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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE MET ON SECOND FLOOR, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, 53 ST JOHN STREET, LAUNCESTON, ON MONDAY, 29 APRIL 2013.

RE: RURAL ROAD SPEED LIMITS

Mr GEOFF PAGE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, PAGE TRANSPORT, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Welcome. This is our second day on the rural road speed limits. We have had one set of hearings in Hobart, and this is day number 2 in Launceston, and our first witness is Mr Geoff Page.

You have given evidence before a parliamentary committee before, haven't you?

Mr PAGE - No.

CHAIR - Okay. Just to inform you; what you say in here before the committee is covered by parliamentary privilege, however, what you say outside may not be covered - as long as you're clear on that.

Mr PAGE - I understand, yes.

Mr FINCH - He has been interviewed outside already. I hope he hasn't put his foot in it.

CHAIR - We just have the one term of reference, as you know, Geoff, and that is the issue of the government's proposed rural road speed limit reduction from 100 kph to 90 kph on sealed roads, and the potential impacts/benefits on communities. We haven't got a formal submission from you, as I understand it.

Mr PAGE - No.

CHAIR - I would ask you to present to us - give us a verbal submission.

Mr PAGE - Thanks, Mr Chairman, and thank you for the opportunity. I, of course, have an interest in this as principal of Page Transport - we have trucks on country roads every day. My main bone of contention with the legislation is; we don't want more legislation - in fact, we want less. We are subject to all manner of truck care, and other programs our drivers have to sit through in their education as livestock transporters. Other industries have similar programs, where they encourage their drivers to drive to the conditions, and also, in our case, to drive with the welfare of the livestock in mind - not stopping quickly or shunting the livestock around corners and doing other sorts of things to upset the balance of the load. We don't see there is any need at all for an extra piece of legislation or more confusion about speed limits.

One of the things I would like to put forward to the committee is the forward movement in vehicle technology. We operate four-deck trailers and these country roads are not B-

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double routes, they are just for ordinary single combination semi-trailers. The braking, the steering, and the maintenance programs those trucks are under have gone forward enormously in the last 20 years - it's just a different beast that we are driving around those roads.

It seems to be a nonsense that we are going backwards in speed, but forwards in safety and technology in those vehicles. We don't see any need whatsoever for that speed limit to be brought back.

People want to make arguments based on the safety issue, and say that dropping speed limits by 10 kph will save 10 lives over the next four years - I think that was the quoted number, and it was along those lines that the minister put in the submission. We wonder where those figures come from, or how exactly that argument is put together. Everybody knows that if you were to drop the speed limit to 40 kph on all roads in Tasmania and have every occupant wear a helmet, we could save lives. What we're talking about here is futile legislation - to try to stop accidents by reducing the speed limit by 10 kph is futile. I think the education of people about country vehicles and roads is a far better way to go.

We participated in a program with the Meander Valley council that was trying to educate people about the potential hazards with school buses, and other road safety risks - what is around the next corner. That was the name of the program; you never know what is around the next corner. Those sorts of initiatives are far better than 'big-stick' approaches, with speed limits being reduced.

We are against further legislation, and we would like to see the committee recommend back to the government that this is not the way forward for road safety on country roads. Hopefully that is the way it will come out at the end, Mr Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Kerry, you have a question first.

Mr FINCH - Could you give me some assessment, please, Geoff, of the condition of the roads that you need to travel. I'm assuming that you travel on a lot of roads that are not highways, and gravel roads and that sort of thing. What is your assessment of the condition of roads in Tasmania?

Mr PAGE - Deteriorating. They are not necessarily better, there is a focus on some upgrades, but there is not - we're talking about farm gate here, so we're talking about every single piece of the road network in Tasmania. That's why the road is there - to get you to the farm gate - and we're noticing deterioration in all of those roads. There are upgrades to the main roads, as we know, and parts of the Mole Creek road are now very good for stability and camber and those sorts of things. Obviously, we've had lots of improvement on the roads at the other side of Burnie through to Smithton; quite a lot of money has been spent on that road. But roads going through to Hamilton, and parts of the Arthur Highway and parts of the Tasman Highway at the other side of Swansea, really are going backwards.

Mr FINCH - What about the situation with gravel roads? The suggestion is that the speed limit there should come down to 80 kph.

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Mr PAGE - Again, it's the same argument, Kerry. It's not a matter of the limits you set on those roads; 80 kph is far too fast for a four-deck load of livestock - of sheep - on some of those gravel roads. You just couldn't physically travel at that speed, so it is nonsense to think that making it 60 or 80 or 100 kph is going to make any difference to the driver. He is going to drive to the conditions, whether it is a gravel road, or a sealed road. It really needs to be taken on a day-to-day basis.

Mr FINCH - You talked about education. What sort of programs do you have for your drivers? Do you stress this? You talked about driving to the conditions? Is that stressed to your drivers?

Mr PAGE - Absolutely. There is a program that's run intermittently - mind you, it hasn't been run for a while - to do with livestock and the care of livestock in the control of the driver. The driver will go to the Powranna saleyards, and he will load his truck with a particular load, assessed by an independent person. This is a state government run program. They will then take the driver for a drive around, do a lap of Cressy and assess how he is looking after the livestock and how he is driving that particular load, and the stability of the truck under his control. If he is going too fast or stopping too quickly; all of those things are assessed. We put our drivers through that program. It is a specific livestock thing; I think it is a very unique product. We are not talking about a load of logs, or general freight, which have a low centre of gravity and are very easy to keep from swaying. It is very specialised. I suppose we'd be the ones that have the least amount of stability and the biggest potential for a roll-over, of any vehicle on the road.

Mr FINCH - In setting the parameters for your drivers, in which they do their work, do you set a time limit on doing a job? For instance, you are leaving here now and we expect you back at three.

Mr PAGE - What we run to, on a daily basis, is the time scale being at the ship by three o'clock in the afternoon. We need all of our cargo to be at Devonport by three o'clock on any given day so, yes, we have to put time and effort into starting times and breaks and those sorts of things that need to be adhered to. Driver fatigue is a whole other story - with log books being enforced for the past 10 years, we've come a long way forward in dealing with that. It must be about six or seven years since log books were made mandatory in Tasmania, so driving hours have now become a big issue. That all relates to driver fatigue and safety in a vehicle and not making mistakes on the roads.

CHAIR - Thanks, Kerry. I remind the committee, and also Geoff - the issue of 80 kph on gravel roads is on not being considered here. We are talking about a reduction from 100 kph to 90 kph on sealed roads. I think most people accept that 80 kph is a -

Ms RATTRAY - Fair speed.

CHAIR - A fair maximum speed on a gravel road. That is not a bone of contention with people out there.

Obviously, you do a lot of interstate stuff with your truck fleet. Are you seeing any moves by other jurisdictions to implement the same sort of overarching - obviously, there are various speed limits in different sections, but are you seeing any overarching speed limit programs?

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Mr PAGE - No, we're not Greg, but, to be fair, we are very unique, aren't we? We look at a district like Deloraine, where every 300 metres to 400 metres or a kilometre, there is another farm gate. When we do a similar job in northern Victoria or southern New South Wales, you're talking 10 km or 15 km between farm gates, so the safety issues are far different, and obviously the road speeds over there are easier to achieve. In Tasmania, it is very difficult with a 41-tonne load to speed up to 100 kph and then stop and go around the next corner. But, to answer your question, no we are not seeing those programs.

The different jurisdictions in Victoria have different attitudes towards heavy vehicles, and New South Wales has a very strict and a very heavily penalised system of monitoring driver hours and vehicle safety and other things. Victoria is a little more lenient. Perhaps they leave us alone a little bit with livestock, but New South Wales is very strict.

CHAIR - Over the past two or three decades, have you had an accident with one of your drivers that was purely related to speeding?

Mr PAGE - Yes.

CHAIR - You have?

Mr PAGE - I have had four roll-overs in Victoria in the last ten years. Three of them were a direct result of speeding - going too fast around a corner. They were all on what you would regard as state highways. One was on the road from Echuca to Melbourne - the Goulburn Valley Highway - and another one was out near Hamilton on the road to Mount Gambier, which again is a state highway. They were just going too fast around a corner with a double deck load of cattle on board.

CHAIR - They would have been 100 kph, 110 kph speed limits?

Mr PAGE - A hundred. All trucks are speed limited to 100 kph. The two roads we are talking about - the limit on the road to Mount Gambier is 100 kph after you leave Colac near Geelong, but the Goulburn Valley Highway is 110 kph from Melbourne right the way through to Echuca. There are many sections between Melbourne and Shepparton that are now four lanes on those highways. That is a country road. There are farms you can turn off into, and abattoirs all along the way that we service and they are serviced by a four-lane highway, so it is a different argument and it is a very different story.

Ms RATTRAY - Thanks, Geoff, for your opening remarks to the committee. I want to explore the consultation process, particularly with significant road users like your company. You would get feedback from your drivers on a daily basis. What sort of consultation has the department or the government undertaken with you, or your business?

Mr PAGE - There has only been one previous invitation to an information evening - and Greg was in attendance - at the Deloraine community centre.

CHAIR - And, of course, we found out about it later.

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Mr PAGE - There you go. That was the only chance for any input, and other heavy vehicle operators and local community people were there. That was the only opportunity, and it was probably two years ago, Greg.

CHAIR - Yes, at least two years ago.

Mr PAGE - Two years or more. That was the only consultation we have had. I can also report that, to my knowledge, there has been no correspondence through our local livestock carriers association. The Tasmanian transport association have had dialogue, and other bits and pieces of information have been fed back to us, but from an industry specific point of view - with livestock transport - there has been no consultation, to my knowledge.

Ms RATTRAY - I pursued a line of questioning in Hobart, when the committee started, about the ability of travelling vehicles to overtake. Personally, as a driver, I feel much safer being able to overtake a vehicle at 100 kph and get back on my side of the road. Do you have any evidence from your drivers that if the limit were reduced - if people were slower overtaking - then potentially there might be some incidents?

Mr PAGE - Our drivers would only be overtaking agricultural machinery or things like that, so that maximum speed would not necessarily be needed for us, but it is a good point when you talk about other motorists being able to get out safely, especially with the power of the cars available today. They can get up to 100 kph very quickly and get past. It is a good point, but not one that would necessarily affect us.

Ms RATTRAY - But your drivers may see instances where people have overtaken your vehicles.

Mr PAGE - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - I have done it myself; I have overtaken one of your vehicles and attempted to get back onto my side of the road as quickly as possible.

Mr PAGE - The point you make is interesting, because our trucks, with the stability issues they have, are quite slow in corners and in deceleration, but they're very quick to get back up to speed, insofar as they are 550 horsepower and they are vehicles that can travel quickly up to speed. If a car driver isn't able to get up to 100 kph, you would find that our truck would get to 90 kph very quickly, and you would have much more limited opportunities to overtake. I think your point is very valid.

Ms RATTRAY - Obviously a point that you share, but others who are making the rules don't share my concerns.

Mr PAGE - Well, that may well be the case. Rules are for honest guys.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr DEAN - Geoff, if they downgrade the speed limit to 90 kph on sealed rural roads, is there any reason why they shouldn't downgrade truck limits to 80 kph? You can only travel

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100 kph now on 110 kph roads, so if the limit is 90 kph, should it be reduced to 80 kph for trucks? That matter has come up.

Mr PAGE - Why not make it 50 kph? Numbers are just numbers. As I said, I wouldn't have a problem so much with that. I would be worried about being booked for speeding, because there are very few roads that I would regard as country roads. By definition, there are three or four different roads in Tasmania. There is the main highway, there are state highways, there are council sealed roads and gravel roads. If we're talking here about all country roads, are we talking about sections of the Lake Highway? Are we talking about sections of the Esk Main Road? These are the sorts of things that I don't know, and I don't know whether the committee has a firm map now - whether or not there are numbers on the pages, or highlighted marks as to which areas you're talking about.

In general, there is just no point to it. There's no point to having an extra piece of legislation. More signage, and more confusion - for no real benefit.

Mr DEAN - There ought to be more emphasis placed on education about the hazards and all of those sorts of things?

Mr PAGE - There is nothing wrong with hazard signage and those sorts of things, especially for tourists. Money might be better spent on line marking and advisory signage.

Mr DEAN - On the figures you referred to - the number of crashes you've been involved in where speed has been a factor - we've questioned the department on that, and we've asked for statistical data to be provided to us in relation to that, so hopefully we will get that shortly.

Mr PAGE - In heavy vehicles, I can tell you there have been four roll-overs in Tasmania in the livestock industry, in about the last five or six years. Two of them happened on the roundabout at Sulphur Creek, on the main highway, coming from four lanes into that roundabout. One of them was one of our trailers, not one of our trucks, and another one was one of our colleagues. So, two of them fell over there, on basically a four-lane highway. Certainly, there was a country road accident. Another one was on a straight piece of road, which wasn't a roll-over. It was an accident with a livestock truck at the top of a hill, just past the Christmas Hills raspberry farm. The country road issue is not a factor for roll-overs of heavy vehicles with potentially unstable loads.

Mr DEAN - It has been suggested to us that this is probably an easy way out for the state government. In other words they see this as an easy fix for what they consider to be an issue, although I have doubts about that, and their statistics. I have questioned that. They won't have to put so much money into maintenance of the roads and bringing the roads up to better condition. If the speed limit is reduced to 90 kph, then less maintenance - less work - is required of them. The roundabout at Sulphur Creek - is there evidence to suggest that the camber on the roundabout is wrong, and that may be contributing to problems? Do you have any comment on that?

Mr PAGE - Yes and no. It was just a speed thing again. It's probably a difference between 15 kph and 25 kph. That's an unnecessary roundabout, by the way. It only services a small number of people at Sulphur Creek. But I probably need to be - I suppose - a little

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diplomatic, and declare my pecuniary interest in the politics of all of this, and try not to comment too much on the actions of the state government. I doubt very much whether the motivation is to get out of spending money on roads. My problem with the state government is their obsession with extra legislation and their need to be seen to be doing something. I think this smacks of that. We all know this state, and the country, are out of money, but I doubt whether avoiding spending money on roads is the cause of this proposal.

Mr DEAN - Perhaps more policing is required, or more education is required or hazard identification is necessary. Perhaps these are the issues we should be looking at.

Mr PAGE - Well, perhaps so. But, I was travelling to Devonport yesterday and a police car travelling in front of me all of a sudden did a circuit, put the lights on, chased after a guy who was obviously doing 120 kph or so at the bottom of the Deloraine hill. When you come off the top of the Deloraine hill it is very very difficult to maintain 110 kph, as people know. Even though there is no excuse for speeding that, to me, is not the policing we are really after.

Those police officers' time would be better spent on the Mole Creek Road or the Lake Highway or other areas where we need to curb speed. Who is directing those police to chase people on a safe piece of road, when we all know there are other roads that need supervision? We do not have any problem with speed cameras or other things being set up on country roads.

Our drivers are all speed limited to 100 kph - if there is a safety benefit to the travelling public, then put the police on the roads that need them.

Mr DEAN - Thanks, Geoff.

CHAIR - If speed limits are reduced from 100 kph to 90 kph, do you see an economic disbenefit for rural and regional Tasmania, in that it is going to take longer to move stock, produce, or whatever, around the countryside? It is going to make some difference to travel times, obviously.

Mr PAGE - Yes, it is just another impediment; it is just another rule, or regulation, that drivers will be frustrated with and we think it is unnecessary from that point of view. The case could be made that, for a lot the country roads, it won't make much difference.

CHAIR - Because people drive to the conditions and they are not doing over 90 kph anyway.

Mr PAGE - They are not worried about that, yes.

CHAIR - Without trying to put words in your mouth, a lot of the northern Midlands roads are open, and straight, and it is quite safe to travel at 100 kph without causing any issues.

Mr PAGE - Absolutely. Many of those sections of road, like the Nile main road, or any of those sections out towards Campbelltown, are very open, and quite wide - even some of the gravel ones. They are quite wide and it is quite safe to travel at 100 kph, so it is back to the same old point.

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CHAIR - It is interesting that the department did their trials on the Tasman Peninsula and in Kingborough. I would suggest to you that the terrain and the topography of those two municipalities would make it unsafe to travel above 90 kph most of the time. In fact, it could be back around 80 kph.

