olds.

CHAIR - That affects their attitude for the rest of their lives when driving.

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, that is exactly right. Once you are taught to do something properly you will do it that way forever and if you are taught to do it badly you will do it that way forever because no-one ever checks you again after your licence.

Mr DEAN - What is your view in relation to the open speed limit on our roads here? It has come up already in our committee -

Mr NICHOLSON - The younger drivers you mean?

Mr DEAN - Well, yes. The speed limits for learner drivers - P-platers - as to how it should work and for open speed limits as well.

Mr NICHOLSON - During the later period of supervised driving they should be allowed to drive at the speed limit because you are going to allow them to drive at the speed limit unsupervised before they have had any practice supervised, which is rather foolish.

Mr DEAN - In the training phase?

Mr NICHOLSON - During the training phase. We are one of the few places in Australia where that restriction is put on learner drivers and P-plate drivers. I do not know why we still stick to it.

CHAIR - I see. So that is out of step with the rest of Australia.

Mr NICHOLSON - And the rest of the world.

Mr DEAN - Is that right?

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes. We are one of the last of the Mohicans on that one.

Ms FORREST - A car does handle differently at 80 kilometres an hour than it does at 100 or 110.

Mr NICHOLSON - Of course it does. To me, 110 back to 100 is marginal, nit-picking, fiddling around the edges. You know, nibbling around the edges. If someone is going to speed at 150 kilometres an hour they are not going to care whether it is 110 speed limit or a 100 speed limit. Someone who does not want to do 110 will do 100 on the open road anyway. I find that is a better speed for me most of the time than 110. The car is a little more economical, it is easier to drive at my age.

CHAIR - At 100.

Mr NICHOLSON - At 100. I went up to Evandale on Sunday for the market and most of the time on the open ride I was doing 100. A couple of times I sped up because people had caught up to me doing 110 obviously anxious and I could not let them past so I just increased the speed a little bit until they got passed and then I dropped back.

CHAIR - That is the only problem of driving below the speed limit, isn't it?

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes.

CHAIR - Some of the people are saying that now.

Mr NICHOLSON - I know it is following person's problem but I try to ease it as much as I can. I always try to make the following person's job as easy as possible.

Mr DEAN - May I ask you the other question now then? Because we are looking at road safety strategies, safe strategies and so on how do you see the position with, say, five or six vehicles behind a car - and it does apply in some States - a law that that front car must pull over and allow -

Mr NICHOLSON - I experienced that many years ago in California. We were in a tourist bus.

Mr DEAN - Causes of lots of accidents, I might add. That is the reason I ask the question.

Mr NICHOLSON - Up in the mountains going up to Yosemite National Park this fellow was travelling at the speed limit all the way. Every 20 or 30 miles in those days he had to stop and let five or six cars go past who could not travel any faster than he had been travelling. Everybody I spoke to about it said it was ridiculous. There was no point to it. Most people travel at or near the speed limit anyway. Maybe it would ease the frustrations of the people behind. That would be about the only thing you could say. It gives those frustrated drivers who are not thinking properly but they are frustrated anyway a chance to get a bit of open road in front of them. But I cannot see any value to it.

Ms FORREST - The frustrating thing is when you have a driver in front of you that continually varies their speed and you want to sit in your cruise control so you can watch the road and not the speedo.

Mr NICHOLSON - We talk to older drivers a lot as well as younger drivers and in-betweens. I always say to the older drivers there is no law that says you have to drive at 100 kilometres an hour. You can drive at 80 kilometres on the open road or 60 if you want to but for goodness' sake use your mirrors. Watch out for people coming up behind. Find a safe space, pull over and let them pass. Then everybody is happy on the road. Roads are there for everybody to use. They are not there for everybody to drive at the speed limit. That is not a target speed. It is ridiculous. There is that concept in Australia the speed limit is the speed you should drive at. It is not. You can save fuel by not driving at the speed limit. Quite obviously you can save fuel.

CHAIR - Could you give us some brief details about your association and how many are involved? .

Mr NICHOLSON - We only have about 55 members now. We have shrunk from about 200 members over the last 40 years because 40 years' ago we had had a lot of support from the Government of the day and at the time the Division of Road Safety was running road safety in driver education. We were recognising the certificates their road safety officers issued and so forth, and they recognised ours. So our membership got to be fairly large. It has dwindled away as people are less and less inclined to join anything these days as you would know if you are a member of Rotary. People just will not get involved. That is our problem. We are getting older. I am older. I cannot find people who will commit time to a cause, to put in frustrating hours trying to do something for the community. It is just not possible. We started off with the standard set by a senior

police officer we brought down from New South Wales, Sergeant Woolnough. I do not know whether he was in your era or not. He had been trained at Hendon and he was the senior officer from St Ives. He came down and assessed our instructors. We have tried to carry that standard of driving ability through since then.

CHAIR - And the students you have, how do they come to -

Mr NICHOLSON - Because we charge only \$60 for either a nine or 10-hour course we have no money. So what we do is use the public service notices in the newspapers and the TV stations and radio stations - those that will run them, we run them. That is how we advertise. For the school vacation we run through all the colleges and send out a poster and a notice and ask them to let their students and the parents of the students know that these courses are on during the holidays and so forth, and word of mouth I guess.

CHAIR - That involves driver training too, does it?

Mr NICHOLSON - That is the driver training.

CHAIR - It is the driver training?

Mr NICHOLSON - That is the driver training. Membership comes out of that if people who come to our courses want to help us - see it as a good thing to do.

CHAIR - So just \$60 for 10 hours, including training and providing the vehicle?

Mr NICHOLSON - Our own vehicles, yes - we take them out after the end of the course for a one-on-one drive with the instructor in their own car, so they get a one-hour drive with one of our instructors on the road as well. It is a feedback session, not a pass-failure thing, but a feedback session on things they could continue to improve on.

CHAIR - That is a very reasonable price.

Ms FORREST - Where do you run them?

Mr NICHOLSON - We are based at the Adult Education Centre at Warrane at the moment but the future of that is a bit shaky under the new Adult Education - they are looking at ways of saving money and that is an under-utilised old classroom block on the Warrane Primary School campus.

Ms FORREST - Have you run it up north at all?

Mr NICHOLSON - We only run corporate training up north. That is how we fund ourselves, we get a bit of corporate training.

CHAIR - How many people are fully employed?

Mr NICHOLSON - No-one.

CHAIR - Volunteer, is it?

Mr NICHOLSON - Well yes, basically. If we do corporate training I pay the instructors, if we are doing public courses we do not pay.

CHAIR - How many students would you have a year on average?

Mr NICHOLSON - Two years ago we had hundreds - something like 400 to 500 did the public courses for the year because the *Mercury* every day for the first three months of the year ran a road safety message. As soon as that stopped the courses started to peter out. This year we are struggling to get anyone to the public courses because the big message is that the roads are unsafe. It is not the drivers, it is the roads now.

If you look at the road safety messages this year in the press it is that the roads are unsafe. So why bother to take any responsibility for yourself?

Ms FORREST - Would that be a way of blaming everybody else?

Mr NICHOLSON - It is, externalise - 'It is not my problem, it was the wet road'.

CHAIR - Well, the roads that are considered unsafe, such as The Sidling area at Scottsdale, have fewer accidents because they are more careful on the roads.

Mr NICHOLSON - Of course they do, because people are more careful - they recognise that there is a dangerous situation.

Ms FORREST - They have to concentrate to drive. I know on the west coast you have to concentrate on those roads, whereas driving down the Midlands you could just as easily fall asleep.

Mr NICHOLSON - Funnily enough we run a course for four-wheel driving for the Adult Education - no trouble getting people to come along to that because they know they do not know how to recover a vehicle out of a ditch. I offer them a free defensive driving course if they join the club that runs that for us - no-one ever comes. They can come for free.

We have been training a lot of these volunteer drivers for free but they do not all come. All these right- turn things where they help disadvantaged youth to get their licences - I have offered to train all those drivers for free, they can come to the courses for nothing - all that sort of thing - but very few of them come. They do not make it a prerequisite, they just hope they will come. I do not ask them for much, I just ask them for six or seven hours of their time.

CHAIR - So if this were compulsory for all learner drivers what effect do you think that would have?

Mr NICHOLSON - I would imagine you could halve - halve is probably a big number - but halve young driver crashes. Maybe not the first year, where somebody has a licence and just goes, you may have far more trouble bringing that huge spike down but the rest of the time you could halve it.

Ms FORREST - DIER have their road safety strategy at the moment that focuses on safe travel speeds, best practice, infrastructure, increased safety for young road users and enhanced vehicle safety. Do you have a view of the importance that should be attached to each area?

Mr NICHOLSON - Well, enhanced vehicle safety is coming whether people like it or not. It is coming because new cars are safer than old cars, so that is going to reduce the number. Yes, it will reduce the number of crashes because electronic skid control and prevention is a proven technology that is working already in most markets in the world and Bosch who have invented it and market it claim something like 27 per cent of single vehicle crashes will be prevented in any vehicle that has it fitted. That is a pretty confident claim to make. So technology is helping, and cars are much safer - most of them anyway; there have been one or two sneak through in Australia recently.

Highways can always be improved. It is a shame when someone is killed because they make a mistake and it is something that need not have been there. That is something that we can spend money on of course as we are doing with the barriers up the Midlands and that of thing.

CHAIR - Roadside furniture.

Mr NICHOLSON - And roadside furniture. What was the other thing?

Ms FORREST - Travel speeds. We did mention that probably and the safety of young road users.

Mr NICHOLSON - Most of the people who are causing most of the problem with travel speeds are law breakers and anti-social. What can you do with them?

Ms FORREST - So you suggest they are generally travelling at speeds in excess, well in excess.

Mr NICHOLSON - Generally. Not always. Put it this way, any single vehicle crash in my opinion is caused by someone at an excessive speed for the conditions and that does not necessarily relate to the sign on the pole. It can be 40 kilometres an hour or it can be 30. I have been going too fast at 10 kilometres going up on the mountain roads one day in my early days. It is excessive speed not speed related to sign posting. I do not know that it has a big difference unless you take big steps like reducing urban speeds to 40 would save a lot of pedestrian damage but it would create a lot of frustration.