Mr PAGE - Almost all of the Arthur Highway from Copping through to Dunalley would be in that category, yes. And, when you talk about parts of the Lake Highway through to Hamilton, you just can't do 100 kph.

CHAIR - Have you seen the map? I think Tania has it.

Mr PAGE - No I haven't.

CHAIR - That was presented to us and tabled last time. It is quite an interesting map.

Ms RATTRAY - You might like to have a quick look.

Mr PAGE - It gives you the exclusions, does it, rather than the exceptions?

CHAIR - Yes. It shows what is proposed.

Ms RATTRAY - The pink highlighters are my roads, Geoff, so that is why they have been highlighted.

CHAIR - That is the type of thing you probably have to look at for a while and consider, but there are obviously roads there that may or may not be -

Mr PAGE - This is a draft for the future?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - We could make a copy of that available.

Mr PAGE - I would love to see that. I would love to get feedback from the drivers, too, because they would have some comments to make.

Mr FINCH - You said, Geoff, there are roads you cannot do 100 kph on anyway, when you are driving to the conditions. I wonder about tourists who come to the state, who have no concept of what the roads are like in Tasmania. They think the roads are going to be the same as on the mainland, and they set their timetables accordingly, and, of course, they can't meet them. I wonder whether setting those roads that need it at 90 kph is better for safety. I am particularly thinking of people unfamiliar with those roads, such as tourists.

Mr PAGE - You've got a point, Kerry. That is probably the only net benefit I can see from any of this - that it advises the tourists. But, they'll find themselves in the same boat, won't they? They won't be able to travel at 90 kph on parts of those roads. I don't think the setting of a 10 kph less speed limit, in that case, is going to make safety any better. It just seems to be that tourists, especially international tourists, have a problem. My father-in-law used to have a rental car company and he could identify exactly what was

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going to happen with drivers before they left his yard. There is a problem there and I'm not sure what is being done to address it, but let's leave it at that.

Ms RATTRAY - Keep them off gravel roads for a start.

Mr PAGE - Is that still rental car policy?

Ms RATTRAY - I believe so.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr DEAN - The entire Lyell Highway, I think, is identified for 90 kph. Am I colour-blind? That's the way I read it.

Mr PAGE - Yes, it is.

Ms RATTRAY - Lake Leake Highway?

Mr DEAN - It seems to me to be a -

Mr PAGE - Lake Leake Road is a B-double route at the moment and we're doing walnuts from Swansea to Devonport. The time sensitivity is that those walnuts have to be at the ship by three o'clock. That's talking about \$30 000 or \$40 000 worth of product on each truck. If it misses a day, it spoils. On a road like Lake Leake - the chairman of the Public Works Committee that built that road about 22 or 23 years ago did a really good job. It is a very good piece of road and very capable of 100 kph for trucks. Our B-doubles regularly travel that road at 100 kph. Sure, from Lake Leake down into Swansea you can't but -

Mr DEAN - There are parts of the Lyell Highway that are suitable for 100 kph as well.

Mr PAGE - That is massive overkill, when I look at that map.

Ms RATTRAY - Any comment on that east coast section, from the Falmouth turn-off?

Mr PAGE - Falmouth turn-off - there is not a better piece of road in Tasmania, is there? It is just fantastic. Not that we travel it that much. There is not a lot of livestock in there; there is a little bit around Seymour.

Mr DEAN - Better roads and lower speed limits; I can't understand it.

Mr PAGE - Better roads, better trucks, better educated drivers and fatigue management; all those things are in place, yet we are going to drop the speed limit. It doesn't seem right.

Mr FINCH - Geoff, you mentioned earlier that education is a better way to go. Just enlighten me, please. I have never driven a truck for a living. How do drivers get a sense of what's happening behind them? Do they worry about what's happening behind them?

Mr DEAN - Not a lot. Sorry.

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Mr FINCH - Do they use their rear vision mirror? Do they have a sense, if they are coming onto a straight stretch of road, that they might need to create opportunities for cars to pass, particularly if they have a long line of cars behind them.

Mr PAGE - You are probably showing your age here, Kerry.

Laughter.

Mr PAGE - I was in the truck yesterday and when I pulled out of the Deloraine roundabout and put my foot down, the cars were struggling to keep up with me. I have got 550 horsepower on a partly laden truck. So, the situation of trucks holding up traffic these days, especially in our fleet, just doesn't happen unless it's on a really windy, really slow piece of road. This speed limit reduction won't help those situations.

The old farm truck from time to time will hold people up and I understand that they are a consideration. But one part of our drivers' training is that driving a heavy vehicle is a bit like shipping. If you and I are out catching a flathead and the Spirit of Tasmania comes along, we give way. That is basically the way they are taught with heavy vehicles. If they need to get out of a passing lane, they should put their indicator on, be positive, and change lanes. Cars have the ability to stop and change direction, so they should be giving way to the heavy vehicles. Not to be discourteous, but they should understand that heavy vehicles have the potential to cause a far, far bigger accident or get into a lot more trouble than smaller vehicles. Heavy vehicle drivers shouldn't be getting over onto the shoulder and letting people go past, that's not how they're instructed to drive - that's a very unsafe practice. As we know on our highways there are very few opportunities - you wouldn't have an opportunity, with a 16-metre rig, for many cars to get past, at the speed they're travelling.

It's an interesting point you raise, but I just don't think it's an issue in our case - that our drivers would need to know. But knowing what's behind you, and knowing what's about is how they drive - there's no doubt about it. And, trucks have the power now to mitigate traffic jams.

Mr FINCH - Geoff, it's hard not to show my age. You only have to look at me.

Mr DEAN - On that point, Geoff, it used to be a habit of truck drivers, going back a number of years ago, to indicate whether it's clear ahead for a car to go past. I notice now that's not done at all - I guess drivers are instructed not to do that.

Mr PAGE - Yes. We don't want liability for an accident that might happen. I suppose that's common courtesy, but things like that have gone by the wayside. When you look at sections of the Lake Leake road, especially round Windfalls and those sorts of areas, there they're big and open, and drivers can make that decision for themselves.

CHAIR - Referring to the Arthur Highway again, Geoff, the Public Works Committee recently approved some quite extensive improvements to that road. To summarise then, you're saying your company, having had a lot of experience in the heavy transport business, is not supportive of the regulations. You think there are better education programs that can be provided for drivers, and better line markings, and I think -

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Mr PAGE - Hazard signage.

CHAIR - Hazard signage or whatever, which is important, for tourists as well. Also, the technology of heavy vehicles has improved so much over so many years, and this is an overreaction from the state government -

Mr PAGE - In fact, we would advocate to bring more standardisation into speed limits in country areas. In towns like Mole Creek, Chudleigh, and Avoca, for example, the 50 kph, 60 kph, 70 kph and 80 kph limits should go by the wayside. In country towns we should reduce the speed limit to 50 kph or 60 kph, then that should be it, from town boundary to town boundary. We don't want 80 kph and 70 kph limits and confusion like that. It feeds into some safety issues, where people think they are supposed to be doing 80 kph but they're within a town boundary and they have missed a sign.

Places like Chudleigh or Mole Creek - I know I'm going back to that area again, but they're slow towns - they've got corners in them. Really, 50 kph is an ample speed through any of those towns, and it should be a standard thing. I think it probably is in those towns, so I'm probably not giving a good example, but I know, when you look at Exeter and along the West Tamar Highway, Kerry, you've got numbers flashing up all the time.

Why not make it 60 kph from the bridge right through to the end of Riverside and through to Gormanston Road. That might not suit everybody, but from my point of view it would save a lot of -

Ms RATTRAY - It's just consistency, isn't it?

Mr PAGE - It is.

CHAIR - Any more question from the committee for Geoff? If not, Geoff, would you like to make a closing statement?

Mr PAGE - I am appreciative of the invitation, thanks, and good luck with your endeavours.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr TERRENCE OLIVER EATON, TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ENGINEER, AND **Mr ADAM WILSON**, GENERAL MANAGER, NORTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Thank you very much, gentlemen. Have either of you given evidence before a parliamentary committee before?

Mr WILSON - Yes, for water and sewerage.

CHAIR - Just to remind you that whatever you say in the committee hearings is covered by parliamentary privilege. However what you say outside the hearings may not be. Of course we have the one term of reference as you know and we have a submission from you. Thank you very much - it is quite an extensive submission. I would like to invite either of you to speak first to that submission and then I will open it up to the committee for some questions.

Mr WILSON - I will hand over to Mr Eaton. He is our traffic engineer at Northern Midlands. He has been there for a number of years and he understands our road network very well - the number of people using the network, the size of the network compared to the rest of the state, some traffic issues that have occurred over time, and fatalities.

CHAIR - Yes, thanks Terry.

Mr EATON - One of the issues that has concerned council is; we have made submissions right from the beginning of this process when they were called for and I have personally made submissions, but there is no response from the recipients - from DIER and the Road Safety Advisory Council. Basically your information goes in and you assume it is received.

CHAIR - You have heard nothing back?

Mr EATON - You hear nothing back. In our particular case, we attended two information sessions, but clearly by that time the proposal was well and truly in place. I attended one session at the Northern Midlands council, and another one at the tram sheds.

Clearly the department was not prepared to take on board any issues or any concerns that were raised. This was the proposal, they were going ahead, and they believed it was right - and there is no argument that they are sincere in that belief. However, our concern was - and it was raised fairly early - that there is no specific evidence our road network is unsafe.

The original proposal was to put it on all council roads. Then, following the RACT's intervention, the proposal was to put it on selected roads. Then they have come up with some road design standards that are totally beyond the capacity, not only of the councils but also of the state, to put in place.

I asked about the veracity of these particular design standards, and clearly they are design standards that relate to the ability to drive at 100 kph at all times, everywhere. With our topography, and with our financial situation, that is an impossibility. The

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Northern Midlands area has long stretches of straight road, and tight curves. In my mind, it comes back to the philosophical issue: do we drive to the conditions or do we advise drivers you can drive at this maximum speed everywhere, in which case we have to reduce the speed.

One could say a lot of our lesser roads are no safer at 90 kph than they are at 100 kph, because they are probably built to a 60-kph standard, so it is really sort of playing around the edges. Many of our alderman travel long distances; they represent a fairly large regional area. Clearly they have an appreciation of safe driving, and they can't see the merits in this proposal.

I asked for a breakdown of accidents on rural roads, by type of accidents, and it was very difficult to get that information. In recent times I have received some of it. If you look at our Northern Midland area, we've got something like 7 per cent of the local road network - the council maintained network - and we've got about 3 per cent of the accidents. Effectively, we are twice as safe as the average. If that's the case, why is this default limit being imposed on rural people with? Those questions make us ask, 'What is this really about?'

In my own evidence, which I'll give this afternoon, I've gone into some benchmarking and accidents rates. It's basically come from the information that was provided to the Road Safety Advisory committee that was never picked up. Really, that's the issue. We believe we've got a reasonably safe road network, and our drivers understand it. They are experienced; they drive to the conditions, in terms of the level of safety.

Going on further, with regard to the proposed standard, I would suspect something like 78 per cent of the state network doesn't even comply. But now, one of our difficulties is that this is the judge and the jury in terms of these issues. They will decide what roads need the criteria. They've developed a concept of 'marginal'. Nobody tells us what 'marginal' is. It's up to them to decide what's marginal. Clearly, the standard was put in place to support the concept, knowing full well no council could afford to build roads to that standard. Indeed, the state can't even afford to. So, I guess that's our concerns in a nutshell.

CHAIR - Not to interrupt your flow too much, Terry, but there was a recent example - and you might have pointed it out in your submission - where the lane width on a newly constructed state road was only three metres. I didn't even meet their own criteria.

Mr EATON - That's exactly right. The state is still building roads to satisfy what we term high mass limit vehicle standards - B-doubles and the like - which is lower than the standard we require for rural roads to operate light vehicles at 100 kph. I am totally confused as to how this standard was put in place. I did some rough calculations on it and I estimate we are looking at a 15 per cent increase in road construction costs for the state roads - the relatively high standard roads - to meet the standard they're imposing. Clearly, they can do what they like because there's no-one out there saying, 'Hey, you're not building your roads to your own standards'.

That was really the overview of the evidence from the council.

CHAIR - Adam, anything you'd like to add?

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Mr WILSON - In Terry's report to the council in December, he also came up with the estimate that, for a small municipality, we'd be looking at an extra \$30 million. Our turnover for the year is \$15 million. We have a very good road network; we have a very good asset management plan in place now. To put these extra requirements on, puts so much more pressure on the rate base. I guess that's one of the areas that councils are looking at. There are no additional funds from any of the tiers of government to provide that, other than from the ratepayers. For an extra \$30 million to undertake that, it's quite large. And that's not our whole road network; that's only connector roads and the linking roads.

Mr FINCH - Adam, we heard some evidence earlier that was critical of the process of consultation. There is always the circumstance where people say, 'I haven't been consulted properly'. I imagine it would behove the government to work particularly well with local councils on this project. From your perspective, at the Northern Midlands Council, do you feel that you've been included, and consulted? Has the process been fulsome, in your opinion?

Mr WILSON - Workshops were undertaken within the municipality that we were allowed to attend at an officer level. However, if you look at the workshop that was undertaken in November 2012, Terry and I were going to attend with our councillors, but we were advised that we weren't allowed to attend. No officers were allowed to attend, only elected members. And as you see in the report, Councillor Knowles provided feedback to us about what was stated at that workshop.

I wondered why we weren't allowed to go along and provide support to our elected members and provide them with information if required.

Mr FINCH - Did you get any sort of explanation as to why that occurred?

Mr WILSON - They stated it was only for elected members, not for officers, and both Terry and I were going to attend. I see that as limiting the feedback. We're trying to make good decisions. You want elected members in the room, but they may need to have information available to them, in order to ask questions. Officers can provide that information.

Mr FINCH - Did you take up the opportunity to present to the government your thoughts on the parameters they were working with, and the suggestions they had about proposed speed limits?

Mr WILSON - At the workshops we pushed the case, in line with nearby councils - West Tamar, and Meander - that the requirements and the standards they were setting were very high, and that none of the councils could meet them. Also, we noted that there was very limited data being provided for us to make decisions. Mr Heaton only received that data nearly two years later, and it's very difficult for us to provide all the comments required, and to analyse it. There should be a time frame where you are allowed up to maybe six weeks to report back and to give evidence.

Mr FINCH - So, on a consultative score of one to 10 you would put it -

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Mr WILSON - About a three. There was some, but, from the workshops, it seemed they had already made their mind up before they walked in the room.

Mr FINCH - Thanks, Adam.

Mr EATON - I could add, in the council's submission there is a copy of correspondence to Mr McIlfattrick on 21 December 2012, which outlines council's concern that, effectively, it appeared the process was fixed - 'We're going ahead, we don't particularly care what you think'.

Mr DEAN - Did you get a response to that?

Mr EATON - No.

Mr DEAN - You didn't get anything back? That's a pretty tough letter to them, and they ignore it.

Mr WILSON - Sometimes they ignore our tough letters - they're not the only department.

Mr DEAN - You've been very strong - and I don't blame you. You've said that, and they've not even picked the phone up to talk to you? No report at all?

Mr WILSON - No, not that we're aware of. Otherwise we would have included it in our report to council. Mr McIlfattrick is usually very good; he listens to us on a number of things, and we are working with him on a number of major projects within the municipality - on state roads and federal roads. I think we've got a good working relationship with him, but for this topic, it has been limited.

Mr DEAN - You make the comment here, and I will read it from your letter -

[To be confirmed.] In view of this apparent lack of consideration for what is perceived to be relevant concerns, council is not prepared to participate in the further advancement of this proposal at this time.

Mr WILSON - We still tried to provide input where we could.

Mr EATON - You must remember that was the view of council.

Mr DEAN - Yes, the council

Mr WILSON - It was the view of council; it was a decision of council.

Mr DEAN - Yes, the council.

Mr WILSON - It wasn't my view.

Mr DEAN - No, written on behalf of the council, according to the Northern Midlands Council minutes.

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Ms RATTRAY - Adam, can you confirm whether your council was approached by the department to organise the community consultation sessions? Can you take your mind back to the early part of the process, and whether you were invited to organise who might be able to attend?