Ms FORREST - The car design makers are fixing that, the front end of a car design -

Mr NICHOLSON - Yes, there are some cars that are more pedestrian friendly. There are explosive bonnets that pop up and keep the pedestrian away from the hard objects in the engine room and that sort of thing. That is all coming.

Mr DEAN - Jim, would you agree that speed as a sole contributing factor in an accident is very uncommon?

Mr NICHOLSON - If you relate speed to the speed limit, yes. If you relate it to the conditions, it is quite often the sole contributor.

Mr DEAN - Normally there are other ingredients that come into that of either alcohol or drugs or racing which is a different thing.

Mr NICHOLSON - Excessive speed for whatever conditions exist at that moment, be it weather be it the condition of the person driving, the car, is very hard to define, almost impossible to define, and certainly you cannot legislate against it, against people making mistakes. You can legislate against exceeding a set arbitrary speed limit but that is always going to be too high for some conditions and lower than necessary for other conditions. I used to drive to Launceston in old Holdens and Falcons owned by the Government at 90 miles an hour because it was legal and the roads were shocking and so were the cars.

Ms FORREST - We used to lie in the back of the old station wagon and have a sleep.

Mr NICHOLSON - I would not do it these days of course. I am a little more sensible now.

Ms FORREST - We still survived to tell the tale.

CHAIR - Any further questions of Mr Nicholson? No. Any closing comments?

Mr NICHOLSON - No, I think I have said more than enough as usual. Once you get me wound up it is hard to stop me.

CHAIR - It has been very helpful. From what you are doing in a voluntary capacity you deserve a very high award and certainly the appreciation of the community. We hope that our Government may follow you with that. Thank you very much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr DOUGLAS JOHN LING, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DRIVER SAFETY SERVICES, AND **Mr ALEXANDER JERRIM**, INNOVATIONS MANAGER, DRIVER SAFETY SERVICES, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, gentlemen. We have your detailed submission. If you'd like to speak to that in whatever way you wish then we'll ask questions as we proceed.

Mr LING - The severity of crashes has reduced over the last 15 to 20 years and governments take credit for that generally in the public education programs and enforcement programs, but our position is that the main reason that there's been a decrease in severity of crashes is due to the improvement in occupant protection in vehicles, which has been quite dramatic in the last 15 years.

The number of casualty crashes has really been the same; it's really the severity of the crashes that has reduced. There may be some contribution to that with, I guess, the concentration on speed. There's certainly been a change in the public's attitude to excessively exceeding the speed limit in general but, other than that, the main improvements, we believe, have come through improved protection in vehicles.

The number of crashes is similar so people are still making mistakes. We've had a big improvement in vehicle occupant protection and also in passive safety of vehicles. In recent years we've had dramatic improvement in active safety with stability control and other improvements associated with that but that's, I guess, really the silver bullet that's happened in the last few years. We've had a couple back in the eighties and seventies with seatbelts, et cetera but really, to prevent or reduce the number of crashes occurring, stability control is the main technical breakthrough with vehicles.

The issue is that people still make mistakes. There's a small percentage that no matter what education programs you put in, they don't seem to take any notice and they don't take any notice of penalties or law enforcement. A lot of the activity is directed at that group whereas the majority of drivers don't intend to harm themselves or others when they drive and they take risks a lot of the time unknowingly; they're just are not aware of the risks that they're taking. The big issue with young drivers is the first six months of gaining their provisional licence. The whole licensing system and the training is all about getting the licence; not about after. We've been engaged nationally to implement the Australian Automobile Association's Keys2Drive program, which is being funded by the Federal Government. Our approach to that is really targeting that first six months and getting driving instructors, learners and their supervisors all focused on being safe when they get their licence rather than just focusing on getting their licence, which is what the tendency is generally. That program is going to be rolled out nationally from the beginning of next year. They start in Tasmania with a pilot.

CHAIR - Do you have generous funding for it?

Mr LING - Yes, \$17 million. Apart from the novice driver program that the Federal Government were funding, which is taking a long time to get off the ground, this is really a first attempt by the Federal Government to have some influence on learner drivers. The

approach we are taking has not been tried anywhere else in the world and there is quite a bit of interest from overseas already in the program.

CHAIR - Could you give us an idea of what is involved in that program?

Mr LING - It is aimed at giving support to parents and supervising drivers. In other States that require 100 or 120 hours of supervised practice, the Federal Government saw this program as providing some assistance to parents because a lot of them see it as a daunting task to provide those practice hours. In Queensland it is just too hard for a lot of young people to get that time of practice in.

I guess the issue is you could have 120 hours but if your parent or the supervisor has bad habits and is not a very good driver it means you have 120 hours of learning how not to be a safe driver so this program is really aimed to assist in that area. It involves a free lesson for the learner.

CHAIR - One free lesson?

Mr LING - One free lesson, with a learner.

CHAIR - How long is that?

Mr LING - An hour, the normal professional lesson. If the parent or the supervisor accompanies them then the whole lesson will be structured to provide information and support for the supervisor or parent. We see that as a hook to get them into the program.

We are putting a lot of money into developing an interactive web site which will be an ongoing support program for learners and supervisors and driving instructors right through the period of learning and also when they first get their provisional licence.

Part of the scheme is an accreditation scheme for driving instructors, so that will be a national accreditation scheme really looking to lift the bar with driving instructors. They will be required to interact with the scheme through the web, which will be a major issue for some driving instructors. They will be required to use at least four-star NCAP safety-rated vehicles and to promote safe vehicles and to meet a fairly high level of professionalism in their work. They are the three key parts of it.

On our web site we are developing what we are calling a learning space. It won't be just going there to get information about what is required to get your licence or whatever, it will be activities and the use of some games to encourage young people to engage in the web site so it is an ongoing program. It is not just getting a free lesson and that is it. We will be encouraging instructors to encourage the supervising drivers to come back for additional lessons along the learning path so that they can give them guidance on what to concentrate on.

CHAIR - That free lesson for one hour, is that driving instruction or instruction also about safety measures and tips about safe driving?

Mr LING - You might like to give a bit of a beef, Alex.

CHAIR - Just some idea of what happens in that hour.

Mr JERRIM - It has very little to do with driving. Of course if you think about it, a free lesson in one hour, what can you achieve? Our approach right from the beginning is to say that one hour is to engage people in a process of thought which hopefully will mean that they continue to engage in that learning process. So it is going to present them with information that no other road safety system probably in the world has presented supervisors with.

CHAIR - Such as?

Mr JERRIM - I will draw your attention to this graph; I do not know if you have seen this in the submission -

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr JERRIM - This is rather frightening. It shows that the day a learner driver goes from being a learner driver to a provisional driver their crash risk increases 20 to 30 times. We argue that part of the reason for that is the dramatic change in context. They have gone from being highly supervised to being highly independent.

So underpinning our philosophy is one where we train them to learn how to operate in a solo context whilst still supervised. The lesson is how do you train a supervisor to let go of control, because a mother or father teaching their son or daughter to drive is constantly wanting to control their son or daughter's safety and yet that is the worst thing they can do in terms of training them to manage the solo driving context.

CHAIR - Do you provide Valium tablets for the parents?

Laughter.

Ms FORREST - Sometimes the parents don't need them; they are tired anyway and they do fall asleep.

Mr JERRIM - While it is highly important that the supervisors sit there and help control the car from a safety point of view, the mistake they make is that they also control the student's mind and, of course, as soon as they get the provisional licence they no longer have direct control so the learner is there, completely free and independent. The core idea of the program is to train supervisors to let go of control and very much it is about developing better relationships with their adolescents. I guess it is a social strategy as much as a road safety strategy and it is based on a body of research from both Europe and the United States.

I presented it at a conference last week where there was a keynote speaker from the United States, a world expert in novice driver safety, and he agreed that this is one of the most innovative programs currently being developed anywhere in the world - a remarkably exciting opportunity for us.

Ms FORREST - The same would apply to their sex life, the use of drugs or alcohol - all these challenges that young people face. It is about parents getting them to have the skills to make good decisions.

CHAIR - But you wouldn't have the parent in the car if it was a matter of sex life -

Ms FORREST - Not necessarily.

Laughter.

Mr JERRIM - You are absolutely right there.

Ms FORREST - We are talking about the issue of educating our young people. I did hear someone say that they are the Generation Ys, and this is a quote and I do not know who was responsible for it. They said that they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. And so as educators of our young people, which we are when we are teaching them to drive or about their sex life or whatever it is, we care about them enough to say we want them to be safe and this is how we are going to help them. It is not just related to driving. So when you talk about putting these educational programs out there, do you think it needs to be specific for driving or should it be a whole life thing?

Mr JERRIM - In road safety we are absolutely lousy at asking first-principle questions. We respond on intuition and we remain within our very narrow area, we don't look outside our discipline. You have hit the nail on the head: if we actually look outside the area of road safety and don't see road safety as the problem, but think about from a social point of view what the cause is of the problem that we are facing and what can we learn. We have this assumption that we have to do more research and gain more knowledge before we can act. The knowledge exists; we have to know where to look. What you have described is so poignant in that if we look to other areas such as adolescent education and social problems, the answers from the research are there, and essentially that is what we have done in this program. We have looked outside our normal discipline -

Ms FORREST - That is what it sounds like.

Mr JERRIM - and learned. I guess that is one of the other things that is a frustration to us in the road safety area and that is not only the lack of first-principle questions but lack of a systematic approach by to it. What we tend to do in road safety is do lots of 'stuff'. We do stuff for speeding, we do stuff for cars, we do stuff for drink driving, stuff for roads but we don't ask the questions or think how those little bits fit together and what relationship they have.

Ms FORREST - And how do you teach kids to be responsible for their actions?