Mr WILSON - I received an email about setting up a meeting within the municipality, which councillors and officers could attend. They asked if we could help in some way, but they took on the role of putting it in the paper, advertising it and ensuring the community were aware of it. Yes, they did ask for council's input and we did provide input as required.

Ms RATTRAY - So you provided to the department a list of people or organisations in your community that you felt would be prepared to have some input into the process?

Mr WILSON - No, they didn't ask for a list of anything like that. They were just looking for a venue and timeframe and if we would be committed to that. They didn't want any input on who should attend and that sort of thing.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm aware that one local government area organised a community consultation process. The service clubs and the Probus club were invited and there wasn't any real broad community input. I am wondering how it unfolded in your particular local government area.

Mr WILSON - We've also got the local district committees within our municipality; we've got committees at Avoca, Ross, Campbell Town, Longford, Perth, Cressy and Devon Hills. We get those people involved, and that gives an opportunity for community consultation as well. However, they were the ones advising who would attend and so on. They didn't want a list.

Ms RATTRAY - Can I fast forward now to the new draft? You obviously would have seen the draft of the proposed network.

Mr WILSON - Mmm.

Ms RATTRAY - I take you to the Esk main road, which will have -

Mr WILSON - I haven't seen it, I'm sorry.

CHAIR - No, it was tabled for us last Monday. It will be up on our website, I think Stuart informed me, very soon.

Mr WILSON - There was one previously; it was a draft.

Ms RATTRAY - That is a particular area - Avoca, and the Esk main road.

Mr WILSON - Which had an accident the other day.

Ms RATTRAY - On the improved section or -

Mr DEAN - The black roads are the 90-kph roads.

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Ms RATTRAY - I'm wondering whether you're aware of any community feedback about lowering the speed limit on a significant part of the Esk highway to 90 kph.

Mr WILSON - Only on the Conara junction of the Midlands Highway and the Esk Highway. There has been a proposal from council to reduce the speed limit there due to the number of accidents in that area.

Ms RATTRAY - So, the community groups you've talked about - have they met and discussed this at a community level?

Mr WILSON - The Avoca and Rossarden and Royal George local district committee did have a major concern with the issue of school buses travelling to Campbell Town during the closure of Avoca, and the speed limit there. Also, there is an area called Red Hills, which is about one and a half kilometres in on that road, from the junction - there has been some concern regarding the speed limit as you are approaching that area and you've got the sun setting in the west. There could be a need to reduce the speed limit in that area.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Mr Chairman, that's all at this stage.

Mr FINCH - This could be a question for both of you. Can you give me some sense of the condition, or the way you view the roads in your municipality?

Mr WILSON - I have been lucky enough to work for a number of municipalities across the state during my 25 years, and the road network and the asset-management plans prepared by Northern Midlands council are very high for maintenance and improvements. We have spent quite a lot of our budget on those areas, in my short time with Northern Midlands over the last three and a half years. The funds the council spends on our road network is very high. We also have a bridge program in place, where we replace our timber bridges with concrete, and that has been undertaken over the past 20 years, since DIER transferred those bridges over to the council's responsibility. That's nearly completed now, so we have very few timber bridges, and the approaches to those bridges are maintained to a higher standard as well, when we are reconstructing those bridges.

Each year, if you look at our budget, you would see that our capital works is very high for reconstruction, and we also use our roads-to-recovery money to upgrade roads. Our infrastructure is very good - we look for the best quality materials across the state. We're lucky to have a number of quarries in the north within our municipality where we obtain materials. The majority of our work is undertaken by contractors, because we only have a small - around about 40-man - crew in our outside workforce. If you look at our asset-management plans, you will see our asset-management indicators for each section of road. If you're driving along our roads you'll see an orange pole on the side of the road and it will have a number on it, and all those numbers are linked to our asset-management plans. That has been undertaken for a number of years.

All of our bridges - if you wanted to look at our data, there are photos of construction, and there are photos of access to those bridges as well. I think, for a small council, the quality of our work is very good.

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Mr FINCH - Do you think that would be a driver for your councillors perhaps not agreeing with the strategy the government is establishing - that the councillors generally feel the road conditions are in good shape at the speed limit, as it stands now?

Mr WILSON - Our councillors do a lot of travelling across our municipality. For instance, I do around 70 000 kilometres, mostly on our roads, but also on some DIER roads, like the Midlands Highway, over a 12-month period. We have a lot of time on our roads, and you do have to drive to the conditions, because we have a lot of flooding within our municipality. We have fires and those sorts of things. But as Mr Eaton has suggested, we have a lot of straights, and a lot of tight corners as well. On average, you wouldn't be travelling 100 kph when you're driving on our roads. You may be only averaging 75 kph to 80 kph. But on some of those straights it is feasible to be doing 100 kph instead of 75 kph or 80 kph.

Mr FINCH - The evidence from the government suggests research has shown that with this strategy there will be a reduction in fatalities and injuries. Now, Mr Eaton, I know you are dying to comment on that -

Mr EATON - Yes.

Mr FINCH - but, if we keep the speed limit the same as it is now, what would support the government's drive to reduce fatalities and serious accidents in your area?

Mr EATON - One of my philosophical concerns, if you like, is that more and more we are taking responsibility away from motorists. The exception is that the state has to advise how to drive safely in all areas, but I am not quite sure where this process ends up. Because of our topography, and because of our economic or financial constraints, we can't build roads to the category one, major road link standard, so there is a responsibility to drive in accordance with the conditions.

I have been associated with this for a long time. Our road signing - our safety overlay, if you like - has always been based on our road conditions and the fact that motorists need to be aware. Indeed if you read some of the Australian standards, like the Austroads Australian Standards on rural roads, they talk about this responsibility to drive to the conditions.

In our municipality - and I have done a casual review of the accident locations - accidents in our municipality are operating on about 25 per cent of our network. Something like 75 per cent of the network has no accidents. My view is that we are talking about a marginal number - a small number.

Clearly it is a matter of being advised of where those locations are, going out, doing a review of those locations, carrying out adjusting roadworks - because most of them, apparently, are on curves or bends - and updating our advisory signs, showing a bend coming up and indicating an appropriate travel speed around that bend. Addressing the roadside issues is probably going to give us the best benefit.

Mr FINCH - Do you feel the council is diligent in that strategy and in the way they assess the roads that have the 25 per cent of the accidents?

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Mr EATON - We are diligent from the point of view that if we know there is an issue, we address and rectify it, but there is clearly a problem if we do not get a report, or we have not yet received a report. If there is a fatality, there is a review by the Department of Infrastructure's traffic management team, and I might add we work very closely and have a co-operative relationship with DIER traffic management. We have a traffic management committee of council that looks at all traffic issues and which involves the police, ourselves and DIER traffic management. Where we are aware of an issue we go out and investigate, and if action is necessary we put it on our works program and undertake the work.

Mr WILSON - If the community feels there is a need to reduce the speed limit, our traffic management committee provides feedback and allows external parties, like Tasmania Police and DIER, to look at the issue. If there are issues around the council table, or there are petitions brought forward for a reduction in the speed limit in a certain area, they are looked at by third parties, and further feedback is provided. Occasionally we look at areas that require speed limit reductions, but we do not think it should be across the board.

Mr EATON - The other issue is that this proposal has never been brought before our traffic management committee. It was never raised, it has never been on the agenda, and clearly there is a separation, in terms of function, between the road safety section of DIER and the traffic management section of DIER. When I've spoken to people in traffic management, they've said they have not been part of the process. When we've had our forums, they were never invited, which always surprises me because my background says traffic management is an integral part of road safety. In this process they've been set aside and basically we've been advised, 'This is what you're going to do'.

CHAIR - Gentlemen, with regard to the two pilot studies that DIER undertook - one in Tasman and one in Kingborough - and the conclusions they drew from those studies, could I put it to you that both of those municipalities are very topographically restrained areas? Would you like to comment on that, and the fact that a municipality in the north should have been chosen - one with a different set of circumstances?

Mr EATON - That's been one of my concerns from the very beginning. If I was setting out to prove that we need lower speed limits in Tasmania, I suspect Kingborough is probably the municipality I would select. I haven't got a wide knowledge of Kingborough, but I have some knowledge; I have travelled their roads. As you say, there's the topography, the mountainous terrain, and the fact that most people in Kingborough are close to the Derwent estuary and travel on state roads. I haven't got the full details, but I think they ended up with a speed parameter of about 77 kph. I think there was something like a three or four per cent reduction in speed when they put the proposal in place. We are talking about reducing the speed limit from 100 kph to 90 kph. How do you deduce what is going to happen from results in Kingborough, to straight roads in the northern part of the state? I think it's a long bow.

CHAIR - Okay, a long bow, I get the measure.

Mr WILSON - I have been lucky enough to work with Tasman as well, so I have travelled on many of their roads for a period of time. The road network in the Tasman is quite different to the Northern Midlands. The roads in the Tasman area - the peninsula - are

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very undulating, compared to the very flat roads in the Northern Midlands. Driving to the conditions, you would drive a lot slower in the Tasman area than in Northern Midlands, under normal circumstances.

CHAIR - The Northern Midlands has become almost a food bowl of Tasmania, if you like, with all the intensive rural irrigation that has been rolled out, and there are a lot of heavy vehicles on the roads. Do you see a potential economic disbenefit, in terms of travel times, for rural and regional Tasmania, by reducing the speed limit from 100 kph to 90 kph?

Mr WILSON - I guess the longer a vehicle is on the road the more cost there is. The idea is to maintain roads to the highest standard possible to ensure traffic flow is not impaired, and the time that trucks and travellers are on the roads is minimised. This is necessary, from an economic perspective, if we want to ensure that the food belt is viable in the future.

Mr EATON - One of my concerns with this proposal is the lack of balance. It purely addressed the issue of road safety. Certainly that's important, but when we look at a road network and we look at the operations of a road network, or we look at road improvements, there are three elements. If you're building a new highway and you do the cost/benefit analysis, the benefits are, first, reduced travel times. You aggregate that - it may be very short periods of time, but by a lot of vehicles. The second element is road safety benefits, and the third is the maintenance reduction costs, because you have built to a higher standard.

If you look at those in a general sense, with most new highways, 70 to 75 per cent of the economic benefits relate to travel time savings. About 15 to 20 per cent is the road safety benefit, and about 10 per cent is the maintenance saved. Effectively, travel time savings are about three times as important as the road safety benefit. In this exercise, we've ignored the travel time savings, or the travel time costs. That's been one of my concerns. We don't know what they are; we haven't measured them. We talk about it being only an extra two minutes on a trip but that two minutes, when aggregated, becomes a fairly substantial amount. Indeed, if you didn't take travel time savings into account, we wouldn't upgrade any roads in Tasmania at all because we wouldn't have an economic argument to upgrade them. It's that lack of balance that worries me; there's a major economic component that's been left out of the analysis. There is this casual attitude that an extra two minutes can save a life. But, it is an important two minutes.

A few years ago I gave evidence at the magistrate's hearing relative to the closure of the west side access into Scottsdale. DIER and the council were proposing that we close that and we use the new highway coming from Bridport main road. It was put to me that it was only two minutes extra travel time, so what did it matter. Then I pointed out it was that two minutes that basically justified building the new highway. If you didn't aggregate it, it appears unimportant in the context of the macro scene. That is a very important cost; indeed, if you didn't take that into account, you wouldn't have built the road. That's one of my concerns; we don't know the economic cost.

CHAIR - Interesting point. I don't know whether you've put it on record, but the Northern Midlands municipality, as I understand it, has the greatest rural road length and number

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of bridges of any municipality in this state. I think they are number one and Meander Valley is number two.

Mr WILSON - Yes, then the Central Highlands. We have one of the largest road networks in the state and I believe we are number one.

CHAIR - And as somebody who travels on your roads, might I compliment you on the standard you have and the fact that you have a lot of cautionary arrows at different points when you are coming to a rise or a steep corner. I cycle a fair bit of it as well and I travel the back road - the Mount Joy road. That road has quite a narrow seal but you have long straight distances, and plenty of good vision. I was thinking the other day as I drove down - '90 kph - I don't think so'. That's beside the point, but you drive to the conditions and, invariably, there's very little traffic there and the conditions are good.

Mr WILSON - Yes, and you get a number of trucks on that road because you've got the poppy processing down there.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr WILSON - However, if you are travelling on that road, the majority of the time you would be travelling at close to 100 kph and you usually have the line of sight to see when you need to slow down, and if there is another motorist coming the other way, both parties usually slow down. They look at the condition of the road and they pass at a reasonable speed and then speed back up to the required speed for the road.

CHAIR - Before I pass to Mr Dean, I am also glad to see you fixed up some of those cracks on the Woolmers Bridge. As a cyclist, it wasn't a good day out one day, I can tell you. Even though it has a sign there that says, 'Cyclists Dismount', which my sister took notice of, after I showed her the bruise I had. But, sometimes you don't see these things.

Mr DEAN - I wanted to follow up on the one question that the chairman asked in relation to the two studies that were done in Tasman and Queenborough, and no -

Ms RATTRAY - Kingston.

Mr DEAN - Kingston, yes - you looked at the results there. We were told by the Tasman mayor of course, that the crashes during the period went up in fact. It was contrary to what they expected to happen. What the mayor then said was that there was little contact from DIER after that, after they realised that that study had gone the wrong way. That was a comment that she made, and that's in *Hansard*.

The question I ask - and I think Kerry covered this to some extent as well - have you ever been advised by DIER for instance, that there is a part of any one of your areas, roads, where there have been a number of crashes that have been speed related, speed related only, or significantly speed related?

Mr EATON - No.

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Mr DEAN - Where a serious reportable crash occurs on your roads, does council get a report on that at all from DIER? Do you get a report on that, where there is a serious crash on any of your roads? Has there been any?

Mr WILSON - I guess the rail incident has probably been the last one, fatality, on a council road. Would that be right?

Mr EATON - We have had a fatality on Mt Joy road and we have had a fatality on Willmers Lane with the rail crossing. In both instances we worked with DIER traffic management looking at that, in terms of are there any improvements we should make, or what is the issue. Was this driver related? Is it road related? So in both those accidents there has been some sort of cooperative research or review of the situation in terms of anything we needed to do.

Mr DEAN - Right. So you take the action that is necessary at the time to try to expunge that black area, or any cause that might be attributed to any crash that has occurred?

Mr EATON - Yes, and certainly DIER traffic management do look at these situations and make suggestions. In terms of Willmers Lane, effectively one of the views was that the actual crossing position signs were not visible because of the background. They have now updated that to a substantially - with a red background with a position crossing highlight, and we put advisory curb speed signs on Mr Joy road.

Mr DEAN - I asked that question, and I will just turn that question around a little bit, as I did to DIER: are you aware of any crashes on your roads that have been speed related, where the speed limit has not been exceeded? In other words, where the speed limit of 100 kph has been maintained, or less than that, are you aware of any crashes that have occurred as a result of that?

Mr EATON - No.

Mr FINCH - Drawing on your experience, Terry, the 100 km sign that we have, has that always been thus? I mean, since decimalisation has it always been 100 kph? Have we ever been lower or higher on rural roads?

CHAIR - You are insinuating that Mr Eaton is getting on a bit.

Laughter.

Mr EATON - Well, I do go back to pre speed limits. I am sorry, I have a feeling initially on metrication we went to 110, then we pulled back to the 100. The default was 110, we pulled it back to 100.

Mr FINCH - In your recent memory it has been at 100 kph consistently.

Mr EATON - For some time, yes.

Mr FINCH - What I really want to go to is the fact that in this day and age vehicles on the roads are ostensibly safer, easier to handle, and better able to deal with conditions that

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might otherwise have not been the case in years gone by when you did not have power steering, you did not have the good tyres, you did not have the brakes that we have now.

Ms RATTRAY - Six air bags.

Mr FINCH - Air bags: we have not talked about air bags because that is when you have actually been involved in an accident. I am trying to get before you actually have an accident. I am wondering whether the vehicle you are driving is in much better shape than cars of yore that were trying to work to the same speed limits but were not really in the same condition as modern vehicles.