Mr JERRIM - I think it goes outside what we are talking to kids about; it is about how we talk to our road-user public and how we interact with them. If we looked at the DIER strategy which you mentioned previously, and, sure we have the bit on roads, we have the bit on cars, we have the bit on speed, we have the bit on novice drivers, but how do they interact? How can we combine the combined energy of those various bits? So if you were to achieve any function you could have five bits working separately or five bits

working together. If you work together you will achieve more than the sum of the parts. That is one thing that has always been lacking - this is a view I hold quite firmly - in road safety in Tasmania. That is, a lack of coherent strategic thinking about how the various parts of the system fit together. As Doug was pointing out, we have had tremendous improvements as a result of the type of vehicles that we now have on the roads. But we are running out of silver bullets quick-smart.

That is the last remaining opportunity beyond vehicles to make a significant gain - other than roads - and if you have squillions of dollars that is the best way to spend your money. Separate two people coming at each other at 100 kilometres an hour and you have saved lots of problems. But in Tasmania of course we do not have squillions of dollars. So more than any other jurisdiction we probably have to look more at behavioural outcomes. So how is it that we can influence behaviour? Sure, we might have a speeding and law enforcement policy but how does that interact with our education policy? How does that interact with our training assessment system? There is no coherent strategy or explanation of how that system works. It assumes that just because we have many parts we have a road safety system. We do not in Tasmania. It is as simple as that.

CHAIR - What do you call your program?

Mr JERRIM - Which program?

CHAIR - The program you are going to implement nationally.

Mr LING - It is called Keys2Drive.

CHAIR - Yes, that is the same.

Mr LING - There is a Keys2Drive info web site which gives detail on it if you want to have a look.

CHAIR - Yes. I thought it was the same as what we had heard about. After the one hour if people wish to continue, what does it cost them and what happens in the program from then on?

Mr LING - It does not cost them anything but they need to access the program through the web site. The education material, the information material would all be on the web site. So it is a web-focused program.

CHAIR - And that is tips for driving?

Mr JERRIM - It is support in developing a better relationship with your adolescent, the person you are learning with and how to help them learn what would loosely be described as self-regulation skills. How can you help someone learn to regulate their own behaviour? Of course, to do that, a parent has to be able to do that as well, to be able to describe how they are doing that. So this program is as much about helping supervisors learn to manage and improve their own behaviour as it is helping the learner driver. So it has a very non-traditional approach to road safety in that it is really not about how you operate a car. It is about how o you operate yourself.

CHAIR - On the roads as well?

Mr JERRIM - Yes.

CHAIR - Is that available at the moment, on the web site?

Mr LING - The Keys2Drive info web site is there but the web site is being built at the moment. We have a pilot that we will run in Tasmania from about mid-January until the end of March and then we will have a national roll-out from April for nine months across the rest of Australia.

CHAIR - I was wondering if you would mind liaising with Mr Fewkes and let us know when it is available for us to see it.

Mr LING - Yes, sure. We will give you an update.

Ms FORREST - I would like to enrol in August.

Mr JERRIM - You can express your interest on the web site now.

Ms FORREST - Then I will.

Mr JERRIM - Then you will get updates.

Mr LING - I guess our focus is on the first six months. Our concern, as we expressed in our submission, is the direction that DIER have taken with their two-stage learner process where they are looking to have an L1 and an L2. The whole recommendation of the original proposal - and I was on the working group that developed the novice driving training reforms back in about 2001 when that first started - was the two-stage assessment process. The first assessment basically would be of a higher level than the then current driving assessment and that there would be a further assessment then to really determine how safely the driver was driving rather than whether they could physically handle the vehicle. Alex, with his previous company, part of Driver Safety Services, was engaged by DIER to develop a second assessment which is really going along the first principles that he was talking about, being how to really assess how safe a driver was. DIER paid for that. It was quite a big project. They've chosen not to implement that.

Ms FORREST - It is collecting dust somewhere here.

Mr LING - Yes, because of workability issues and we understand that - I will not give any official comment on that - but it is really that it would be a bit hard for them to implement. They would have to train their assessors and it would be a shift in direction for them.

Ms FORREST - To train their test assessors?

Mr LING - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Why would that be a problem? I know that economically it would be an issue.

Mr LING - Maybe also some of the assessors may not be able to be re-trained as assessors rather than as testing officers which they really are at the moment. They introduced the first stage of the program, which was from Western Australia and which Alex developed for Western Australia. We understand that they are going to, if you like, dumb down that test to a very simple test for the first L to go to L2, the first test. Basically, only in 50 kph speed limit and really just to test whether they can handle and physically drive a car. That is all that test will do. Then, the second test would be a bit of an upgrade on the current one. The current test was designed as the first test, not as an exit test.

Ms FORREST - So is it your view, then, that the current test should become the first test as it is, the new test that Alex has devised?

Mr LING - Basically, yes, and then a higher level one to assess whether they have these concepts of driving safely rather than just physically being able to drive a vehicle. It is more about the mental attitude and behavioural assessment which is harder to do. You need assessors that are trained to be able to do that. Alex's proposal had all the training manuals and everything developed for that. We are concerned that they are missing an opportunity there. The first test designed was a very simple test; the main criteria was so they could do three an hour rather than what the outcomes of the assessment are. They are employing another nine assessors or testers to be able to do that as was in the original proposal that went to Cabinet back in 2001. It was proposed that they should outsource at least that first test to the industry. That is also, I understand, considered all too difficult for DIER to be able to manage. There are simple tools available now so that you can measure assessors' performance, et cetera. The other proposal from the novice driver recommendations was that when the two-stage assessment was implemented, which was supposed to have been done by 2003 - we are still waiting for the full thing - consideration be given to encouraging provisional licensed drivers to have additional training with a prescribed or recognised course and that you give them an incentive, rather than make it compulsory, that you reduce the provisional period by 12 months. It is the sort of thing they have been doing in New Zealand for -

CHAIR - That recognised course, would that be compatible with yours?

Mr LING - Well, we have obviously put up a course - you would need to establish the criteria for what that course would be achieving. It would not be the sort of standard defensive driving course or skid control, car control type of course. There is a lot of evidence to show that that is counterproductive.

CHAIR - You appeared in the latter part of Mr Nicholson's evidence, I think. I am not sure whether you were here when we were discussing a course for all learner drivers, say three hours or two half-days or one full day but not really one full day, not of actual physical driving but advice about various aspects of driving.

Mr LING - We do run a one-day course which has been developed by Alex.

CHAIR - Along those lines?

Mr LING - Well, yes. I will just give you a brochure on it.

CHAIR - And would you propose that that be run as well as the national course that you are running?

Mr LING - Yes, it is a different I guess further progression of what we do in the national program but it would fit in well with it because it has the same sort of philosophies that we are using.

CHAIR - And do you consider it is desirable for all learner drivers to undertake a course such as that?

Mr LING - We have been running this course as part of the MAIB-funded courses in association with the RACT and we have been providing that course and that is to P-plate drivers at colleges and high schools. So it is focused -

CHAIR - In the schools. That is the one in the schools.

Mr LING - It is called P-plate Action. That is really focused at that first six months as well so it is targeting licensed drivers. It follows on from the program that we are talking about, the national one, and we are encouraging in that they ought to get further training once they get their P-licence. This program that we run, we run for industry as well, but it has a different focus for experienced drivers. Maybe Alex can give a couple of minutes run-down of the philosophy of crash-free driving. It is sort of a bit like the Vision Zero approach but it is about that if you can control your environment then you can drive crash free.

CHAIR - This is the one in schools?

Mr LING - As well. It is a similar program that we run in the schools as well for corporations.

Ms FORREST - The cost of \$2 300 -

Mr LING - That is for up to 12 people.

Ms FORREST - Oh, it says 15. So it is not each.

Mr LING - No, if we ran them for individuals then we would charge \$230.

Ms FORREST - I thought it was \$2 300 each.

Mr LING - No, no.

Mr JERRIM - We have just run a trial course or at least offered a course to people in the Minister's Department in DIER because we were keen to communicate to the Government what the approach was because we see it as a significant opportunity to help people develop safe behaviour. We describe it as a program to empower drivers so instead of being a victim you actually have control over the risks you are exposed to. It is essentially a program in self-management. It is allowing people to get inside their own

minds and say how do I think and feel about driving, how does that match my safety aspirations, where there is a difference between what I aspire to and how I currently behave, how do I go about shifting my own behaviour. So essentially it is a behavioural change program and that behavioural change occurs through a process of self-awareness and self-management. Again, it is based on some research, a large body of European research, that came out around 2003. It is very different from the traditional driver training course and it does not attend to things such as driving skills because it assumes most experienced drivers have all the skills they need to avoid crashing. It is the choices that they make that get them into trouble - choices in relation to speed, alcohol, drugs, fatigue, all of those. We see speed and alcohol and drugs and fatigue as symptoms of a problem, not the cause of the problem. If you look on them as symptoms you then have to look deeper to what the causes are. Only by treating the causes can you treat the symptoms, or can the symptoms disappear, and that is the underpinning philosophy of that program.

Mr LING - The minister did half the course as well.

CHAIR - Which minister was that?

Mr LING - Graeme Sturges.

Ms FORREST - Did he fail at the halfway point, or what?

Mr JERRIM - He had a bad attitude and was asked to leave.

Members laughing.

Mr JERRIM - No, not at all.

Mr LING - He could not get to the second session.

Mr JERRIM - No, the reality of running the State took over.

Mr LING - The program is six hours and sometimes we do that in two three-hour lots and then there is a 10-day self-coaching program which you do online. It is really you thinking about your driving and what mistakes you make, rather than blaming everyone else on the road, which is usual.

Part of it is we get people to stand on the one to ten - five being the average driver, and ask them where they think they are compared to the average driver, and of course you never get anyone that is average, they are always better than average. During the training program people reassess that and when we get them to stand up again they have moved down a fair way.

Ms FORREST - Do any move up?