Mr EATON - There is no doubt about that. The vehicle of today is substantially better than the vehicle of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when we had an open limit where there was no speed limit - it was basically open. I was saying to Adam on the way in, in those days your target figure was 100 miles an hour. As a young man that was the target figure - you drove as near to that as you possibly could which I know does not sound good today. Effectively, yes, in vehicles with nowhere near the suspension, nowhere the steering capability of a modern vehicle. Certainly our accident rate was substantially higher too in those times.

That is I suppose one of my concerns, yes, if you look at all the literature, there is no mention of the fact that vehicles in the continuum of improvements that road safety have made, they do not refer to this ongoing continuum of vehicle improvements. Certainly with modern vehicles today, sometimes you have difficulty holding it at 90 kilometres because clearly their cruising speed is near 100, 110. I suppose that is one of my concerns, that everything we talk about we talk the vehicle; we do not talk about the driver - the vehicle lost control. I suspect that maybe the accidents do relate to a poor understanding of vehicles by modern drivers. There is no research of that that I am aware of.

Mr FINCH - It might be that driver education and the attitude of drivers on roads to present day conditions might need to be upgraded and concentrated on rather than this tactic -

Mr EATON - That was something I was going to talk about in my evidence this afternoon that effectively if you look at the issue we have the three Es - road safety education, enforcement and engineering.

CHAIR - If that is the case we will wait until the second course.

Laughter.

Ms RATTRAY - I was just thinking while Mr Eaton was talking 30 years ago, Mr Chairman, I put my baby on the back seat in a bassinette and went driving into Launceston. I mean that is how far we have come in regard to safety.

Mr DEAN - You are right.

CHAIR - It used to happen.

Ms RATTRAY - Probably others around this table did the same.

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CHAIR - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Would have done.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, gentlemen.

Mr WILSON - Thank you for letting us come along.

CHAIR - Thank you for your information and we will progress with the committee and see where we get to. We will see Mr Eaton later on today.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Ms JAN DAVIS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AND **Ms MEL KING**, POLICY ADVISOR, TASMANIAN FARMERS AND GRAZIERS ASSOCIATION, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Welcome, Jan and Mel to this hearing. Jan, you have certainly given evidence before a parliamentary committee before.

Ms DAVIS - Yes, again and again.

CHAIR - Mel, I am not too sure whether you have.

Ms KING - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Obviously whilst you are in the committee before us you are covered by parliamentary privilege, however, once you leave here you may not be. We have the one term of reference, which is quite simple, and I will remind you about that. Do you need reminding? You probably don't, I can remind myself what it is about.

Ms DAVIS - I am happy for you to do that, Chair.

CHAIR - We are looking at the issue of the government's proposed rural road speed limit reduction from 100 kph to 90 kph on sealed roads, and the potential impacts/benefits on communities, and to the petrol, any other matters incidental thereto. We haven't got a written submission from you, that I recall.

Ms DAVIS - No, you don't.

CHAIR - That's all right. I will ask you then if you would like to speak to the submission, then so the members can ask some questions.

Ms DAVIS - Thank you, Chair, and thank you, members, for inviting us to speak to you. We did not make formal submission to this because we felt that most of the issues we would raise would have been covered by others.

It is very difficult to argue against the proposition that the government has put because they have racked it up in 'if a life is saved it is worth it'. Our view is that that is all very well, but it is another example of discrimination against rural communities, or urban communities being treated differently to rural communities. We want to be sure that this is not an excuse for government to abrogate its responsibilities in maintaining rural roads to appropriate standards.

We also want to be sure that there is a clear understanding of the fact that this is not being done on the basis of evidence and science, because all of the data shows that most of the accidents are not related to speed as an isolated factor. They are driver inattention or a range of other issues. There is nothing in the government's proposal to show how reducing the speed limit as the only action they are going to take is going to address these issues of driver actions, driver inappropriate behaviour.

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We are concerned about that. We are concerned that there seems to be no proposal to actually review the performance of this action over time, to see if there is a correlation between reduced road speeds and any reduction in accidents. It is all 'say it three times doesn't make it come true'. We want to see that there are some performance correlations built into whatever the proposal might be.

There are a few issues we have to - and Mel is my subject expert on this, we'll talk to them in bit more detail - but specifically around the difficulties that some of our rural drivers are going to face with so many changes of road speed in often quite short distances if this is brought in as it's proposed.

They are the key areas that we were concerned about. Mel will make a few more comments and then we're happy to take any questions that you might have.

Ms KING - Probably further to the evidence basic, if you go through the serious-crash statistic data from 2006 to 2010, and admittedly there are quite a few in there that one of the factors for the crashes is speeding or excessive speed for the conditions. Speeding is not going to be fixed by changing a road sign; that is an attitudinal problem. Excessive speed for the conditions - some of them were during a wet period, so the road was wet. Again, it is a behavioural-based problem. A lot of them were across a range of factors, so there was alcohol, there were drugs. So they were all behavioural based.

Do what you like for speed zones, if you don't address that problem, then you are not going to save many lives. Dropping 10 kilometres in speed limit is not going to stop people's driving - especially on a rural road where they think there are no police anyway - an iota really.

My other concern is the Kingborough Council, the KISS trial that was done, the material out of that showed nothing where they did reduce the speed limits. When I queried them on that, they actually said, well, it wasn't a big enough sample to be looking at to show any real evidence. We said, why did you use Kingborough Council, and they said it was one of two councils that would actually agree to do it. Obviously there are council attitudes to that as well. We would have liked to have seen that trial done in a rural area, so that you would actually get some representation on what the real impact was going to be.

CHAIR - Yes, we have had some discussion on that this morning, let me tell you.

Ms DAVIS - Good, because I actually found that quite astounding, that that was one of the programs they were basing their decisions on and it was flawed to start with.

Mr MULDER - But they did one in Tasman and you would not call that urban, would you?

Ms KING - Yes, Tasman as well.

Ms DAVIS - It is peri-urban. It is not rural.

Ms KING - Peri-urban. It is not true -

Mr MULDER - Tasman Council.

PUBLIC

Ms KING - Again it did not show enough -

Mr DEAN - Show an increase.

Mr MULDER - I am not disputing that finding, it is just that -

Ms KING - Thank you. Then it was distorted because it still was not a high - I think their reasoning was the roads they chose did not, again they used, it was a lower sample base.

Ms DAVIS - So yes -

Ms KING - It appears both were slightly flawed. Do not get us wrong - we believe that anything that will actually save lives is a good thing.

Mr MULDER - I was not challenging that. In fact, it was your statement that you should have tried it in a rural area. In fact it was trialled in a rural area, Tasman Peninsula, and it produced the same lack of results.

Ms KING - Yes.

Mr MULDER - So it is not that Kingston was particularly an irrelevant place to conduct the trial. It is the fact that even when it was conducted in a rural area it produced the same result.

Ms KING - That is true, but according to them the sample base was not big enough.

Mr MULDER - There is another proposition if you read the trial that I can put to you while we are on the topic. That is that if the intent of the reduction in speed limit was to reduce the average speed - forget the accident rate, Tasmania as a whole is statistically relevant, we could trial the whole of Tasmania and it would not assist you statistically speaking - but if the intent was to get cars to travel slower, both the Kingston and the Tasman trials showed less than a 1 km reduction in actual speed. That is the reason they are ineffective.

Ms KING - And again that comes down to behaviour and attitude.

Mr MULDER - I am not disputing your point.

Ms KING - No, I agree.

Ms DAVIS - Mr Mulder, that is why we said -

CHAIR - He is here to help this morning.

Ms DAVIS - That is exactly right.

Ms KING - Thank you.

PUBLIC

Ms DAVIS - That is why we made it clear at the beginning of our comments that whatever they choose to do we want to see some performance measurements, some accountability, some correlation data done, so we can actually work out whether or not this is a real solution or whether, as it seems to be, is a band aid. Well, one would hesitate to say knee jerk populist response.

CHAIR - As Tony said it is peri-urban, it is not rural, but they are topographically constrained, if you like, compared to some of the others up here so it might have been better to have also had one done in this end of the state as well. Anyway that is beside the point. That was not done, so we are where we are.

Ms DAVIS - Yes. Did you want to make any comment about the farmers who gave us comment around the changing speed limit signs, and particularly that -

Ms KING - A couple of farmers spoke to us about this and described the amount of difference these zones, given that there are no roadworks or anything else. One was a farmer whose wife takes children into school each day. If at a point they are on a dirt road it would be 80 kph, and then they turn onto a rural road which we are assuming would be 90 kph, then they go onto a 100 kph limit and then onto the Bass Highway which would be 110 kph, and then into the town down to 80 kph, 60 kph, 50 kph, and the school zone is 40 kph. That is a lot of different restrictions - and then on the way home.

All I can see this doing is being a really good revenue raiser for the police that would like to sit in certain areas. If we really want to actually address it, then make it a bit more uniform. If they are going to go down this road maybe rather than just signs that get covered over by trees and that, especially in rural areas, we need to make sure they have nice big signs on the road like they do on the mainland with the speed zone actually on the road. You can't miss that. All I am saying is to avoid that, instead of just sticking signs on the side of the road, if they are actually going to bring in these restrictions, they need to make them as clearly marked and as easy to abide by for those that choose to, of course, as possible. It helps avoid that inadvertent 'missed that sign'. The ones who go in and out to town all the time obviously are going to get used to it, but when you have the likes of tourists or people unfamiliar with an area, it becomes a real issue.

Mr FINCH - A couple of times this morning we have touched on consultation by the state government. I am wondering whether you can give me a comment about - seeing that we are dealing with rural roads and of course the representative for people who live in rural areas or who have business in rural areas is the TFGA. Do you have a sense that there was a lack of consultation, or were you as involved as you would have liked to have been?

Ms DAVIS - My recollection - and Mel will correct me - is the first we heard of this was a press release. I am not aware that we had any significant consultation prior. They certainly did speak to us in passing after they had made the announcement, but I would not consider that to be adequate consultation.

Mr FINCH - Jan, when you say after the announcement, what announcement was that?

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Ms DAVIS - Last year when they made the announcement that they were going to look at this as a prospect. Subsequent to that, since that time we have had no engagement with government at all.

Ms KING - The only one was when they had the initial round of consults which we were invited to, along with everyone else, which were at the town hall. To be honest, I came out of that with the impression that they had made their minds up well before they even put it through to consultation, because a lot of the arguments that were presented in that consultation by various people were really - to me - not taken on board. And we haven't heard anything back from them since at all.

Mr FINCH - I am curious about feedback that has come to you from your members, but also did you activate anything yourself in respect of a questionnaire and things, where you might have gauged a sense of what your people were feeling?

Ms DAVIS - We certainly publicised it, as we do with most things we're responding to, and that is what prompted calls from members to us to talk through specific examples. Mel spoke to more of the members than I did, but the general feeling was, well, this is just another whack at people who live in rural areas. When there is no clear evidence that it is going to make any difference, we really resent it. That was fair comment.

Ms KING - The number of phone calls I got from members in support of it was zero. That is not because farmers don't care about saving lives. I don't think any of them could see that this was actually going to do anything. They all said pretty much the same thing, that until you change driver behaviour, whatever the road speed limit is, it is not going to matter.

I know one particular dairy farmer who has an obligation to wash down his road and he said it is local traffic that know he is there. He nearly gets skittled; he takes his life into his hands washing down his road because no one will slow down for him. He approached the council about putting up a sign and they didn't want to do it, but that's another issue.

Again it comes back to driver behaviour. If we don't start doing a little bit more with our kids, and whether L1, L2, P1, P2, B3, all the bananas, it doesn't matter if we don't somehow address the behaviour. The attitude is what counts. I have two teenaged kids going through their licences now and their attitudes are going to come from us. So if I am a red neck, then no doubt they will be too. How we approach that - I would like to see something in schools, but the money that the government needs to channel towards educating our drivers is what is important, not particularly the speed limit on the roads.

Ms DAVIS - That is what has really concerned us about this, that as best we can tell, because we have very little information other than the stuff that has been quite publicly announced. There is no funding allocation to match this proposal with any educative programs, or with anything else at all. That is why it is easy to understand that some of our members are seeing this as simply a way of saving money by not maintaining rural roads to the standard that they ought to be maintained.

Ms KING - That is a real fear with them, that they really do see this as a way of the government cop out of maintaining their roads.

PUBLIC

Mr FINCH - Jan, do you have a policy position on this particular impost that might occur?

Ms DAVIS - We talked a lot about whether we should come out and say something on this, and it was a really difficult one for us to come to grips with. Our basic policy position that surrounds everything is governments have right to make whatever decisions they choose to make. We want to see them evidence-based; this is not. We want to see them not disadvantage rural communities; this does. We want to see appropriate and adequate consultation in any decision making process - and there wasn't. As a general position this did not meet our policy provisos.

We stepped back from being hugely activist over this because there were other groups that were going to do it. To be honest, I was concerned about us being portrayed as red necks and not wanting to be, you know, arguing against things that might save lives, so we did not make a public stance on it.

Ms KING - We got to the stage of actually drafting a media release and chose not to do it because we felt there could not be a win/win, and again it looked like farmers just wanting everything -

Ms RATTRAY - That you do not support safety.

Ms KING - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - And that is the issue -

Ms KING - We say there is no evidence base - there is the Monash study which does show a reduction in speed saves lives. But that is a reduction in speed. Changing speed signs is not going to fix that. We have had an 80 kph road works through the east Tamar along the Newnham section for a month. I can tell you that I do not see many cars - I am the only idiot - down to 80 kph coming through there most nights.

Mr DEAN - Nobody takes any notice of them.

Ms KING - No, especially as there is no road works going on there and everyone knows it.

Ms DAVIS - Let us not even talk about the Midlands Highway.

MS KING - As I said again it is that driver behaviour. All for things that will actually save lives but while you have got 110 kph on the Bass Highway you have to wonder whether reducing to 90 kph on rural roads is the answer.

Ms DAVIS - My understanding is all the research shows that a 10 kph reduction in the speed is not going to make any significant difference anyway. To really make a difference you have to drop it from 100 kph to 60 kph, and that is not going to happen.

Ms RATTRAY - Get the horse and cart back out.

Ms DAVIS - Yes, and have the man walk along in front with the flag just in case.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - With regard to rural and regional activity, do you see an economic disbenefit for the state as a whole?

Mr DAVIS - Mr Hall, we started out thinking that might be the case, that by slowing traffic down you were unfairly disadvantaging businesses in the rural communities and that would add significant cost. We expect government to be evidence-based. I could not get any evidence to prove that. So clearly that was a hard one for us to run, particularly when we were talking about this walking over, particularly when a lot of the traffic we would be talking about would be heavy traffic anyway, and it would be unlikely to be necessarily impacted as much as domestic, you know, private traffic would be.

Whilst my gut tells me it will have some effect, quantifying that with any evidence base has proven to be impossible. Nobody else has done this that we can find any examples of, done it as a stand alone measure - if there have been any changes they have been part of a package. I keep coming back to the point that without any demonstrated investment in other measures to support this it is very difficult to understand that it is going to deliver any of the benefits that it is purported to do.

CHAIR - It has been put to us with many of our roads, particularly in the northern part of the state, that better signage, better line markings with corners coming up, dangerous corners, all those sort of things which Northern Midlands just presented to us a minute ago, have effectively done a lot of their roads is a more sensible option in terms of road safety not only for locals but for tourists and everything else. Would you agree with that?

Ms DAVIS - Absolutely.

Ms KING - It is more important for the people who are not local because, speaking from experience, locals know the local roads. They know when to slow down and what bends are a bit dicky, and what intersections they need to be a bit wary of - that vision is reduced. They know the road and they drive, well, one would hope -

Ms DAVIS - Generally.

Ms KING - Generally they drive acknowledging that. Only a fool would know there is a really sharp bend coming up and stay sitting on 100 kph anyway. It is the people who are not familiar with the road. Better signage, better markings can address that.

Ms RATTRAY - I think Mel and Jan have covered what I would have expected the TFGA to have a view on fairly well, Chair.