Mr JERRIM - If you get a driver who is under-confident, they say they are over-cautious. They learn that being very cautious is actually helpful, that it is not necessarily a dis-benefit. Yes, occasionally we do get people to move up.

CHAIR - Would you mind explaining the graph in your submission under section 2 - serious casualty crashes and casualties per crash?

Mr LING - The serious casualty crashes is just the number of crashes where casualties occurred. That is pretty well flat; we have not had many.

CHAIR - And much lower than the others.

Mr LING - It depends what the scale is there. There are three different scales.

CHAIR - Are there? I assumed it was all the same scale.

Mr LING - The one on the right is casualties per crash and the other one is the number of cases.

CHAIR - Oh, I see, I had not looked at those.

Mr LING - The top, pinker-coloured one is the serious crashes.

CHAIR - Ours has not come out in colour so I will put my own in to differentiate.

Ms FORREST - It is the one with the square box, Don?
the square box one is the serious casualties, the absolute numbers, and you can see that that has come down, indicating that the severity of the crashes is reducing. The numbers are basically the crashes. We are still having the same number of casualty crashes but the severity of that is reducing.

CHAIR - Incident figures that I got from the Library some time ago indicated that the number of serious crashes was coming down but not the number of fatal crashes, that they were fluctuating at a similar sort of a level, up and down, up and down, the same as the scale in the last eight or nine years.

You say that the number of serious crashes is not trending down.

Mr LING - No, and our summation of that is that the vehicles is really the main thing that is reducing the severity of the crashes.

CHAIR - Serious crashes on this graph are not related to injuries or anything, it is just the number of serious crashes?

Mr LING - A serious casualty involves serious injury or fatality.

CHAIR - What is the difference between serious casualty and serious casualty crashes? I am looking at the legend at the bottom right-hand corner.

Mr LING - Serious casualties are the absolute numbers of people injured.

Mr HARRISS - There could be three in one crash.

Mr LING - There could be three in a car, yes. A serious casualty crash is just the one crash but there might be three or four people in the vehicle.

CHAIR - I see.

Ms FORREST - You could deduce from that that in 2000, for example, there were more multiple fatalities in one vehicle -

Mr LING - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Because you have a higher number there that would suggest that in that year there were more crashes than other years. There were more people in the cars that crashed who were injured or killed.

Mr LING - Yes, more people were injured in the cars.

Ms FORREST - Yes, in the cars that crashed.

Mr LING - Yes.

Mr DEAN - I want to follow through about the training supervisors who let go of control. I guess what you are saying is that it would allow the learner driver to do more of the things than they would otherwise do, is that it?

Mr LING - They have to look everywhere. They do not have the parent to say, 'Oh, watch that car there' or those sort of things.

Mr DEAN - Also, for the supervisor to be able to identify with that because they have to get that message through to the learner driver later, that they missed something. Let us take it a bit further. You are saying that immediately they get their P-plates the number of crashes goes up because they are on their own and they start making their own decisions.

Mr LING - And they have their friends in their cars.

Mr DEAN - There is nobody to stop them, tell them to slow down or speed up or anything.

Mr LING - They only have their eyes rather than the supervisor being there as well.

Mr DEAN - Do you subscribe to the position that was suggested to us this morning that a learner driver ought to be able to drive at higher speeds when they are being taught in those learning stages? In other words, should they be allowed to reach the maximum speeds on the roads where they are driving?

Mr LING - In my previous role we had the position that there should not be speed differential, that you need to learn to drive at the traffic speed. If you have a lower speed you are not learning to drive under normal conditions. That also makes the learning process different from when you get your licence. Victoria do not have a speed differential for learners and the evidence is there is no difference between learners and drivers in Victoria and here. Because of the older age that they get their licence in

Victoria, there are some arguments about that but if you look at it they are a bit more mature -

Mr DEAN - What is the age in Victoria? Eighteen?

Mr LING - Eighteen. They do not learn to drive under normal conditions which they really ought to.

Mr DEAN - That has been a concern and police have often raised that they have not been able to train and drive in similar conditions they will confront. Do the statistics in Victoria show that when they move onto their P-plates - and they have a similar system there, don't they - that the accident statistics are lower than ours per head of population?

Mr LING - I am pretty sure that there is no significant difference to show that that has an influence. It is all very well to put in a lot of controls but if the drivers don't take any notice of them they are ineffective. People will still have a crash, a lot of the time because they are disobeying the law generally. Those people who do have crashes are having a crash irrespective of what the controls or the laws are.

Mr JERRIM - One of the things around the country is that none of the jurisdictions currently has a driving licence assessment that assesses a young person's readiness to drive solo. They have all been designed primarily to perform an administrative function. If you look at our assessment here, which was introduced in 2002, it has one item that assesses capacity to drive safely and yet it is rarely used by assessors. When that assessment was first designed, it was designed to assess someone's readiness to learn to operate a car safely. It was called a stage 1 assessment; it was not an exit assessment. It is used as an exit assessment in Tasmania. Since 2002 young drivers in this State have not been assessed on whether they can drive a car safely before they drive solo. For six years we've allowed people on our roads without an assessment of their capacity to drive safely.

CHAIR - What have they been assessed for?

Mr JERRIM - They've been assessed on what's, in a research sense, called skill automaticity, which is their capacity to operate a car, change gears, brake and steer with a level of automaticity. They can operate a car and have spare attention left over and obey the traffic rules. They are not assessed on all the criteria for safe driving. I can say that for a fact because our company designed the assessment. The current assessment in Tasmania is not designed to do what it's being used for which is an indictment of their ability to manage road safety.

Ms FORREST - We have raised the issue about the capacity of learner and provisional drivers to only drive at speeds up to 80 kilometres per hour, and I always thought that was a bit strange myself. Another aspect of that is that it doesn't give them the opportunity to learn how to pass safely, because if you can't go over 80 kph obviously you don't get any experience as you're being passed yourself most of the time.

Mr LING - Correct.

Ms FORREST - Going back to point 5 of your submission which relates to motorcycle rider training, you made a comment that a monopoly arrangement was provided to a Victorian-based company to undertake the motorcycle rider training and you believe that hasn't been in the best interests of motorcyclists. Do you want to elaborate a bit further on that?

Mr LING - It's going on reports and questions in Parliament about the level of service in some rural areas which show that even though the nominees are saying that they provide them, the courses aren't readily available when people want to do them. We see it no different to the fact that at the same time they outsourced the heavy vehicle licensing assessment to four providers. We believe that we'd have a more robust and accountable system if it was opened up to other providers as well.

Ms FORREST - Do you think the training that's provided is adequate and the lack of competition is not affecting the quality of the product? Is it the availability that's your main concern?

Mr LING - We believe it affects the quality as well because they have no-one else providing it and they're not competing with anyone to any standard. In a more open market people generally would go to where they received the best training, particularly with motorcycles for which the requirement for initial training's much higher than for motor vehicles.

Ms FORREST - Do you think that level of training should be initiated for learner drivers? I know my daughter got her motorcycle licence not long ago and went through the process. She felt that certainly helped her with the driving of her vehicle.

Mr LING - There's more concentration on being aware of the rest of the traffic, which is an important part, and being aware of what else is going on the road whereas when driving a motor vehicle people tend to look at the road in front and not worry about what else is happening.

CHAIR - I have two matters. First, psychological aspects of a learner driver; should they be taken into account? By that I mean the suitability psychologically for them to be on the roads.

Mr JERRIM - Too hard. There's been a massive amount of research into personality profiles, attitude profiles and the like and there's not a socially acceptable, I guess, and proven model that would allow that to happen.

Ms FORREST - Shouldn't that be applied to all drivers, not just adolescents?

CHAIR - Yes, but first of all learner drivers in dealing with whether or not a person should ever have a licence, but also people who have had licences where such considerations have not been a factor.

Mr JERRIM - Profiling tools have been used in the area of fleet management and fleet driver safety but that's in an organisational environment where an organisation can make those decisions. It is far more complex from a social point of view in its broader context.

CHAIR - Just above figure 1 in your submission you make the point that 95 per cent of crashes are caused by driver error, making wrong choices et cetera. What effect do you think the condition of motor vehicles has on crashes? Is that a significant factor? With 95 per cent of crashes caused by driver error there doesn't seem to be much left over for such matters.

Mr JERRIM - I know in New South Wales they keep statistics on the degree to which vehicle defect contributed to the crash and it is not detectable in terms of the broader statistics.

CHAIR - Not detectable at all?

Mr JERRIM - The only thing of any significance in terms of vehicle defect is tyre failure, and where tyre failure is concerned that is mostly due to lack of maintenance on the driver's part and usually low tyre pressure. In general, people will adapt their behaviour according to the vehicle they are driving; if you put someone in a more dangerous vehicle they will drive more cautiously. That is a very broad statement but that is the general principle.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for your submission and the very helpful, interesting evidence.

Mr DEAN - You may have answered this question and I might have missed it but do you believe that the changes to novice drivers and learners getting their hours up et cetera have put better drivers on our roads than with the older system?

Mr JERRIM - No, learner drivers will only learn what is necessary to pass the test, regardless of the amount of experience they have, and that is proven by research. Until the test changes, behaviour won't change because the test is the main motivator for learning. It matters little how much we tinker with the system; it is only when that system changes that learners will be motivated to learn and to ask supervisors to teach them.

CHAIR - Good, any further questions?

Mr LING - I have just provided some supplementary material, a paper that Alex provided to the motorcycle safety reviews.

CHAIR - That is very apt, just before our next witness deals with the question of motorcycles.

Thank you very much indeed.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Mr BRENDON JOHN THOMPSON, STAY UPRIGHT MOTORCYCLE TECHNIQUES, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thank you. For the record, what is your occupation, please?

Mr THOMPSON - I am the State Manager for Tasmania for Stay Upright Motorcycle Techniques and the national ATV Manager for Stay Upright Motorcycle Techniques.

CHAIR - Thanks very much for your detailed written submission. We would like you to speak to that and deal with any aspects that you would like to elaborate on and we would like to ask you some questions as we go along.