Mr DEAN - I will quote from a document from the minister, David O'Byrne. I do not know whether you have seen the document. He says:

[**To be confirmed.**] There is clear evidence that implementing such a sustained and coordinated approach to better aligning speed limits and the inherent safety of the road environment will result in large safety gains through reducing road user risk and increasing road users protection. It has estimated the adoption of the approach advocated by the strategy could result in 100 fewer Tasmanians being killed or seriously injured over the next six years. [**To be confirmed.**]

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Ms DAVIS - We saw that comment and that was specifically why I asked Mel to look into the crash data so we could get some feel as to whether that was what the evidence did show. On the information that was available to us, we could find no evidence of that. We do not have, relatively speaking, a high road toll here. A hundred seems to be a significant reduction and we found no evidence of anything, anywhere, of a reduction in speed limit doing anything in isolation from other measures that address the behavioural attitudes we have talked about.

Mr DEAN - We have asked for - and we do not have it yet - the statistical data they are relying on. Specifically I have asked how many crashes have occurred on these rural roads where the speed limit was maintained or the vehicle was travelling under the speed limit. Not where they have exceeded the speed limit, because that is another issue. We have asked for that specific data.

Have you raised this issue at any of your TFGA meetings?

Ms DAVIS - We have not formally raised it, but, informally, every time farmers get together it has been a topical issue. No-one wants to say 'We should not do this', because it is not a good look, but I have not heard one person support it.

Mr DEAN - So, not in any of those informal discussions has it been supported by anybody in the rural area, that you are aware of?

Ms KING - No. I have had some very savage comments, about the government's abdication of their responsibility in one particular case. A couple of almost defeatist attitudes of, 'Here we go again. Whack the poor old farmer'. I have played devil's advocate with a couple of them and said it will save lives, and they genuinely believe that if this is going to save lives it is not a problem. But, they see it as a government cop-out and all it will do is cause inconvenience.

Ms DAVIS - At the time the initial announcement was made, which was 12 months ago, I think, we were doing a round of meetings out and about. We did one at Campbell Town, for example, and they were the sorts of comments we heard. There were councillors from a number of local government areas - and a lot of farmers fill those roles - and there was a bit of muttering and mumbling about the lack of consultation with councils, and the increased responsibilities and the perception of cost shifting that would happen. Totally anecdotal evidence, but they were the feedback mechanisms we used and that was the conversation we had.

Mr MULDER - I note you've conceded that you can't really quantify any disadvantage that comes out of it, but you still use words like, 'Wack the farmers' and 'the disadvantage'. I am wondering whether that is an appropriate way to put it. Wouldn't it be much better to say, 'We can't see any benefit from this', rather than implying that there's some disadvantage, other than inconvenience?

Ms DAVIS - Mr Mulder, the phrases we used there were the ones that were put to us by the farmers; they're not phrases that we would use -

Mr DEAN - Farmer lingo.

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Mr MULDER - We have had these experts who say, 'You will be guilty of 100 lives, over six years if you don't agree with us'. They're talking to people who have been touched by it. Some of us have had the lovely job of scraping bodies off the road and pulling them out of cars. Some of us have had to go and do that doorknock at 4 a.m. in the morning and if you ever think this is a tough job, take that one on. I really think this is a classic case where we just need to get that emotion out of it.

Ms DAVIS - You're absolutely right. That's partly why we did not engage in this public debate, because there was the risk of us being perceived as being - Mel used the phrase 'redneck' - I'll use the phrase 'heartless and self obsessed'. We certainly don't want to be there. This is a 'have you stopped beating your wife' question. There's no way that you -

Mr MULDER - I'll take the fifth amendment on that one.

Laughter.

Ms DAVIS - There's no way we could publicly oppose this without leaving ourselves open to accusations, whatever our basis, which clearly is that we want the evidence to match the positioning, but it doesn't. We would end up in a place that we don't want to be.

Mr MULDER - Professor Jackson said to us that there was no doubt throughout the world; wherever speed limits had been increased, there was an increase in the seriousness and frequency of trauma and wherever it was decreased, you had the opposite effect. He didn't provide us with the studies that prove that. You seem to be saying that it hasn't had that effect, so I am wondering if you'd comment on Professor Jackson's comments.

Ms DAVIS - You are right, there are a few studies that say decreasing speed limits will reduce accidents. What we don't know is whether it's done in isolation. Facts can be whatever we want them to be if we want to get to a certain answer. One of the things we're really focusing on is; if this is something we don't have any choice in, don't go down that road in isolation and expect to achieve what you want to achieve. I would really love to see the data they're using to say that we will save 100 lives, because when I look at the crash data I can't see how that will happen by reducing the limit by 10 kph on rural roads, especially while we've got 110 kph on our main highways. It just doesn't make sense.

Ms KING - Looking at this as a sensible, commonsense, normal person, surely if the professor's position is right then the greatest risk and the greatest incidence of risk will be in urban areas where you have more people on the road more often doing more bizarre things more consistently. If it is truly the case that a reduction of speed always decreases accidents, then we should be reducing speeds everywhere.

Mr MULDER - Of course, we won't then say how far.

Ms DAVIS - Some arguments even say at 60 kph you should be taking it back to 30 kph because of the damage. There isn't a correlation between a 10 kph change and a reduction in damage. We're not scientists, we're not road engineers, we're not traffic experts, but common sense says that, on the basis of the evidence we have seen, there is no link between the proposed solution and the supposed problem.

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Ms KING - Having said that, we're also not saying that reducing it by 10 kph won't save any lives. It may do, but how many and is it really going to address the issues? It may save one life, and I guess that's good. But if you are going to do that, then look at some of the real issues and address them, and you could save a lot more.

Mr MULDER - The other argument that they run is that the condition of our roads requires that the speed be dropped. What is your view on that?

Ms DAVIS - We don't have an official view on that. Some of our roads are obviously in need of love and care. As a general statement, however, speaking as somebody who has lived in other places in Australia, the standard of the roads in Tasmania is generally a lot higher, particularly in the rural areas, than the standard of roads, particularly rural and remote areas, in other states. Yes, we could always spend more money on roads, but are they at a state that I've seen elsewhere, where they've been really bad? No, they're not, nowhere near it.

Mr MULDER - To this end, they quote the Australian standard, and then, even to get most of our rural roads up to 90 kph, they have to relax that standard to meet the Tasmanian conditions.

Ms DAVIS - And I would say that would be the case elsewhere. You look at the Bruce Highway, which is highway 1, and on average that road is cut in at least four places at least four times a year. I don't know if any of you have ever driven it, but once you get north of about Bundy, some of our worst rural roads are in better condition than the Bruce Highway. We really have to look at -

Mr MULDER - It has also been suggested that making the condition of the road the determinant of the speed limit is a wrong equation. Surely the volume of traffic and the use of the road should determine its condition, and speed should become a by-product of the infrastructure being fit for purpose, if you like.

Ms DAVIS - You are absolutely right, and this comes back to our whole argument. This is a real issue. Nobody is questioning that this is a real issue. But what we are looking at is a simplistic solution to a complex issue, and without doing a more detailed analysis of how all the factors interplay, this would seem to be an action in isolation that either won't deliver what it's said to, or won't deliver as well as it could possibly do if it were part of a package of other measures

Mr MULDER - And the volume of traffic and the use of the road translate to \$14 billion raised in fuel excise, with only \$3.5 million spent on roads. So, perhaps the user is paying but not getting.

Ms DAVIS - That is certainly an argument that can be readily made, and that comes down to government making decisions on funding priorities. If, as we are being led to believe, and rightly so, road deaths are a high priority, then one could quite easily question what they are doing to redress that funding allocation. We know it is not a magic pudding, but priorities have to be reflected in spending.

Mr MULDER - Thank you, Mr Chair, I have given all my evidence.

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CHAIR - Thank you, and I think members have exhausted their questions at this stage.
Thank you so much for coming in. We appreciate that.

Ms DAVIS - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Mr CALVIN JONES, SCOTTSDALE, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Thanks, Calvin. You should understand that whilst you are giving evidence to the committee you have parliamentary privilege. However, it may not cover what you say outside.

Mr JONES - I think I understand all that.

CHAIR - We have one term of reference and I will reconfirm that - the government's proposed rural roads speed limit reduction from 100 kph back to 90 kph on sealed roads and the potential impacts/benefits on communities and any other matters. Would you like to make some introductory remarks telling us who you are, and what you do? We can go from there, and the committee can ask you some questions. We will do it informally on a first name basis, how is that?

Mr JONES - Thanks very much for allowing me to speak on this matter because normally we do not get a chance to speak on these sorts of things. The only way everyday road users get a chance to make a comment is on talk back radio, and if they do not like what you are saying they normally cut you off anyway.

Mr MULDER - I would.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - I appreciate the opportunity to have a talk. I am a trucking contractor - C R and S Jones Transport. I work out of the north-east. I cover pretty well every road in Tasmania, day and night. I have been in this game for 38 years. The next time they want to write something up on this topic, get them to ring me and I will do it for half the price.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - I told the girls I would do it for nothing. I have seen a lot of good things and a lot of changes over the years. I guess I am an unofficial representative of the people in the north-east because most of them are a little bit nervous about speaking up. So, I'm unofficially speaking on behalf of transport users in the north-east. I have asked them to write a letter but they won't complain until it's all been changed; then they'll complain. My idea is to fix it before it's broken.

CHAIR - We had Mr Page here this morning and he gave it to us pretty straight, as he saw it.

Mr JONES - Yes. I run five trucks and trailers out of the north-east; my wife and my family. I can see a lot of negatives in the change to 90 kph. One of them is the fact that it means more speed limit signs. We are over-governed with speed limit signs as it is.

The other thing is; if people are driving a car or a truck, they're going to set their cruise controls to hold this 90 kph speed limit. Cruise control is the most dangerous thing ever put into a motor vehicle. I use it myself in a 70 kph zone - I am watching continuously for speed limit signs, but while I am watching continuously for speed limit signs, I might

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miss little kids running out in front of me. We are over-governed with speed limit signs. It should be 60 kph, 100 kph or 50 kph. I agree wholeheartedly with the 50 kph zone where there are schools and things like that.

Ms RATTRAY - Calvin, when you talked about the cruise control, is it the fact that you are so intent on your car's speed and the speed limit signs that you are not aware enough of what is going on around you? Is that what you are getting at?

Mr JONES - I have to concentrate on what is going on around me. You have a truck that's 45.5 tonnes all up and if you're watching the speedo all the time; you're not concentrating on what's going on with this fully laden truck. Therefore, to my way of thinking, it's unsafe and I think people are going to do it - people do it now with these cruise controls. They set it, and I'm guilty myself. That's what they'll be doing to try and keep that truck at 90 kph on a lot of these roads. I'll come to that in a minute.

As I say, I am speaking on behalf of a lot of the people that won't speak up. You see, when you have a speed limit of 90 kph, it's very hard to maintain a speed limit of 90 kph in a truck. You'll run at 80 kph to 90 kph then you'll have a car behind you whose driver is going to get very impatient. That car is going to want to get around.

Mr DEAN - Probably me.

Mr JONES - Yes, and me, too, in a car. I see them every day. They're waiting for an opportunity to get around and quite often you'll wave the car past and they get nervous and won't come around then all of a sudden they get a burst of excitement and they'll pass you right on a corner or on the brow of a hill. You sit back and think why didn't they come around when I flagged them past. That's one of the issues.

I'm a bit concerned - I want to go to something that DIER sent out.

Ms RATTRAY - They sent this to you, Calvin?

Mr JONES - Yes. I've got 11 pages of rubbish from DIER. From 2001 to 2010 the statistics show that our death rate on the roads is getting lower so why would we want to be lowering the speed limit if it is already getting lower? At 90 kph, it says it went from zero in 2001 to seven in 2010. I will ask you this. In the amount of travelling that you do, how many of you have seen a 90 kph speed limit sign? I think I have seen probably one or two in the state.

Mr DEAN - There is one at Devonport.

Mr JONES - Yes. The majority of the roads we drive on in Tasmania are 100 kph and 60 kph speed limits. That is why the biggest numbers of deaths are in the 50 kph and 60 kph and 100 kph speed zones.

Ms RATTRAY - Because the majority of our roads have those limits.

Mr JONES - Anyone can sit and do statistics on a computer screen. I do my statistics through my eyes. I am on the road 12 hours a day and I have been doing this job for 38 years. I can tell you, speed is not an issue. There will always be one or two who

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break the rules with these speed zones but looking at it through my eyes, speed is not the issue - it is inattentiveness. I have talked to police officers, and if they are honest with you they will tell you the same thing, like they have told me. I have something here I want to show you.

Ms RATTRAY - A picture of your truck?

Mr JONES - No. That is a picture of the dashboard of a 1982 model vehicle (showing the dashboard of trucks in a photograph). That is a picture of the dashboard in a two-year old car. I will go through what is in that picture.

Mr DEAN - That would be a 2000 model. No, a 2010 model.

Mr JONES - You have paddle sticks for your gear changing, bluetooth - plus and minus, a radio - plus and minus, turn it on, turn it off; little spanners on the dashboard that tell you when your car needs servicing. Buzzers that go off if other things are happening and that is where our problem is -

Ms RATTRAY - Six-stacker CD.

Mr JONES - Yes, that is where our problem is on the road. It is not speed. It is people concentrating on the dashboard gadgets and not on the speedometer.

CHAIR - We will table those.

Mr JONES - I do not need them. I know what I am talking about anyway.

These statistics worry me. I worry about where they get them. I thought perhaps I could make up some statistics of my own, so I did. I thought there could be 10 people a year killed by taking evasive action to miss a fox or a Tasmanian tiger.

Laughter.

Mr FINCH - You've got Ivan's interest.

Mr DEAN - I'm dodging foxes all the time, Calvin. There's so many of them around.

Mr JONES - These are my statistics. I can't prove them, and neither can the people who have given us those other statistics I talked about. Statistics, as far as I'm concerned, are really a load of rubbish because you can make statistics do whatever you want. It is a matter of putting figures together that suit you, and suit the people you are doing them for - that's my opinion. As truck drivers, we have the advantage of sitting above the car drivers. Therefore we have the opportunity, in a lot of cases, of seeing what really goes on in with the vehicles on the road.

I want to tell you about a couple of things that have happened. I was sitting at the Elwick lights in Hobart one day and a young motorist was sitting at the lights beside me eating a bowl of cornflakes, with milk in them. These sorts of things are where our problems are. Our problems are not with speed. I keep mentioning that because I know that's not where the problem is. I have seen ladies putting lipstick on at 100 kph.

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Ms RATTRAY - And it's not me?

Mr JONES - I think I saw a fella putting some on once.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - I am being a little bit facetious, but I'm telling you what happens out on the road. I see farmers getting along the road at 50 kph to 100 kph with a farm dog jumping around in the front seat with them. I see a carload of bowlers going to the bowls. Normally they can fit four, but sometimes they will have five in there, with all their bowls and hats up the back and they can't see a thing behind them.

These are the issues, these are the problems we have on the road - it's not speed. I took Peter Gutwein with me over the sidling. We have had an issue on the sidling for the last 15 years. Thirty years ago someone had the foresight to cut all the corners off, and made it so you could see around, but all the trees have grown where they pushed them back, and we cannot see. I rang DIER. I didn't write to them because it's a waste of time. I took Peter Gutwein with me to show him what's going on, and he said to me, 'Well, you need to write to DIER'. I said, 'No, I don't. DIER has a boss, and it's his job to fix these problems'. That's where a lot of our problems are.

The other problem is trees are growing over our roads, and what it does - next time you go for a drive I want you all to take a lot of notice of this - there's green slime on the roads from where the trees lose their sap. And as soon as it gets wet, it's like driving on ice. It takes a couple of good heavy rains to fix the problems. That's where our problem is - it's not speed. I've mentioned that, haven't I? It's not speed.

Can I have a drink of water?

Ms RATTRAY - Of course you can. *Hansard* doesn't record pauses, Calvin, so you can pause. That's no problem. I learnt that early on in my time - that's it's always good to have a pause.

Mr MULDER - What sort of pause are we talking about here?

Mr DEAN - We can put a drop of scotch in the water for you, if you like.

Mr JONES - That might be good idea, but I have to drive.

CHAIR - Remember, all this is on *Hansard*.

Mr JONES - Our problems are with all these things. We need the edges of our roads taken back 20 metres each side, taking the trees back so as we have got a safe road to drive on.