Mr THOMPSON - I will start with the background information. Briefly, Stay Upright was formed in 1981, and is the largest and most experienced provider of motorcycle rider training in Australia. We provide all forms from learner to advanced, off-road motorcycle training and ATV training Australia-wide. The ATV off-road stuff is my responsibility Australia-wide. Stay Upright is the largest provider of learner and provisional training for the New South Wales Government. We operate in Victoria, in Queensland and the ACT. From January 1998 to June 2006 we conducted learner and provisional training here in Tasmania for the Government. In 1 July 2006 that contract was awarded to a Victorian company called Decker Training, a truck-training group. I was asked to stay with Stay Upright, to take a full-time role in the ATV and off-road training and to do advanced and other types of road training. I still do that.

I have been involved in training since 1994 as an instructor. I am stuck with it even through the period where I had other responsibilities because I could see it did a lot of good for a lot of people. I was involved in the day-to-day running of the scheme in Tasmania - recruiting staff, training them, making sure that all the government requirements were met. I am still convinced that the training of people of any age to ride a motorcycle is absolutely essential because it saves lives. That is one of the motivations for my continuing in the role for the period that I have.

In terms of the TAFE connection that I mentioned in the submission, TAFE approached us in 2003, concerned about the number of deaths and injuries from quad bikes in Tasmania. We had an ATV course that we put the TAFE management people through. Then they conducted a tender and we were awarded that contract to deliver ATV training for workplace operators right around the State - which we still do. I have enclosed a letter from TAFE to validate what I am saying about the effect of that on the crashes and fatalities of quad bike operators. We are still doing that. That is my background in this industry.

I now turn to the questions that you have asked for comment on, the main causes and effects of road traffic crashes and off-road motorcycle crashes. In brief, I have said that I believe that there are a number of things that cause crashes and I have documented two or three of them. There is a host of things that cause crashes and I think we all know that. One of the important things for those who are going through training is that they must not be allowed to pass the course unless they can meet the required standard for operational skills of machines. I have the feeling that there is a little tendency at present

to let some people through rather than have an adverse response in their feedback sheet and that is putting people at risk.

Ms FORREST - To which course are you referring?

Mr THOMPSON - Learners and provisional.

CHAIR - It seems to be the opposite with learner drivers seeking motor vehicle licences.

Mr THOMPSON - It seems to be?

CHAIR - The opposite. They knock people back for trivial matters.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, they do and the point is that the eight-and-a-half years we were doing it, we did knock people back because people who were not able to demonstrate the control skills should not be on the road. That is something that I wanted you to be aware of because motorcycles are exposed vehicles, people can be injured. There is very little room for error on a motorcycle, and if people are being allowed to go through the course and are given the nod, or the benefit of doubt then they are at risk and so are other people on the road. That statement and view is a precursor to the fact that there needs to be very thorough auditing of what is going on in the Motorcycle Rider Training Scheme.

Why do I feel concerned? You may say that Brendan is a bit unhappy because he is not doing the job. Obviously, there is disappointment that we do not do the training now, that is human nature. However, over the period that I did it I recruited probably 100 people and 40 of them went to the new provider. The feedback that I have had from them is not very complimentary about standards. It is more about a process. The difference between a process and meeting standards is very significant.

CHAIR - The process being just to pass the licence.

Mr THOMPSON - You have to do it. It is a requirement. As long as you come along and you look half like you are alright, you are right. That is a better outcome for some people than saying to them they cannot reach the standard and need some further training. They react badly quite often to the fact that they have not been able to get there the first time. I am using that as a valid reason to suggest that there has to be a very thorough auditing of what goes on. There is an exit test at the provisional level for motorcycle riders who go to training and it is a once-only attempt. I am hearing that some people are being granted several attempts.

CHAIR - It is a once-only attempt, so if they fail once they should not be allowed to apply again. Why?

Mr THOMPSON - That is right. They have to come back and retest.

CHAIR - Oh, yes.

Mr THOMPSON - The exit test, called the MOST, Motorcycle Operators Skills Test, is there to confirm finally that after two training courses the people who are going to get a motorcycle licence in this State have the operational skills that are required.

Ms FORREST - What I think was suggested, Mr Wing, was that they should be put to the test and if they did not pass they have to go back and retrain, but they were given two or three times to take that test at that time to get it right.

CHAIR - At the same time?

Mr THOMPSON - I do not want to sound like I am someone who is having a go at someone else, but the people who went and worked for the new provider were my staff who were required to operate at a standard, a level.

Mr HARRISS - Brendan, I presume there are a number of motorcycle associations in this State. I can recall the Legislative Council being lobbied by Shaun Lennard on various occasions in regard to motorcycle issues. Are you aware whether his organisation or any others are dissatisfied with the current process?

Mr THOMPSON - I don't know; I have not heard anything from them.

Mr HARRISS - I presume you are aware of the process which was used to award the tender to the Victorian company because you submitted your tender for that particular project.

Mr THOMPSON - I am very familiar with it.

Mr HARRISS - Are you satisfied that it was a reasonable process -

Mr THOMPSON - No.

Mr HARRISS - properly identified -

Mr THOMPSON - No.

Mr HARRISS - examining body or testing training body? What were the deficiencies?

Mr THOMPSON - I need to be careful about what I say because there are things that I have come across since it happened and things that I encountered at the time it happened which cast serious doubts in my mind as to the integrity of the process.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, on behalf of the committee, I suppose you can be assured you are protected by parliamentary privilege so you can't be challenged by anybody for defamation. If your recall is that of a factual nature you are entitled, if you wish, to share that with the committee.

Mr THOMPSON - We had a post-tender meeting with the Registrar of Motor Vehicles probably six months after the announcement of who was the successful tenderer -

CHAIR - Excuse me for a moment, Mr Fewkes has just pointed out that if you wanted to give any evidence in camera then you can make application for that, but as Mr Harriss has pointed out, you are protected by parliamentary privilege from anything that may otherwise be considered defamatory.

Mr THOMPSON - I don't think there are any issues about me stating the same concerns that I spoke of at the post-tender meeting -

CHAIR - No.

Mr THOMPSON - with an auditor there who said to me, 'You won't catch them out on process but I can see why you are upset about the quality of the decision'.

In February 2006 we tendered for the contract. At one period late in that month, shortly before a State election, a decision was made and the decision was that Stay Upright had been unsuccessful. I was in Hobart that day and I arranged to speak to Richard Fowler, who is the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, and asked why somebody else had been chosen. He said to me, 'You are not a full-time manager', and I said I was. 'Ah, we will cross that off', so at the post-tender meeting that argument didn't appear.

It seems to me, to cut a long story short, a case was made to support a wider agenda to do with truck training.

Ms FORREST - You did say these were truck-training people who got the tender.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Not motorcycle people.

Mr THOMPSON - That is right. They do motorcycle training in Victoria but it is a very, very small part of their business and not their core business. That is as it might be. I wouldn't argue with that side of it but there was not enough substance in the reasons that were put forward for changing the provider to have done this, as I said in the post-tender meeting.

As we let things cool a little bit and we had a look at DECA Training's balance sheet we found that a former commissioner of transport is a board member -

Mr HARRISS - Commissioner of Transport in Tasmania?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, there wasn't much substance to the whole thing.

CHAIR - Who was that?

Mr THOMPSON - I can't remember his name but it is certainly in the balance sheet in the public records.

Mr HARRISS - How do you spell DECA?

Mr THOMPSON - DECA, Driver Education Centre of Australia, and they are based in Shepparton. They train drivers of heavy vehicles, emergency vehicles. I did hear that a former commissioner of transport had been lobbying the department on behalf of DECA -

CHAIR - The same one who was a director?

Mr THOMPSON - I am not sure if it was the same one, but a former one.

Ms FORREST - The Commissioner of Transport at the time was on the -

Mr THOMPSON - No, a former.

Ms FORREST - Who was on the board of DECA?

Mr THOMPSON - A former commissioner of transport was on the board of DECA and that was in their documents.

Ms FORREST - Okay.

CHAIR - Is that company, DECA, now doing the training of motorcyclists?

Mr THOMPSON - That's right, yes.

Mr HARRISS - It is an exclusive contract.

Mr THOMPSON - It is a monopoly. Let me sum this up. Since the change of provider, regardless of whether I have views as to the appropriateness of the decision, the quality of training has dropped and so has the quality of the delivery. In other words, the service is not being provided where it formerly was as the contract requires, and that is very clear from evidence in the papers, people ringing us saying, 'How do I get a course in Scottsdale or St Marys; why can't you guys do it?'

I will give you an example of the kind of thing that goes on and I am not pulling punches on this one because I know the north-east area, I have trained people there for 14 years. In the six months prior to the change of provider, in Scottsdale and St Marys there were eight or nine courses. In the six months following there was one, and the excuse put forward was that there was not enough demand. What is happening is manipulation of the situation. If you rang in, Paul, and said you would like to do a training course at Scottsdale, or your son would, you would be told, 'We do not have any numbers booked', and every caller gets that answer, so there never are any numbers booked.

Ms FORREST - I can verify that. My daughter had the same experience when trying to book.

Mr THOMPSON - Thank you very much.

CHAIR - In Scottsdale?

Ms FORREST - No. She was trying to book in Launceston where she lives and had to come to Penguin to do it because that was the course that was running at the time.

Mr THOMPSON - I would need a day with you people to take you through everything. There are contract requirements for waiting periods.

CHAIR - As I am concerned, take your time. Does anybody have a commitment? No, you take whatever time you need. Do not feel under pressure.

Mr THOMPSON - It is impossible to distance myself from my personal feelings but my commitment to rider safety is a very serious and longstanding one. When I see it all fall apart, particularly when I know the background information, as to how the decision might have been made, I feel really really passionate about it.

CHAIR - By whom was it made?

Mr THOMPSON - It was made by a committee.

CHAIR - Do you know what the composition of that committee was?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes I do.

CHAIR - Can you give us that?