I could write a letter a week to DIER. They won't listen to me and I am going to tell you why. You know when they grade the edges of roads and they come along with a sweeper and sweep the gravel back off, well I normally break five windscreens a year because they don't sweep the gravel off. That is a death - that is a way of killing a driver straight up with a broken windscreen. I ring DIER and I said you have a problem with these

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roads, the sweepers are not sweeping the rocks back off the roads. I said when they sweep them back they need to be swept back at least 500 mm from the edge of the bitumen. They said our policy is we are sweeping to the edge of the bitumen.

We have not got a road in the country that we can fit two vehicles on without running into all these rocks. I billed Stornaway for my broken windscreens. I still have not been paid for them. So what is the point? DIER is there to help but they don't help because I am just a single person making a comment on this. They said, 'Oh well, the sweeper comes along', but we end up we have a road there that is supposed to be flat and we end up with a dip in the road and the sweeper goes along and sweeps the road but it does not sweep the rocks out of the dip. It is like driving through a war zone with the rocks coming at you and they just won't do anything about it. They said our job is to sweep them to the edge of the bitumen. That is what I am saying. Speed is not an issue; the issue is all these other things.

Now, I go to this map. I can't work out why they have a 90 kilometre speed limit from Scottsdale to Launceston on the Tasman Highway. They have just finished spending millions and millions of dollars upgrading that highway to a top standard and they want to put a 90 kilometre - does anyone actually drive out there? [inaudible] does, and that is one of them.

The other one was up from Gladstone through to, I think, it is Scottsdale, I am trying to work that out. I only got this yesterday so I really have not had a long time to look at it. That road there has not long ago been upgraded to a national highway. Does anyone ever go up that way? I wonder if anyone from DIER goes there because I don't think they do.

Then we have a road from Scottsdale to Bridport. They have that at 100 kph and it is the worst road in the state. I am happy to drive on it. I can drive on it at 100 kilometres, it is not a problem, but I can't understand why they have left that road at 100 kph and cut the others back to 90 kph when they have already been upgraded to national highways. It is beyond belief.

The other road is, you have from off the Frankford Highway through to Deloraine; it is a B-double route. It is not good enough to drive a horse and cart through but it is a B-double route. That I can understand being 90 kph but the road from, say, Exeter through the Frankford to Devonport you can drive at 100 kph on that quite safely and if anyone thinks they can't, I will take them with me and I will show them. I can't make too many comments on a lot of the other roads even though I do use them. I am mainly concentrating on the north-east.

What is shaking there? Something is making that noise, it is the glasses, it is making me look bad, isn't it?

Laughter.

Ms RATTRAY - Calvin, would you like to make a comment on the Lake Leake Highway?

Mr JONES - I was at Lake Leake a few months ago. I think it takes just on three-quarters of an hour from Swansea through to Campbell Town -

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Ms RATTRAY - That is right.

Mr JONES - I could back a semi-trailer at 100 kph through that road because it is that good a road. The only problem is going down into Swansea. I cannot believe that you would not have it at 90 kph.

Mr MULDER - I would like to test that, Chair.

Mr JONES - What, that I could back a semi-trailer?

Mr MULDER - At 100 kph anywhere.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - I am pretty good at it.

Ms RATTRAY - Night time driving across that road I have always found a challenge with game. It is prolific with kangaroos.

Mr JONES - Yes. What I have found is if there is a problem on the road just because it says you can do 100 kph you do not have to do 100 kph. There are places where it could be 100 kph and you could be battling to do 50 kph. Instead of all this rubbish with dropping the speed limits to 90 kph, my solution is it is not the locals who have the problem - most of it is tourists. The other thing is too I am wondering with these head-on collisions in these statistics, have they been taking into account because, from what I understand, a lot of these head-on collisions are caused by suicide anyway where people are driving into trucks. I think down the Midlands you can drive at 100 kph and you could have seven lanes there. If someone wants to run into you they are going to come and get you anyway. It is a thing we live with every day, the fear someone is going to do it. We are the ones who have to live with that. Even if you put barriers up through the middle of it someone is going to do it. They will find a place to do it anyway. They will pull out in front of you from off side streets and all that.

Do you want to ask me something?

CHAIR - No, keep going; you are right. Members can ask questions of you if we need to, Calvin, as you go through. Finish your presentation.

Mr JONES - To finish what I am saying, it would be far better if you want the knowledge of what really goes out on the road go with a taxi driver, go with a travelling salesman, go with a truck driver, to get that knowledge. I can put whatever you want on a computer screen but if you go with someone you get that personal one-on-one information. I can guarantee that it will be 100 per cent as opposed to what you get off a computer screen. That is probably about all I need to say.

CHAIR - I suppose, Calvin, we being in the job that we are in we spend a lot of time on the road so we appreciate what you are saying.

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From your business point of view do you think dropping from 100 kph to 90 kph as you travel around the state, I presume you do a fair bit right around the state as well, will have any sort of economic impact upon your -

Mr JONES - I have done something on that.

This is an example. I am not a very good reader so I will give it you to.

CHAIR - I will read it.

Inquiry into rural road speed limits - this is an example only - based on 100 kph for a 10 hour day at a rate of \$120 per hour equals \$1 200. By reducing the speed limit to 90 kph based on a 10 hour day earnings are reduced as follows:

40 working weeks (200 days) at five trucks at \$120 per hour equals \$600 per day. Therefore \$600 at 200 days equals \$120 000 in lost earnings.

Mr JONES - You can keep that as an example.

CHAIR - We will table it, thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - So even half of that example, you could still effectively lose \$60 000 on those 200 days for a business. I know five trucks is a fairly big operation, but there would be lots of other businesses around the state.

Mr JONES - Some businesses run on 100 trucks; they could lose that in a month. You run a truck on a 24-hour day; you could lose that much money in a month. I listened to -

Ms RATTRAY - Geoff Page?

Mr JONES - No, the Minister for Transport, who is that?

Ms RATTRAY - The Tasmanian minister?

Mr JONES - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Bryan Green.

Mr JONES - No, no, the other -

Mr DEAN - David O'Byrne, you're talking about, are you?

Mr JONES - David O'Byrne, I listened to him the other day and in the end I pulled the fuse out of the radio because I couldn't listen to him any longer. He said that there would be minimal cost to road users. Well, it probably is minimal cost if you are going to church, or you are going to a function. He wants to come and sit in my seat for a day and see where his minimal cost - I can show him where the minimal cost would be, because you take 10 per cent off a day's work you're going to lose.

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Now, our problem is that the transport industry is a very, very competitive business. We don't get a period of three or four years and then we get elected in or out. We are there for life, or until we go broke, or make a fortune - and not very often you make a fortune. I don't know where he gets his statistics from. I am sure that it is all part of these others that they have made up.

Mr DEAN - It's a bit like my son said, Mr Chairman, if farmers are required to drive their tractors in second gear and do all their work in second gear as opposed to third and fourth gear, their production at the end of the day is far less than what it would have been if they had been able to drive at the speed they wanted to.

Mr JONES - Exactly. Yes. Now, I know that we don't drive at 100 kph for 12 hours a day; that's an example. You can change those figures however you want to make them work. And it is the same with the figures that I got from DIER. They have changed them to suit them. I think that next time they want to do these statistics, if they just ring me, I will do it for them for nothing and we won't need a professor from the college. I will do it for nothing for them. Actually, I will pay them so I can do it, just so it will get done right.

Laughter.

Ms RATTRAY - Another question in relation to the consultation process, Calvin. I know in the area that I live, and that you work and live as well, the consultation process with the community was on a Tuesday afternoon, and it was by invitation from the local government area, from Dorset Council. Has there been any talk, communication, about that process?

Mr JONES - You obviously read the letter that I wrote, did you?

CHAIR - Yes, we all have that.

Mr JONES - I got a letter back from David Jolly, I think.

Ms RATTRAY - He is the works and services manager for Dorset Council.

Mr JONES - You are quite welcome to read that if you want. It doesn't say much. It just says that he has no control and -

Ms RATTRAY - Basically I am asking do you believe - and the operators that you represent - that that consultation process has been adequate?

Mr JONES - No.

Ms RATTRAY - That is what I am asking.

Mr JONES - I will tell you why it is not adequate. Just for argument's sake, say there are six transport companies in Scottsdale, and most of them are like me: they go to work each day and they are running their business. When you are invited to turn up at the RSL club at 2 o'clock in the afternoon to have a discussion about it, most of them are at work when they are trying to make a living. That is why they set these meetings up - they don't want

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me there because I have too much to say. I am the last person they want at these meetings. I think I am boycotted from most of them.

Ms RATTRAY - I was interested in what other operators might have given you with feedback around that process.

Mr JONES - Other operators - a lot of them don't even know this is going on, to be quite honest. It has only been the last couple of days where a few people have been making comments on it in the paper and on radio. I have been saying write a letter to your council. I am the only person who actually wrote a letter. Everyone makes comments on it but I am the only person - to be honest with you, I actually got someone to write that letter up for me. It was a pretty good letter, wasn't it?

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - I put the words -

Mr MULDER - We knew it wasn't you; there were no expletives in it.

Mr JONES - That's right.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - People haven't got time to write these letters; that's where the problem is. They do a 14-hour day. They come home and the last thing they want to be doing is writing letters to DIER that you are not going to get a response from. I got a response; 11 pages which told me nothing. It virtually told me that it was a foregone conclusion and just live with it. That's what it told me.

Can I ask the question: is it a foregone conclusion? Is it going to happen? Am I wasting my time being here today?

CHAIR - No. The committee is here, and certainly the minister in some correspondence we received indicated that they would like to get this in as quickly as we could and he has asked us when we might report. So that is what we are doing now. We are taking the evidence. That is why we, at my instigation, are moving things forward as quickly as we can. We had hearings in Hobart the other day, hearings today, and hopefully we will be doing a report as soon as possible.

Mr JONES - Yes, so they want it done before the next election.

CHAIR - I didn't say that.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - No, I know that.

CHAIR - You can draw your own conclusion.

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Mr JONES - Other than that, I would like to think that what I have said can help in some way because I still think what they have put up is rubbish. There are roads that you can do only 80 kph on but we are being sacrificed. They are taking our ability to earn money and our rights away. One thing I will say; I have just done a trip from Queensland, Townsville to Melbourne, and the roads there are far worse until you get deep into New South Wales. It is one strip of bitumen and you have B-triples running up both sides of the roads. They are far worse. They are allowed to do 100 kph on them. How come we are being told we can't in Tasmania? Are we different to them? I know we have two heads but are we different to the rest of Australia? Why should we be sacrificed for what other people - the federal government finds it legal to run at 100 kph everywhere else in Australia; why do we - I think I've worked it out. It is so that a lot of these people can keep up in their Humber Hawks and Velettes and all these old cars. I think it's so they can keep up with the rest of us.

Mr FINCH - P76 with square wheels.

Laughter.

Mr JONES - That's it.

CHAIR - A few more questions before we run out of time.

Mr DEAN - Calvin, you are on the road the whole time. I dare say you have witnessed some crashes from time to time.

Mr JONES - I have.

Mr DEAN - My question to you is one I have asked nearly all the others. Have you witnessed or been unfortunate to be part of crashes where people have maintained the right speed limit. In other words, they have been under 100 kph in a 100 kph zone - they have maintained the right speed limit, they have not been driving in excess of the speed limit.

Mr JONES - I did take the oath and I will be honest. When there is an accident there is no way of telling how fast they were going. That is why I can't understand where the statistics come from. There is absolutely no way - unless the speedo jams at 50 kph or 100 kph. You can estimate from the skid, but if the road is wet, or there is ice on it, your skid marks won't show up. There is absolutely no way in the world you can tell how fast a vehicle was going in those conditions. There is no-one in this country who can tell me, if it is a wet road, how fast a vehicle was going. You can estimate, but you cannot tell for sure.

Mr DEAN - My other question is along a similar line. You've said that trucks today can get up to 90 kph very quickly. Is it your experience, having driven a truck, that even at 100 kph other vehicles - cars - will want to pass you on a straight section of road, therefore getting up to 110 kph, or 120 kph?

Mr JONES - Yes.

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Mr DEAN - That has been said to me by one transport company owner. He made that very clear - a truck will get to 90 kph quickly and then there will be this excessive speed to get past on a straight stretch of road.

Mr JONES - Yes, and that is what happens. All our trucks today are set with speed limiters and we can't go over 100 kph. People say you can, but there is only one way you can change that, and that is to set your computer. That has to be done by a certified mechanic and he takes responsibility for it.

This is another dangerous thing. You can have a car doing 80 kph and a truck can get out alongside them at 100 kph, but then they are in dead man's land. They can't get past, but they have gone to the point where they can't go back. In my experience, once you get past the half way mark you are committed and that is where we have a lot of trouble with speed limiters on heavy vehicles. To be quite honest, to pass a vehicle travelling at 80 kph, depending on the distance you have to do it, you have to get up to 110 kph. You can't do it otherwise. It is impossible.

They are very smart, our government, because they set the speed cameras up where you need to do 110 kph to get around another vehicle, and that is a big issue. These speed cameras are supposed to be set up in black spots.

Mr DEAN - You probably cannot blame the government for that, but you can probably blame the policeman.

Mr JONES - Well that is true. I have to be careful because he is an ex-policeman.

Mr DEAN - You are right. Two of us.

Mr JONES - Two, right. I will keep my hands on it.

Mr MULDER - Some of us realise we have retired, so it is ex-wallopers.

Mr JONES - Oh, good.

Mr MULDER - Others think we are still carrying batons and handcuffs.

Mr JONES - But it is a problem.

CHAIR - We are just about out of time. Kerry and Tony have questions. Can you be very quick?

Mr FINCH - Calvin, you have described yourself as the unofficial spokesman. You say you have been talking to people in the industry in the north-east. Can you qualify that for me? Have you spoken to half a dozen, or a dozen?

Mr JONES - I spoke to Stagoll's Transport's two managers - two brothers own that. I spoke to Neds Transport's operators and I spoke to Keith McPherson and I have spoken to -

Ms RATTRAY - What about Cassidy's, have you spoken to them?

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Mr JONES - Yes, Damian Cassidy, who is part owner of Cassidy's Transport. If you like I can get something signed to say that I've spoken to them.

Mr FINCH - That's okay. Do you have staff yourself? Do you have drivers yourself?

Mr JONES - I do, yes.

Mr FINCH - How many drivers do you have?

Mr JONES - There are two drivers.

Mr FINCH - So, they agree with your sentiments?

Mr JONES - Yes. My son and my son-in-law drive, and I have them doing twice as much work today, and they said, 'What are you wasting your time going there for?'

Mr FINCH - It was only out of curiosity. You say it's not speed, right? But, we have a lot of evidence that it is - there are maniacs out there. What would be your observation as to what causes a lot of accidents, particularly the deaths on the road that we see? If it is not speed, what else would you put it down to?

Mr JONES - Mobile phones, CD players, GPS. They put a GPS in the middle of the windscreen, for God's sake.

CHAIR - Inattention mostly, this is what it comes down to.

Mr MULDER - As a general observation, is the condition of Tasmania's roads satisfactory to the point where you think 100 kph is a reasonable speed limit?

Mr JONES - Yes, I've no doubt. No-one can do 100 kph around a 90 degree turn - but in all our roads are quite capable of handling speeds of 100 kph, and if they're not, the driver should not be behind the wheel.

CHAIR - Okay. Thanks, Calvin.

Mr FINCH - And, drive to the conditions, is what we are hearing.

Mr JONES - Yes, and that's it. I could go on all day about it.

CHAIR - Thanks, Calvin, you've done a great job. We appreciate you coming in, and hopefully we will get some feedback to you when the committee report.

Mr JONES - Thank you. Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr TERRY EATON WAS CALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - You have taken the oath already today, Terry, so we don't need to go through that procedure. Would you give us your presentation, thanks?

Mr EATON - Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR - And just explain for the record your CV - your credentials.