Mr THOMPSON - The committee was the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, Richard Fowler.

Mr HARRISS - Who, by your evidence earlier, indicated to you he could understand why you were somewhat miffed.

Mr THOMPSON - Absolutely. 'Disappointed' is the word I use officially. There are other words but that is the official one.

CHAIR - We have deleted your thoughts from the transcript.

Laughter.

Mr HARRISS - You were going to list the other members of that committee.

Mr THOMPSON - There was Maree Hoyle, a project officer appointed by the department who, to the best of my knowledge, had no previous experience in motorcycle training or anything to do with it. She used me as a very useful resource to obtain information about how the scheme worked, how you would put a tender together and even used some of our documentation wording to put it together, which I gave freely because I did not feel there were any real issues there.

Shaun Lennard was a member of the committee. There was supposed to be an MRA member on the committee but there wasn't so another person from the Motorcycle Council was on the committee. To the best of my knowledge the first four people I have mentioned have no experience whatsoever with motorcycle training and I seriously doubt whether the Motorcycle Council members have actually ever done a course of any kind. They were charged with making a decision about something that I feel made Tasmania look a little bit foolish. There was nobody in Tasmania with the capability to do it and the experience.

Ms FORREST - You have the capability to do it, you are saying?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes.

Ms FORREST - There was no-one else in Tasmania besides you, is that what you are saying?

Mr THOMPSON - No. The other member was a guy called Ray Newland who was previously running the VicRoads scheme in Victoria before that was privatised. We have heard that a decision was made to stay with Stay Upright but it was overturned overnight.

Ms FORREST - Who informed you of that?

Mr THOMPSON - I am not at liberty to say who informed me of that. You can scratch it out if you wish to but I would not be saying it unless I believed it was right.

Ms FORREST - Could I just dig a little bit deeper there.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, go on, keep digging.

Ms FORREST - You were led to believe that Stay Upright had been awarded the contract?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes

Ms FORREST - What led you to believe that?

Mr THOMPSON - We were told by a person who was in a position to know that after presentations by each party that made the short list a decision was made by the group and then it was overturned.

Ms FORREST - Are you willing to say in camera who that is?

Mr THOMPSON - No, because it is something probably that I should not have said, but I know.

Ms FORREST - You were informed that their decision was that Stay Upright were going to be awarded the contract and within 24 hours you were informed by somebody else that that was not the case?

Mr THOMPSON - After the tender process had happened. The decision was made after the presentations to the committee that they would retain Stay Upright as the provider, and overnight it was turned over.

I raised that in the post-tender meeting and the Registrar said that he would answer that in another forum if he needed to.

Mr DEAN - Brendan, how long had you been operating for in the position in Stay Upright; how long had you had the contract?

Mr THOMPSON - Eight-and-a-half years.

Ms FORREST - Do you suggest we should call the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to get an answer?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, you should; why shouldn't you? He was not able to answer it, along with several other questions when he was asked at the post-tender meeting, nor was he interested in answering.

CHAIR - Mr Fewkes has just drawn attention to the fact that privilege is provided, provided the evidence is within the terms of reference. We have to make sure that it is within the terms of reference. I was not aware of that. That is definitely so, is it?

Mr DEAN - On 'matters incidental thereto'?

CHAIR - I think it comes within 'matters incidental thereto'.

Mr DEAN - I think it would do, Mr Chairman, because it is a part of training in this State. It is looking at motorcycle riders as well, which is one of the terms of reference.

Ms FORREST - It is a compulsory aspect of getting a licence to ride a motorbike.

CHAIR - And the quality of the decision making.

Mr DEAN - That's right.

Mr THOMPSON - I think that is where I am coming down - it is the quality of the decision. In the end, we cannot change that decision - no-one can.

CHAIR - It relates also to the quality of the decision-making in terms of registration.

Mr THOMPSON - Let me backtrack a little bit. I do not believe the panel that made the decision were appropriately qualified to make it. It was more political, let us get those together who are interested in this and if they are part of the decision they cannot complain, which is the oldest political trick around.

If they are knocking on your door saying, 'We do not want this Bryan Green as minister,' and you are listening to them, they would probably want to do that no matter who the provider was that was chosen, so get them in and sit them around the table and say, 'Well now you are part of the decision', make that decision and they cannot complain if they were part of it. That makes good political sense.

Ms FORREST - Was the Registrar of Motor Vehicles at the time that this occurred the same person now?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, it is, I am sure it is. Richard is still there. Richard assured me that it was nothing personal. He even offered to give us a reference. His umbrella statement was that DECA offered a better deal. It certainly has not turned out that way and some of the things that were put together to make the case - quite important things - were not even correct.

CHAIR - What was the committee called?

Mr THOMPSON - I do not know that it had a name.

Mr DEAN - Is there statistical data since they have been there to show that they have given better training or improved the services? Are there fewer crashes now?

Mr THOMPSON - No, I do not know what statistics have been gathered; I would not know. I am very concerned about the need for auditing because, beyond the training of the actual people, there are waiting-list requirements that the contract requires to be met.

For example, it is eight weeks, and nobody in any part of the State should wait more than eight weeks to receive training once they apply for it. In the country that may mean that from time to time there will only be three or four on a course, not five or six, which is a more commercially viable number than three or four. But when that happens the provider has to run the course so that the waiting times are not exceeded. I know that there have been double courses run where there have been 12 people on a course. Those are the kind of things that we were audited on. It is really important that when people exit the training they have reached the standard and that it hasn't been a snow job - 'Oh well, Johnnie looks like a sensible young guy.' It can't happen like that.

CHAIR - Do you happen to know what amount the other successful company tendered for compared with what you tendered?

Mr THOMPSON - From memory, for learners it was identical.

CHAIR - Two companies identical?

Mr THOMPSON - On learners. I just can't recall what happened with provisional. I do believe they were slightly cheaper but then if you had to go back for a re-test they were dearer.

CHAIR - So it wasn't a big factor.

Mr THOMPSON - No. Richard assured me that it wasn't a price issue.

CHAIR - I see.

Mr THOMPSON - He assured me of that. But I don't want to dwell forever on what might appear to be sour grapes. My main concern is that what's happening now to a member of the public who makes a phone call or gets on the Internet and says, 'I want to do a learner course', compared to what was happening before. My overall view is that the quality of training has dropped and the service delivery is not being provided as well as it was.

Mr HARRISS - On that issue, then, Mr Chairman, are there any performance criteria which have been set down pre-tender or post-tender which the service provider is obliged to comply with?

Mr THOMPSON - Maximum numbers on a course, maximum waiting period, instructor qualifications - there is a host of things that the contract requires.

Mr HARRISS - To your knowledge, are they being complied with?

Mr THOMPSON - I can tell you straight up, as I've said, the delivery of service in Scottsdale and St Mary's isn't up to the standard that I would expect. That's why I'm suggesting, to be independent about it, that somebody who's not involved with DIER, DECA, Stay Upright or anybody else, gets hold of the contract and audits it thoroughly so there is no suggestion of any conflict of interest about whether it is happening the way it should or not.

CHAIR - So you were told finance wasn't a factor?

Mr THOMPSON - That's right, I was told that.

CHAIR - Were you told what was a factor? Were you given any reasons?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, there were reasons. The first one, as I remember, was that I was not a full-time manager.

CHAIR - And that was deleted?

Mr THOMPSON - I asked them how they knew that. 'Well, we just knew.' 'Well, you didn't ask me and you're incorrect.' 'Oh' - so that disappears.

Mr HARRISS - Was that identified as a prerequisite?

Mr THOMPSON - No, and the man that replaced me had never ridden a motorbike, didn't hold a licence and had no experience in training. That is a fact. I'm feeling a little bit sore at this point, you know, hearing that.

Ms FORREST - Were there any other reasons given for your not being awarded the contract?

Mr THOMPSON - There were about three or four reasons. Another one that I recall was that I wasn't providing training in Zeehan. I said, 'Well, Richard, we all sat on the committee two or three years ago and, with the help of Tasmania Police, decided that there wasn't a need to deliver training in Rosebery and Zeehan and you were part of that.' I got no answer.

CHAIR - Are they providing it in Zeehan now?

Mr THOMPSON - The contract requires them to; I don't know. I've had feedback from your end similar to what I get from the north-east. People ring us and ask, 'Why can't you do the training; why can't Stay Upright do the training?' 'Well, we don't have the contract and we're not accredited to issue certificates or the permits.' So we can't do it, but as I've said in this document, the Commissioner for Transport has the authority to appoint another provider or providers without the need for any legislation. At the post-tender meeting I asked Richard whether that would be considered. I was told, 'No, we will be staying with one provider for this contract'. This contract has an initial three-year period which ends next June. A decision has to be made by DIER as to whether the current provider gets another period of two years. I believe that is what it was in the

tender document. Another question that I asked was, 'Have any of the original tender criteria been changed?' 'No'. Well, I am not satisfied that that is the case.

Ms FORREST - Just to clarify, when the tender went out for the contract, did it state at that time there would be one provider or was there capacity for another?

Mr THOMPSON - No, there was capacity for another one.

Ms FORREST - The decision was made just to engage the one. I noted what you said about people asking you whether you can do the training and you say that you cannot. You could do it physically; you have the skills.

Mr THOMPSON - Physically, yes. I could.

Ms FORREST - But if you did it you would not have the appropriate certification that person could take to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to get their licence. Is that the case?

Mr THOMPSON - That is right. The accredited provider, and in this case there is only one, has the authority of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to issue certificates which people who pass the courses take to Service Tasmania and present. Then they do the paperwork, get their plastic and they can ride. We used to do that. We had books of certificates and so on. That was the process.

Victoria was like Tasmania. They had part of their VicRoads system that looked after motorcycle training, as we did here. We privatised ours 1 January 1998 and stayed with one provider, which was Stay Upright. Then, when VicRoads privatised theirs they accredited a number of providers who have to meet a standard and they audited just like the single provider we have here. That provides access to training over a wider area. It provides shorter waiting periods. So instead of waiting 12 weeks you will be right inside the maximum easily. It will have some bearing on the price.