Mr EATON - Terry Eaton, consultant traffic engineer. I've been working in traffic management and associated road safety for something in excess of 40 years - 45 years. I was the chief traffic engineer with the transport commission and in that capacity road safety administration and statistics came under my umbrella. Included in that was accident research.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr EATON - First of all I would like to thank the Legislative Council committee for making this opportunity available. One of the things that has concerned me is process, in terms of this matter. Often, the public does not get the opportunity to go on the record. I have made previous submissions to the Road Safety Council and basically they go into this dead letter office, or something - you never get a response, you never get an acknowledgment and sadly this is following the same theme.

My initial concern is; how was this decision made? Clearly, it appears that it was a closed loop. The administration looked at absolute figures for accidents, or total serious accidents, in the 100 kph zones, saw they were the largest number and said, 'We need to do something about that'. Rather than looking beyond to a mass action plan, let us reduce the speed limit and that will save the world, or save Tasmania. They did not, in my view, look at other options and in particular, they have been very, very selective in terms of the research they have produced and in terms of what has been made available. In a lot of cases, if you read that research you found there were other factors, or other issues, which were left off the system. Clearly -

Mr DEAN - Excuse me, Chair, are you taking questions as you go or do you want Mr Eaton to complete his submission?

CHAIR - You can, as long as you do not interrupt his train of thought.

Mr DEAN - You said they have been very, very selective in looking at this issue - why do you think they might have done that? Were they looking for an easy way out or a cheap way out? Do you have any view on why they might have done it this way?

Mr EATON - I can only assume if you are putting an argument, you want the data and the research to support your argument. I do not believe that is how research should be done. When I was at the transport commission I oversaw some research into the age and condition of vehicles and the impact of those factors on accidents. I had two university chaps working on it and they came to me in total anguish. 'The statistics do not support the assumption. What do we do now?', they said. I said, 'You report it as it is'. We do

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not have the outcome we expected to get, but we have advanced the research. That was an issue of taking an assumption that seemed to be logical - older vehicles will be more represented in accidents - and then finding it was not so. There was only a slight causal link for vehicles over seven years of age. So that was a case of saying, 'Well, that is what it is'.

Unfortunately, in this instance we have taken a macro approach for what is, in reality, a very, very small number. I have asked for some time to see a breakdown of the statistics - how many of these accidents involved high blood alcohol levels? How many of them were driving without a licence? All that has been aggregated into the statistics, on the assumption it is speed. I would love to support this, but I haven't been given any evidence that this is going to result in a saving. Like everybody here, I'm interested in road safety, first for the issue of suffering caused by accidents, but second because we all pay an MAIB premium. If you can reduce accident costs, we can reduce that premium for motorists.

We're certainly advancing road safety, with driver education et cetera, but I still can't work out why we would selectively target speed. The minister has quoted statistics saying the implementation of this proposal will save 100 casualty accidents on our road system over six years. Now, the six years is really in there to make the figures look good.

I would say; if you put it in across the whole system, we will save 500 casualty accidents, and that's purely because we're only dealing with 30 per cent of the traffic. Seventy per cent of the traffic is on roads where the speed limit is not going to change. If you look at the statistics, generally, I think it's most optimistic to assume we're going to save that sort of number, in terms of the amount of travel that's involved.

As I said, my starting point was; how was this decision made? In my mind it comes back to the way the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources is structured, where you find road safety on about the eighth line of importance in the organisation. I support the view that road safety is an integral part of traffic management, but they don't come together until you get to the deputy secretary level position in the organisation.

So, something extremely important is locked in the bottom tier of the organisation. If we take it even further, the secretary of the department - someone who is very, very important in the structure of the organisation - is subservient to the chairman of the Road Safety Advisory Council. He is virtually fettered in these sorts of issues by the decisions of the Road Safety Advisory Council, which he doesn't control.

Maybe the Road Safety Advisory Council shouldn't be in that department at all. There are certain views of where it should be in terms of government administration. Maybe it should be part of occupational health and safety. It could easily, again, be part of the police department. All these things don't allow for an effective and efficient road safety organisation in this state.

Mr FINCH - Terry, I'm just going to bring back the points you were making in respect of the people who have made this decision. I was going to draw your attention to the Road Safety Advisory Council, who feel they play a lead role in advice about the development of road safety initiatives. Their claim - John Gledhill's claim - is that it is based on a best

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practice and evidence-based approach to policy development. Do you feel that is not the case?

Mr EATON - There are two concerns here. If you look at the Road Safety Advisory Council, it is effectively made up of senior administrator, advisory and public or government administration. Clearly, these are eminent people; I am not questioning that. The only, if you like, engineering person on that board is someone from Monash University. Monash University does all the research so that concerns me in terms of whether that is leading the road safety council or whether it is purely getting financial reward by undertaking work that it's party to develop sending out.

Mr FINCH - Or a vested interest in the development of their ideas and their research and putting it into practice somewhere.

Mr EATON - Exactly. If we look at these things, if we look at that make up, if we talk about the RACT which is a recognised organisation, generally their membership are very conservative motorists, so they only represent a fairly small sector of the driving public. If you look at the others, not disputing that administratively or management-wise they are top people, but previously my understanding is there was a sort of advisory working group that then looked at these things, fleshed them out and then presented them for sign off. Recently, that was abandoned and replaced by the road safety council.

If you look at it, other than the Monash University, there is no other engineering or scientific input into that. For instance, we have a fairly recognised university here but we have no one from the university in terms of statistics or something. We have an institute of engineers but we have no engineering representative on it from the state.

Mr FINCH - You haven't got Calvin Jones there either.

Laughter.

Mr FINCH - You have to admit he would be pretty handy from people who commercially have to be on the roads over extended periods of time.

Mr EATON - We have someone from Bicycle Tasmania there. Riding a bicycle is a recognised recreational pursuit generally, but -

Mr FINCH - He is worried about having to slow down from 100 kph to 90 kph on his bike.

Laughter.

Mr EATON - But it represents less than 1 per cent of travel. I am not saying it is not important but, by the same token, we have 350 000 licensed motorists in this state and they effectively get one representative. The whole bias, in my mind, is towards people who are recognised and seen to publicise their cause.

Mr FINCH - With your experience, Terry, that you have brought to this issue, do you think this is not an appropriate initiative for the road safety advisory council or the government to undertake to bring the speed limit down from 100 kph down to 90 kph?

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Mr EATON - As I said in my submission, we are talking about something like 3 per cent of motorists involved in accidents. It is a very small figure. If we look at it as a benchmark, accident rates per 10 million vehicle kilometres; that gives you a guide as to the level of safety on our roads relative to the rest of the nation. I have done some work there. My work seems to say that, in fact, the council maintained roads in this state are the safest roads in the state. Further to that, we probably have some of the safest drivers in the nation. How does this come about? I believe it comes about because our drivers are more competent than we give them recognition for per se, and they do understand the need to drive to conditions. That is critical. We seem, in my mind, to have this all bias towards the fact everyone wants to drive at 100 kph everywhere. Clearly, our road system and our financial situation cannot support that.

CHAIR - Terry, I just have to duck out for a moment. I note that Mr Mulder has risen to the dizzy heights of Deputy Chairman and will be looking after it. Keep going, Mr Finch.

Mr MULDER - Does that make me the back seat driver?

Mr FINCH - That is fine. I got the nub. Did you have any more to add to that, Terry?

Mr EATON - That is what I am saying - if we look per se and then if look at road safety, if we look at the three main pillars of road safety it is engineering, enforcement and education.

Enforcement-wise we have just dropped the numbers there. I am not sure whether some, if any, increases if they were related to that.

In terms of education, I am not sure. The road safety people seem to do some work there, but it seems to me there is still a lot can be done in addressing the 3 per cent of drivers who have accidents. Again I am not quite sure how they are dealt with. I can remember some time ago people saying if you have an accident you really should be charged with an offence because to have an accident you have done something wrong. I do not know whether that happens across the enforcement spectrum.

In terms of engineering, certainly we can do work to upgrade roads and address the issues. Looking at the statistics we are not talking big numbers that we don't get the opportunity to, if you like, look at the accidents, look at the accident locations, look at the road conditions and try to then provide some correlation between the accident circumstance and the drivers. There is so much of this that is put together as a macro analysis and assuming a whole-of-state approach and then sieving out the main roads we travel on because that is probably not politically acceptable.

Clearly, if we were really genuine about it, this sort of approach, we would effectively speed zone the whole road system. We would speed zone the whole road system because if it is only a 70 kph road and you are still doing 90 kph on it you are not all that much safer than if you are doing 100 kph.

Mr DEAN - You have raised the issue of statistics and we are getting that through this inquiry from a number of people, indeed we have raised it ourselves. It seems to me if you are going to rely on statistics to do what they are doing the statistics need to be the right statistics. The point I make here is when you are talking about the number of

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crashes on a road over a certain period of time, and then you identify whether speed is a part of that or whatever, you then need to take that further.

The weather conditions ought to be a part of those statistics. In other words, if it is a wet road, greasy road, frosty morning, black ice, et cetera, that ought to be a part of this statistical data you are going to use. A crash in that sort of situation can happen at very low speed and it is probably the speed of the vehicle has been a cause of it even though it has been a very low speed. It seems to me statistics should also include the time of the crash, in other words whether it is night and dark, et cetera, et cetera.

It also should be a part of that if you are going to come up with true statistical information to base a change that they are going to do here or want to do here, that is a change from 100 kph back to 90 kph. Would you agree with that?

Mr EATON - I think effectively you do a detailed analysis of the accident statistics and then you basically re-sieve that, if you like. What always worries me is if we look at our road network and we look at almost any rural road there are variable standards across the length of that.

I drive regularly between Bridgenorth and Longford to the Northern Midlands on Bridgenorth Road. Effectively there are sections of that road - I think there is a 2 kilometre straight at one part of it, there are series of other straights, but they are connected by about 40 kph corners. Clearly you can be doing 100 kph along the straight, and one of the critical factors in terms of safe driving is your forward sight distance - how much sight distance you have in front of you - so you can drive reasonably and if you are aware of it, as I said, you can drive at your 100 kph. You know it and there are advisory warning signs and you know you have to slow down for that corner so you drive according to that road standard.

As I said, one of the issues is 100 kph daylight speed is equivalent to an 85 kph night speed. You are not addressing in this -

Mr DEAN - Sorry, just run that by me again please?

Mr EATON - In daylight, safe at 100 kph is the equivalent at night of only 85 kph because of your headlight issues.

Mr MULDER - I know we are now going to get variable speed signs that switch over at dusk and dawn.

Mr DEAN - Well, it does apply in some places. It only applies in these variable speed limit signs night time driving changes the speed limit changes. So you are right.

Ms RATTRAY - Through you, Chair, that would apply particularly for the Lake Leake Highway. You cannot drive at 100 kph of a night time through there. Not because of the road conditions but because of the game that is on it.

Mr EATON - Yes.

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Ms RATTRAY - And the Avoca Highway is the same because of the potential for deer to come. The people who know the road know that you cannot drive that at night safely but during the day when you have clear vision you can safely drive those roads.

Mr EATON - That is my concern. We are not talking about a road system that allows us to drive at 100 kph. I do not know any experienced motorist who assumes they can drive at 100 kph full-time every where for a long distance. I do a lot of travelling around the state relating to my work. I know that I have great difficulty maintaining an 80 kph average. Effectively, that is driving at 100 kph and that is going down to Wynyard from Bridgenorth going to the north-east and some of that is even less than that. What I do know is if it is a straight section I want to minimise my travel time it is up around 100 kph where you need to be. If you go back to 90 kph there, it is going to cost you travel time. As I said this morning travel time is important, time is important to people, particularly older people.

Mr FINCH - Time is money.

Mr EATON - So neglecting to take that economic impact out of this review seems to me to provide a major deficiency there. If we look even further we talk about, my understanding is one of the impacts of this is looking for a so-called halo effect and that is where the accident savings come in. The assumption is that we put this in place everybody will drive between 4 kph and 5 kph slower everywhere. Now quite clearly 30 per cent of the people are only going to be involved I am wondering how the other 70 per cent are going to have this impact on their driving. It does not make sense to me, I am sorry.

If we talk about economics, if we talk about behaviour - the government promotes motor racing at Symmons Plains. We promote Targa and Targa is all about speed. Yet we say to our motorists no, you have to travel slower. If you were sincere about speed and road safety the last thing we would be doing would be promoting Targa where they look at average speeds on their legs of up around 150 kph and whilst the roads are closed the conditions are not much different to what the average traffic passes on. There is a lot of inconsistencies in taking a broad brush approach to this issue.

Ms RATTRAY - Terry, what is your view, if the department and the government are serious about the reduction in potential fatalities, why wouldn't they go down the path of reducing the Midland Highway and other highways that are at 110 kph? Are you happy to give some sort of comment on that?

Mr EATON - I think the comment is in my report from the work done by - I think one of the researchers actually pointed out that the biggest actual savings - yes, Max Cameron, pointed out that the biggest savings were by reducing the 110 kph to 100 kph. That was the research that they had.

Ms RATTRAY - So for consistency it would go right across the road network, and you would pick up the 100 per cent of the road users, rather than 30 per cent of the road users, is that a fair assumption?

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Mr EATON - If you were looking at it in that way. Clearly the view has been taken there is an economic consequence on our state highways if we do that. So we take economics into account in that case, but we don't take it in for the rural people.

I come back to that other issue to me. I see here a while back we changed the regulations with regard to testing of older drivers on the basis it was discriminatory. I see this as discriminatory to country people, but that doesn't matter apparently, that's okay.

Ms RATTRAY - Because there are not that many of them who vote. It is an assumption that some might make.

Mr EATON - If we talk about the community consultation, that was basically open consultation. Now, if I am an old man in a nursing home I would say well, yes, there seems to be merit in this, but it doesn't affect me. But the way the consultation has been put together my voice as an old person who never drives is taken statistically to be as significant as somebody - in a case the Northern Midlands Council. I can understand people saying yes, that's a good thing. Particularly if you don't drive on country roads it is a good thing because there is no impact on you. If you keep the highways as they are, no-one ever drives on those country roads, so that is a good thing. Yes, we are going to reduce 100 crashes in six years.

I guess my other question is, there are two aspects of this in my mind. Years ago we used to have an averment clause in the traffic regulations that said if you were caught exceeding the speed limit or something and you could argue that you were driving safely, that would be taken into account in the court proceedings, or you could present that as an argument. We removed that and went to absolute on the basis that it was a lot of court work for the police.

That's fair enough in some ways, but as I said, our standards are so different in terms of our road standards, it just seems to me that if you are driving safely that should be a defence, if you can prove you were driving safely, rather than you exceeded the speed limit therefore it's unsafe, particularly when you put blanket limits on.

That comes back to my other point; if you have an accident on the road there are two aspects to me. One is you have got to be at fault, or something is at fault that needs to be addressed, (a) in terms of the consequences of the accident, and (b) in terms of so the driver gains some experience. At the present time, if you have an accident there is nowhere where you can go and be reviewed as to determine what you should have done, whether you did everything right. There is no requirement to be retrained. There is no requirement to have a better understanding of driving.

Some years ago, when I was at Meander Valley Council, we did a defensive driving course with Barry and Tony Oliver. I suppose I had been driving about 40 years at that time, and to my surprise I learned things there to improve my driving that I hadn't been aware of before. It wasn't anything that allowed me to drive faster, but it allowed me to drive more safely. These are the things that we tend to underestimate. We have made great advances in terms of our criminal code and rehabilitation. But, in the driver's sense, we are still back on the old penal days. Here's a hundred buck fine, mate. In my mind, you would be far better to say go and spend the \$100 on an advanced driving

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course, pass that and then we'll tick you off. We still don't do anything to improve the quality or the understanding of our motorists in terms of the road system.

We come to the other thing; I picked up something today. There are extremely good driver simulators about now. I'll leave that with the committee.

CHAIR - We will table that, thank you.

Mr EATON - It allows you to basically sit in a simulator and drive the roads and undertake all types of driving conditions. That particular one is available at a cost of \$35 000. If we say \$70 000 to operate it we could have 15 of those for the cost of the re-signing of Tasmania. I would suggest that 15 driver simulators to teach drivers, to allow older drivers to test their driving capability in a controlled situation to my mind probably has more merit than changing some signs because it actually gets to address the issue of driver capability.

Mr MULDER - You have mentioned the fact that you were part of the research when I think the issue at the time was the roadworthiness of old cars and the research didn't stack up.