Mr DEAN - Does it provide competition in how it is set?

Mr THOMPSON - No, you are not allowed to set it.

Ms FORREST - Is there anything in Victoria that suggests that having a number of providers does improve the quality of the training?

Mr THOMPSON - I could not answer that either way. I have not heard any comment about it lowering or raising the standard because VicRoads audits everyone. Instead of auditing one provider, VicRoads audits several providers.

Mr DEAN - That gives protection, doesn't it, that a good standard is being provided?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes. You can put a provider in, let them loose and never go near them and things will fall. Of course they will. That is what I am concerned about. If there is a proper auditing process by somebody who knows what they are doing and is not part of anything -

Ms FORREST - Independent then?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes - then you will know exactly what is going on. That is how Victoria runs their system. There are about 1 600 learners in Tassie - or there used to be - and about 60 per cent of those come back and get their provisional licence - or used to. So you are looking at about 2 500 people per year who go through the system as it stood at the time we finished. That was pretty consistent. I am really concerned about, not providing it to the country people because Tasmania is full of dirt bikes and people do not have any training.

Mr DEAN - Where do they go? What do they do for their training?

Mr THOMPSON - They do not have any.

Ms FORREST - They are not licensed.

Mr DEAN - They are not licensed and therefore do not have any training.

Mr THOMPSON - It is easy to leave out the country areas because of the distance.

Ms FORREST - There are farm bikes too.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes. We have been involved in the ATV scheme. I run that and it works. If you put people through training it will help to reduce the number of crashes. It will not eliminate them. It is important to understand that in the time you have people with you for training you will show them how to operate the bike; they will show you that they can do it, meet the standards. You take them out on the road and they show you that they can behave safely in traffic, but the final part of competency - attitude - is the most difficult thing to deal with. Because people grow up with certain images in their mind, they will try to emulate them. Some do, some do not. Training will expose them to the correct methods of operating and they will show you they can do it. But changing their attitude - particularly among young people when they are with their peers - is very difficult.

CHAIR - So what effect, Mr Thompson, do you consider this is having or is likely to have on motorcycle and road safety and off-road situations?

Mr THOMPSON - With learners and provisionals we must make sure the standards are met - that people are exiting their training at the required level. There is no benefit of doubt being given to make people happy rather than save their lives, as well as the other things I have mentioned. Then we start looking at the groups of riders that are out there. The second part of my submission is about the older riders - the guys like me.

CHAIR - Can you still ride?

Mr THOMPSON - I still ride - my word, I do.

Ms FORREST - There are a lot of old fellows out there riding bikes.

Mr THOMPSON - Just like me.

CHAIR - More mature fellows. The former Speaker, Frank Madill, is one.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, there are a few about. In later life - maybe when there is more money - people go and buy a motorcycle, particularly if they have had one in the earlier years. It sort of gets in your blood. Then you have a big risk problem there because the machines are very capable - in fact much safer than they ever used to be - but the riders are still back where they were 20 years ago in terms of - 'I might not have ridden for 20 years, but I am going to put my wife or partner or child on the back and we are going for a ride.' You have a huge risk there and it is starting to show nationally in the crash statistics that older riders have problems. In my view that is a group that needs to be targeted more than it is now. The Motorcycle Council and the MAIB put in place a refresher course, which I have referred to in my document. People pay \$50 and they get a day's training. MAIB pays \$130 to the provider - Stay Upright is one - and it is very valuable to the people who attend. The problem is that only a small percentage of the riders who should do it are actually doing it. When some of these people turn up at the training they need training.

Ms FORREST - So effectively someone could have obtained a motorcycle when they were 18 or 19 and then ridden for a few years. Then they had a family so they did not use the bike as much. But when they got to 50 they thought, 'I will get back on that bike' although they had not ridden at all in that time. As long as they have renewed their licence every year, they are okay?

Mr THOMPSON - It is called a 'sleeper licence'. When you look at the population of riders in Tasmania you have those who go through the learner and provisional scheme. That would be recognised as suitable training, obviously. You have those who participate in the refresher scheme as it stands which may be 10 per cent of those riders in that older age group or coming back into riding. What I am proposing is that if you gave notice of, say, 18 months - just for a number - and said, 'To renew your motorcycle licence from that point on you need to produce evidence that you have done a rider training course'. That would then pick up the whole of Tasmania's riding population as having training.

Mr DEAN - As compulsory?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes. It would be helpful to get MAIB to extend their scheme. That would make it easier for people to participate. In my experience there are many riders out there who need to have this, to be honest with you. It is a little difficult because I am in the game and it is our business, but when you see some of them that come to the training, you realise that they need it.

Mr DEAN - On that, and I do not disagree with the compulsory component part of it, are you saying that should apply also after you have had your licence say for 15 years, or 10 years?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, you could finetune it a bit. I am canvassing a fairly broad starting point but you might finetune slightly so that it gives training every 15 years. If people said, 'Damn that, I am not going to do that,' they could not renew their licence. That would eliminate the sleeper licences and as that population passed on, everybody coming through behind them would have gone through the learner and provisional scheme so every rider in Tasmania licensed here would have undergone some training which would

better equip them to ride the machines. You have a gap there at the moment. You have learners and Ps, those doing the refresher scheme and those who have not. I am proposing that those who have not be picked up in a friendly way, given a lead time and told that within two years or when their next renewal comes up they have to produce evidence they have done a course. If they do not produce evidence they will forgo their licence and that would take them out. It is reasonably painless.

Ms FORREST - Is doing a course the same as passing an assessment at the end of the course? Are you saying they need to do a course or should they pass some sort of assessment?

Mr THOMPSON - No, I do not believe they should pass an assessment. The way that it is working at the moment is actually very good, but you have people there who want to be there, who are looking to increase their knowledge and skills on the bikes. They are looking for anything that we can show them that will make them safer. If you bring in something that is compulsory with a lead time and so on, you may need to have some basic skills demonstrated, like braking for example, and safe behaviour on the road, which would bring them pretty much to the level that the provisional riders go out. You would not need to make it quite as detailed but if they were on the road and assessed for their behaviour in traffic on the highway, they could do an emergency stop and a swerve at speed, I believe that would establish a competency that would be reasonable to achieve and with a day's training they could do.

Ms FORREST - How do you think all the bikie organisations would like that? I am not saying they are bad riders, I am just saying that they would have motorcycle licences and would be required to go through the process.

Mr THOMPSON - Let me say that anything like this requires a bit of political courage because you are protecting people from themselves. Somebody back in 1980 or 1981 here in Tasmania had the political courage to put in a learner and provisional scheme. The older people such as us escaped that.

Ms FORREST - I didn't. I had to go through it.

Mr THOMPSON - That is an idea that I have put in my submission. Maybe you would like to think about something like that, but it seems to me there is a group missing out on something that would help them to be less likely to crash and those coming along and doing it now are getting a lot out of it.

Mr DEAN - Is there anything else that you could see making motorbike riding safer, Brendan? Are speed limits alright? Are you comfortable with them? This is what this committee is about.

Ms FORREST - What about the wire barriers?

Mr THOMPSON - The wire barriers are dangerous, absolutely dangerous.

Mr DEAN - You have spoken on that. There is a suggestion that they can insert, I think at the bottom of the wire barriers, something else, another part of it which can take some of the danger away.

Ms FORREST - Some black buffers that are made out of recycled tyres.

Mr THOMPSON - I think wire fences are dangerous in their standard form for motorcyclists.

CHAIR - Road humps are a problem for motorcyclists, aren't they?

Mr THOMPSON - No.

CHAIR - I have been told that.

Mr THOMPSON - What is the purpose of a road hump? To slow the traffic down.

CHAIR - But I have been told that it is more difficult for motorcyclists to get over those than cars.

Mr THOMPSON - I would not support that view.

CHAIR - I see, that is interesting.

Mr THOMPSON - If you have the basic control skills you can ease off the seat a little as you go over and you slow down as everybody else does. I don't think that is an issue.

Mr DEAN - Do you see any other road rules or things that you have thought about for motorcycle riders, like education?

Mr THOMPSON - The power to weight things is a good move and I support that. Nothing else comes to mind.

Mr DEAN - You are riding a cycle so you are the one to -

Mr THOMPSON - Absolutely, all kinds.

Ms FORREST - The motorcyclists travel on some roads that lose their skid resistance over time with heavy vehicles travelling on things like over-inflated tyres and the like. I have quite a few friends who ride bikes and they say that the safest place to ride a bike is right on the outside of the road or right in the middle because when you get in the tyre lanes for cars there tends to be a loss of friction but in the middle there is more likely to be oil on the road. Is that an issue? Is that a reality?

Mr THOMPSON - No, we recommend that riders choose either what we call position one, which is the left-hand wheel mark that a car leaves, or the right-hand wheel mark. They can move across the middle but the least grip area is the middle, on the wear marks is where the grip is. We train people to ride as much as they can in the left-hand wheel track or the right-hand wheel track, not to brake or swerve or accelerate on the middle area where the dirty patch is. If you look at 25 meters up to any intersection there is oil everywhere in the middle part of the lane. The best grip is where the tyres run.

There are a lot of old wives' tales out there to be honest with you and this is where, particularly for the older group of riders, coming to training is an incredible eye-opener for them. You will hear things like, 'I don't use the front brake because it used to throw me off my push bike'. If you are going to try to do an emergency stop with the rear brake, good luck; it is all over. You show them these things, the correct way to use them and their eyes light up. They will say to you, 'I wish I had known about this before'. It is not rocket science but they go away feeling they have learnt something there.

In the older rider refresher courses we do not charge for pillions and we show them how to operate as a team on their bikes so there is no banging of helmets and a domestic when they pull up. This sounds silly but it is true; you show them how to do it and they love it. Seriously, they love it.

Mr DEAN - What about the compulsory lighting of the headlamps?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, it should happen.

Ms FORREST - Are you referring to cars as well as bikes?

Mr DEAN - No, I am talking about motorbikes -

Mr THOMPSON - It should be on.

Mr DEAN - It should be compulsory because currently it is not, is it? I don't think it is compulsory yet?

Mr THOMPSON - I think it was and then it was taken out.

Mr DEAN - I think it is. You are saying it should be compulsory for motorbikes to have the front lights on.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes it should be compulsory because anything that makes other people aware of your presence is an advantage.

Mr DEAN - I reckon it should be compulsory on motorbikes.

Mr THOMPSON - I agree.

Mr DEAN - Two of my sons ride motorbikes and they believe the same.

Mr THOMPSON - Definitely.

Ms FORREST - Why not cars then? I have been accused by someone who has an interest in road safety that I have the worst colour car on the road for visibility. It's purple and unfortunately I cannot get another purple one but I do always have my lights on for that reason. Also, when it is getting close to dusk or dawn cars notoriously don't have their lights on, particularly getting to dusk, because they are not sure when they need to if they have been driving for some distance. If they have to be on then they are on. Do you think it is important for cars or doesn't it matter so much? They are bigger obviously.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, they are bigger. I have never really thought about cars but from the motorcyclists' point of view sitting on a small machine sometimes against a background that makes me invisible, I want everything happening that makes me conspicuous.

If you are talking about adding something to the assessment of drivers in cars to get their licence, one of the most basic things that they could do is a head check, in other words check their blind spot before they pull out or overtake and not rely solely on their mirrors. That should be part of their test when they go with the testing officer. They pull out from the kerb, look in the mirror, check the blind spot, the mirror shows there's nothing there, then they move. When they overtake it is very simple and it has been included in the motorcycle test now. I am assuming you know what I mean.

Ms FORREST - Yes. It was taught in the defensive driving stuff.

Mr THOMPSON - A head check is really vital; that would actually save some crashes between cars and bikes because motorists would be making sure that they did not hit that bike. -

Ms FORREST - Do you think some motorcyclists don't see the cars? We talk about motorcycles being less visible because of their size, and often the riders are wearing dark clothing, leathers and the like, but do you think that sometimes the car may not be seen if it was dark coloured and the light was fading?

Mr THOMPSON - Motorcyclists are not a protected species; they're not blameless; they are you and me. Most of the time I'm in my car, not on my bike. If a motorcyclist doesn't see something it's the motorcyclist's fault. They need to be alert; they are riding a high-risk machine and they need to be switched-on to what they're doing. I've mentioned here that lack of concentration sometimes is an issue for motorcyclists as well as car drivers. They have to be switched-on. I want to make it clear; I'm not saying that motorcyclists are blameless in any way.

CHAIR - They're vulnerable too, aren't they.

Mr THOMPSON - They're vulnerable, and that is one of the drivers for them to be alert and switched-on, and that's part of the training that they get. You can't just expect the rest of the road users to do everything right by them; they won't.

CHAIR - Any further questions? Mr Thompson, do you have any other comments?

Mr THOMPSON - We haven't talked about the off-road side of things.

CHAIR - Yes, what views do you have on that?

Mr THOMPSON - I understood this is where this originally started, the off-road crashes that are happening.

CHAIR - What started that?

Mr DEAN - This committee, you mean?

CHAIR - No, it started on road safety and this formed a part of it.

Mr THOMPSON - In my submission I have said that there's a combination of things that contribute to crashes off-road and that the vast majority of riders in Tasmania of off-road dirt bikes and recreational riders of ATVs, quad bikes, are not trained at all. There's a different set of skills required to handle an off-road bike compared to a road bike. We do dirt training Australia-wide and there's a different set of skills; it's a different environment, there are different control methods used for the machines and there's a group out there that's not being exposed to that. The road riders are, except for the group we mentioned; the dirt riders are not. TAFE, at government instigation, put in place an ATV training scheme for ATV operators. We've done 3 000 over the last few years and that's making a difference, according to TAFE.

Ms FORREST - So these are ATV riders that ride on farms and recreationally?

Mr THOMPSON - No, recreational ones are not included in it. When TAFE originally came to us and asked about training people off-road on the quads, they had some plan but it never came to anything. The workplace operators are the ones that we've trained.

Ms FORREST - So it's only people who are actually in a workplace, whether it be a farm or some other workplace that uses them.

Mr THOMPSON - Timber industry, mining, emergency services; all those sorts of groups that have a duty of care OH & S-wise to train their operators, which the workplace legislation in every State requires them to do, have put people through this and we've done 3 000. In about 2001-2002 there was a spate of deaths here in Tasmania from quad bikes.

Mr DEAN - They went through a rough time.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, and that instigated this need for training. What we're seeing now with the dirt bikes is pretty much a repeat, and there's a need for something to happen about dealing with that and reducing the number of problems with people crashing and killing themselves.

Ms FORREST - Your dirt bikes include the quads as well as your trail bikes and that sort of thing?

Mr THOMPSON - I'm saying recreational ATVs which are the little sporty ones; totally different.

Ms FORREST - They are lighter.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, they are lighter and more powerful. They are the ones that I, assume this committee is focusing on, as well as the dirt bikes, the off-road bikes. They are not licensed but I really think that is about where you have to leave it until you come up with an idea as to how you might get some training in place for them and then establish that they have actually done it. I have put in my submission an approach that would, in my view, deal with that.

Mr DEAN - What are you saying, Brendan, that there should be some form of control over anybody using a four-wheeler or whatever it is on properties and farms and so on?

Mr THOMPSON - What I am saying is that training should be introduced for off-road riders. Match it up with the gun licence requirements. There was nothing in place to do with firearms in this State until we had problems at Port Arthur, which we all know about. You have a group of people out there, not necessarily with firearms but with motorcycles that are not licensed or regulated in any way, and they are potentially lethal.

How do we go about rectifying this?. What we do is put in a training scheme along the lines of the TAFE scheme, and you might use them as an umbrella, I don't know. There is a lot of finetuning and you might need to consider how you did that. Before they can buy a dirt bike people would have to have done the training and produced a certificate just like the learners and Ps do. You might require them to take that to Service Tas and have an off-road licence issued, and I think you could do that, and you could incorporate all ATVs and all dirt bikes under that banner.

Ms FORREST - What about young kids - 12, 13-year-olds? You have a lot of those.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes you do. You need to put a limit on the bikes they can ride.

Ms FORREST - So they should still go through a licensing process?

Mr THOMPSON - They are children, and working with children is another can of worms for trainers.

Ms FORREST - The dad goes out and buys the bike and gets a licence, and maybe it is an off-road licence, as you suggest, and he could buy two. He himself only needs one licence, he could buy three bikes, and he takes his young sons or nephews or whoever out with him. The bikes are all bought legitimately and he is the one with the licence.

Doesn't there need to be something around those kids?

Mr THOMPSON - Yes. If you go back to the gun laws there are certain categories of size, power that are listed on the licence to tell the gun shop or, in this case, the bike shop what this person is authorised to purchase and in what power range.

Ms FORREST - But if a dad is buying the bikes and he is going to let his kids on them, the requirements on his licence will be for him and not for his kids.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, but you would have to say, 'Nathan Fewkes has an off-road licence. He is entitled to purchase one bike and it is in this power range.'

Mr DEAN - Brendon, those same kids are out there driving tractors around at four and five years of age.

Mr THOMPSON - Oh yes.

Mr DEAN - I was one of them. Where do you draw the line?

CHAIR - Seeing the way you have turned out we should encourage it. That is a good result.

Ms FORREST - Do you have a view on the imported Chinese bikes that are coming in that are quite cheap apparently - sold off the back of a truck?

Mr THOMPSON - Workplace Standards would not allow the ATVs that I saw a couple of years ago to be sold. There were canvas straps where you put your feet and when they got a bit rotten in the weather your feet could drop through. The standard of workmanship in them was such that the front wheel came around and hit you on the foot when you turned the bars. I do not know if that has changed. That is not an issue for me, that is an issue for WorkSafe and the authorities that handle those sort of things. I don't know about the quality.

Ms FORREST - You are not aware of the number of these sorts of bikes that may be a bit suspect coming in?

Mr THOMPSON - No. Australia has standards. How well they are checked I don't know.

Mr DEAN - Brendan, with the training you are providing now in that area, what do you provide at the end of that? Do you provide some formal certificate to show they are competent?

Mr THOMPSON - It is called a statement of attainment.

Mr DEAN - Is that TAFE supported?

Mr THOMPSON - In our arrangement with TAFE Tasmania, where we operate for them, they issue the statement of attainment. Stay Upright is a registered training organisation as is TAFE and can issue its own qualifications, the same thing, and that is what we do on the mainland. We issue qualifications for ATVs and dirt bikes.

Mr DEAN - Will polytechnics do the same or the learning enterprise?

Mr THOMPSON - They will have to, whoever takes over will have to.

Mr DEAN - I thought I would throw it in.

Mr THOMPSON - It is a recognised qualification, it is not a certificate of attendance and there is a difference.

Mr DEAN - Is there a difference?

Mr THOMPSON - People are going through training to a standard and, as I said, a different set of skills is required for an off-road motorcycle compared with a road bike in terms of how to turn it or stop it and so on. There are different skills and people are out there with none. It is like we were pre-mandatory learners and Ps. I can remember in the late seventies people were being killed regularly on motorbikes in Tasmania and the scheme which is still in place was put in. We have a history people were getting killed with ATVs in the workplace, the scheme was put in place and according to TAFE it has had a dramatic effect on reducing the casualties.

You have a group out there who are untrained on road bikes, and I have suggested possibly a way we could deal with that, and a group riding dirt bikes with no training who are getting killed and injured I am suggesting that there is a way that you can deal with that.

CHAIR - Yes, and thank you for that. Are there any other questions or closing comments?

Mr THOMPSON - No, I do not think so.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. We have covered a lot in the time and we appreciate your help. Thank you for your views and your detailed submission.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.