Mr EATON - Correct.

Mr MULDER - Were you also involved in the research from 110 kph to 100 kph when they were talking about lowering that about 18 months ago?

Mr EATON - No.

Mr MULDER - I am interested in the accident research that you talked about. In your experience, the capacity for people to estimate the speed post-accident, what reliability would you place on that?

Mr EATON - Certainly the police have extreme capability of undertaking that work in terms of -

Mr MULDER - All police?

Mr EATON - I don't know but certainly the accident investigation officers are very competent to ascertain vehicle speed at the time of impact.

Mr MULDER - Of course, they only attend the serious or the fatal accidents; they don't even turn up for the serious ones.

Mr EATON - I am not sure of the percentage.

Mr MULDER - Also, from your engineering background, the Australian road standards; we have received evidence that even at 90 kph, for most of our rural roads we have to tweak the national standard to even get them up to 90 kph. What's your take on that?

Mr EATON - All I can say over a lot of years of driving is reasonable drivers can drive at 100 kph on most of our roads. One also has to remember that there is a relationship between the volume of traffic on the road and the required standard. For many of our

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roads, we are talking low volume roads where you are the only vehicle on the road. In those circumstances, effectively you have a five metre pavement and I think our standards talk about a 3.1 metre or 3.2 metre lane width. You take cognisance of a vehicle coming the other way; you don't ignore it.

So, I think sections of our roads and a lot of our roads are quite capable of driving at [100 kph]. I noticed on the proposed changes to the roads, I think it is the road across Mount Black, the bypass past the Cradle Mountain turn-off across to the west coast is probably the best bit of road in the whole state and it is going to be zoned at 90 kph. It is probably better than the Midland Highway!

Mr MULDER - We not have only the Tasman Highway of course, and some of the roads that have been mentioned. We also have something like the Arthur Highway, a major tourist route which takes a lot of traffic and stuff like that, and that has just been wound back to 90 kph despite the fact they are going to spend \$18 million straightening some corners out.

Mr EATON - As I said, the variabilities and talking about roads and of course the other issue that concerns me about this is we talk about the complexity and in terms of experience you drive to the weather circumstances, you drive to the road conditions, you drive to the road side development.

We are just going to add another ordinate of speed into the system. How do I know I am in a 90 kph zone, how do I know I am in 110 kph zone? We are adding another component to the confusion. I can't understand why you would do that. Having to rely on seeing signs to determine what speed just seems to me to be a strange way of doing things. Innately you tend to drive at a speed; an experienced driver understands those things and drives accordingly.

As I said our statistics prove that by far the majority of drivers drive safely and we are not giving them any consideration. Maybe we need to go to a variable licence system.

Mr FINCH - This initiative is predicated on this 100 deaths or fatalities over the next six years -

Mr DEAN - Serious casualties I think you mean, it was not just deaths. It was not just deaths but serious casualties.

Mr FINCH - Yes, and casualties over the next six years. If we do not do this are those figures going to resonate? Are they going to be correct or are you pooh-poohing, are you saying keep it at 100 kph, rural roads, and we will just see what happens over the next six years?

Mr EATON - My belief is that that is an extremely optimistic view. I said earlier it relies very much on a halo effect that motorists everywhere will slow down. It is not related to the 30 per cent of motorists or travel that this applies to. We will get an overall improvement across the network because we will advertise this in terms of we will do some PR on it and effectively everyone will drive slower.

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One can look at the circumstances now, our economy is very sluggish at the moment and there is the correlation between low activity and accident rates probably on the premise that if the economy is tight people don't travel as much so the actual amount of travel is down and so the accident risk is down proportionately.

If our economy picks up almost certainly our accident rate will pick up because people will travel. We have had the fact we do not have log trucks, rarely have log trucks on the road any more. We do not have timber workers going to the bush and so there is a whole reduction in actual travel on our road system, and accordingly there is a commensurate reduction.

Mr MULDER - Are you aware of the trials of this in both Kingborough and Tasman?

Mr EATON - Yes.

Mr MULDER - Are you also aware of the average speed; are you aware of the changes in that?

Mr EATON - Yes. I am aware it was a very minor change but it was no -

Mr MULDER - Less than a kilometre per hour of actual change in the actual speed being travelled?

Mr EATON - On my understanding none of the averages were near 100 kilometres.

Mr MULDER - No, but I was just picking up that point you said about as if lowering the speed limit is going to change the average speed. I am just drawing out that actual research that shows that people travel at what they consider to be a safe speed no matter what it said on the sign that they may or may not have seen on the way through.

Mr EATON - That is the issue and to me -

Mr MULDER - The point is to change behaviour, not the law.

Mr EATON - Yes, and we have been talking about this since about 1933, I think was, when the first 'we need to change driver behaviour', so about 80 years ago, and we still have not been able to successfully do it.

Due credit to our road safety people, the accident rates are down, and I think that's - to my mind, one of my concerns is that we have this unrealistic objective of no fatalities on the road system annually. It is one component of the system. We could go back to horse and carts, or a man walking with a red flag in front of the car.

Mr MULDER - We even lost people then. The man with the flag may have got run over by the horse.

Mr EATON - I am a great believer in science and technology. I am a great believer in the advancements that we have made in terms of motor vehicles in particular, our road system. Certainly our roads of today are substantially better than what they were 30 years ago. We have done a lot of improvements and that is reflected in a falling

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accident rate. And they are the marginal cost of doing things. If you are running at a high level of efficiency it is a substantial high cost to keep bringing that down. This is, in my mind, wishful thinking. If you base your changes on wishful thinking I don't know where we go.

CHAIR - Terry, we're running out of time, I need to speed up.

Mr DEAN - Terry, it seems to me that there are a whole lot of issues here that have been missed, and I want to go to the position of P plate drivers. What they are saying to us, or to the driver with the ordinary licence is it is not safe for you to travel 100 kph on these country roads, so we will reduce you to 90 kph. The P plater is able to drive at 80 kph on those roads. They will still be able to drive at 80 kph on those roads unless there is a reduction from back to 70 kph. What does that tell you? A P plater is not as experienced as an ordinary driver; that's why you're on P plates and you have to get that extra experience. What is that really saying? Is it saying that it is only just the ordinary driver that is causing all the problems? The P platers fit into the statistics in a fairly high rate, did, and I suspect they still do. I was wondering if you wish to make any comment on that, and the learner driver in fact can drive at 80 kph on these country roads when it is reduced to 90 kph. So the other motorists will only be able to travel 10 kph faster. What is that going to do?

Mr EATON - That is one of my concerns, that the concession for an experienced driver is only 12.5 per cent of an inexperienced driver, and the margin in my mind seems to be too close. Clearly, if we look at the signing now, we have a signing regime basically of 100, 80, 60. We are now going to have to go to 90, 70, 50, otherwise the steps become too small. So it doesn't only affect this part of it, it affects the whole system of signing, if you like, and everything slows down. Maybe that's Tasmania.

CHAIR - Terry, we are out of time. I thank you very much for your very comprehensive submission on behalf of the committee, and your very comprehensive and insightful evidence that you have given today. Thank you very much, we do appreciate it.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr MALCOLM JOHN EASTLEY WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Have you given evidence to a parliamentary committee before?

Mr EASTLEY - No.

CHAIR - Just to remind you whatever you say here you are covered by parliamentary privilege, however outside you may not be. As long as you are clear on that. We do have a submission from you but if you would like to speak to that submission briefly and then members can ask questions of you.

Mr EASTLEY - Thank you. I put that submission in and it had two other signatures on it. As you all know, one was Richard Sheriff who has considerable experience with driving around the state; he owns Retravision. The other was David Elmer who has a lifetime experience in the transport industry.

CHAIR - I was going to ask what your experience and background is, Malcolm, for the benefit of the committee.

Mr EASTLEY - No problem. My experience is similar to David Elmer's. I was in the timber industry for 30 years. I ran the transport side of it, and for a time I was on the board of the old Tasmanian Logging Association. They did the cart rates, and subsequent to that we had to do the same thing ourselves for a tender system. David Elmer had to do the same for the bus industry and the milk carting industry. Our basic problem stems from the fact that the Monash report, which underpins all this, is totally inadequate. We went along uninvited to one of the 26 meetings - they were public meetings - and we had a lot of concerns about what was being presented. The Monash report, it is well written, and well presented, and I have no problem with the background software. The problem is with the assumptions that have been put into that report and, honestly, I am quite distressed about that.

For a start, Max Cameron makes the assumption that hills, or vertical curves as he calls them, had no effect on costing, and that is a bit of news to a truck driver. They have used 85 cents and 86 cents a litre for petrol and diesel respectively. On country roads they used capital city pricing for petrol, and they based it on free running highway use mileage, which is altogether different, from a transport industry point of view, to what we are going to achieve on country roads.

This is basically in two sections.

First, the Monash report is based on a public benefit analysis. In other words it relates the cost of vehicles, the cost of labour and the crash savings - they have been given a cost. You balance the three together and you get a point at the bottom of the curve, which is the optimum mean speed, as they call it, which is the speed they are trying to achieve, based on the speed limit. The speed limit at the moment of 100 kph generates an overall average speed on country roads of 85 kph. They calculated the optimum speed at 86 kph - we are already under that. Any change in speed up or down simply increases the cost, because we are at the bottom of that curve. Safety costs become lower

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as your speed drops but as speed drops labour costs increase in a straight line. The thing is driven basically by vehicle costing - it is a function of gearing of motor vehicles - and that gives you a curve with 85 kph at the bottom. The graph is in our submission.

Monash did not understand that, or certainly the Road Safety Council didn't. We have a series of problems with the Monash report there. When you get to sections 6 and 7 in the Monash report you will notice the benefit that showed up on the 110 kph to 100 kph limits no longer applies, it goes the other way. Everybody can understand that on the 110-kph to 100-kph limit, which was ruled out by the government straight up, there is a benefit. The average speed for cars, which was 108 kph, would drop down to about 100 kph, depending on how well it is enforced, and there is a benefit in that from the crash perspective. They overruled that on economic grounds - it was costing too much to slow the transport down, it had a bearing on the funding they received from the federal government for the federal highway system, and they would not have received as much money if they dropped the quality of the roads down to 100 kph. That was ruled out straight away.

They produced a brochure for the public - and the only information the public had was that brochure and what was on the website. I think I have given you a copy of that. That brochure was quite wrong. It is an amalgamation of the results achieved in the 110-kph zones and in the 100-kph down to 90-kph zones. It no longer applied on the country roads. The costings are quite wrong. It should never have been released, and we asked for the last two years that it be withdrawn, but they refused to do it. The website showed similar information, and we asked that it be withdrawn. Eventually it was, but for two years we've been trying to get this information reviewed.

In the first instance, we approached the RSAC and I spoke to the policy manager. He put me in touch with Max Cameron, and Max was okay to talk to, but he was in Perth, Western Australia. They told me on the Thursday. We spoke by phone and by fax over the weekend, but the next RSAC meeting was on the Tuesday - it didn't give me time to put anything together. Max had a discussion with me about the issue of overtime rates. Their proposition was that dropping the speed only led to a few minutes' increase on a 100-kph trip, et cetera. Max's figures are based on a six per cent increase in time costs. A six per cent time cost on a truck driver doing 12 - 14 hours a day, is 40 minutes. If you have to pay that 40 minutes at time and a half, that is an hour's pay a day - that's \$100 a week regardless of what you gain or lose on the road. He just could not see. Max said to me, 'You wouldn't pay overtime, you would put another truck on'.

Now, that was an appalling thing to say to a truck driver. From that point on I couldn't deal with Max. I'm a pensioner. Phone calls to Western Australia were costing me a fortune. It was up to the Road Safety Advisory Council people to follow through on the rest of our problems - the issues regarding the fuel costing they had used and the fuel amount. Just on the fuel cost, the capital city cost is usually five to 10 cents below what we're able to get in the country. A heavy transport vehicle uses 20 per cent more fuel on country roads than it does on free highway running. That's a considerable increase in cost.

All the figures that you've heard quoted in the last two years about savings in crash costs are based on Max's assumption that there would be a five kilometre an hour drop in speed across the board. It can't happen, it's mechanically impossible. The background

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DIER figures were; under the 100-kph limit the overall average is 85 kph. Now, we know - and we can pick it up in the Kingston reports - the average speed on straight roads is 95 kph, and it was always a reasonable assumption that if you put enough cameras out there and drove the average down to the speed limit, you would achieve a five kph drop on straight roads. But there is no reason whatsoever to assume a similar situation on remaining roads, which are winding roads. To give that 85-kph average it therefore must be 75 kph. It doesn't take a scientist to work out what speed limit you have to impose to wipe five kilometres an hour off that. Dropping it to 90 kph makes no difference whatsoever.

When you look at the Kingston trial reports, the background figures from Central Coast measure the underlying factors, which might be wet weather in one particular year, or it might be the fact that people are tending to drive slower because of the 'drive to the conditions' campaign. Whatever it is, it was consistent and across the board and it's the way we want to be going. In Kingborough, there was a problem with one site, which was obviously road works, but it still left four sites in Central Coast and four sites in Kingston. And the results are quite clear. They did slow down slightly.

The site with roadworks was deleted from the results, and there was a drop in speed on the straight bits. It wasn't as much as expected; it dropped from 94 kph to 92 kph but the underlying factors account for 1 kph, so it became a one per cent drop on straight roads. That indicates it wasn't well enforced. If you put a camera out there, it would have driven the speed down to about 90 kph, but it would have destroyed public support for the system, so there was a problem there.

Across the board on the slowest sections, which you'll pick up quite easily, speed actually increased. The 5 kph they were talking about in the Monash report is actually 6 per cent when you convert it to the average speed of 85 kph in the Kingborough area. They were expecting a 6 per cent drop. When you account for the 3 or 4 per cent rise they got, and work into it that the underlying figure is a one per cent drop, they actually went 5 per cent faster than they would have done if they'd had no change in speed limit at all. The people of Kingston are driving less safely than the people of the Central Coast, who had no change in speed limit. At that time, the road safety people were saying they were running a successful trial in Kingston. That was part of the literature on their website. When we pointed out that it was actually a disaster, rather than look at the thing and rejig it, they declared the Kingston trial deficient and removed it from the website. When they did that, they wrote to the Integrity Commission with a view that it did not change anything, and the results from the Monash trial were robust and reliable. I must ask you, if I go any further with the integrity side of this problem, that we have a closed room, please? I don't want to name anybody.

CHAIR - Is that something you would like to do?

Mr EASTLEY - It is. I think it is appropriate. I have to run through a problem with the Integrity Commission and with the road safety people. It stems from the fact that the road safety council basically -

CHAIR - Sorry, so you're not -

Mr EASTLEY - I'm not going further into that but I'm just trying to say that -

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CHAIR - You want to make an explanation as to why we should do it.

Mr EASTLEY - Yes, why we should do it. I don't think it's wise to do it any other way. Is that possible?

CHAIR - It is possible. If that is the case, I take it that will be a fairly short presentation?

Mr EASTLEY - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. I would ask people to remove themselves from the room, including you, Malcolm, while the committee makes a quick decision.

At 3.53 p.m. the committee proceeded to hear further evidence in-camera.

At 4.02 p.m. the committee continued in public session.

Mr EASTLEY - We made some suggestions to the Road Safety Council about better advisory speed signs rather than the blanket limit. It works very well in New Zealand. They have a separate system there. They use a car to make sure they are reliable and consistent. Driver training has been ignored. One of my biggest bugbears over the years was that Jim Cox and the police commissioner at the time took the view that driver training made people cocky and was undesirable. That is quite wrong in that the driver training that we envisage is the defensive driving course which was quite common some years ago when we had the training scheme that Keating put in place and it worked really well. We took log truck drivers along even though they had done a log truck accreditation course. We took them along to that course and they learnt something. It should be part of every P-plater and L-plater's driving course and anybody who has an accident can be referred back and do it and they pay for it at their own expense.

There is a problem with P-platers at the moment in that reduce to 80 kph on 110 kph roads is a 30 kph difference. We feel that it would be better to limit them to 10 kph under the limit. At the moment they are learning just about nothing regarding road craft, they are being tailgated, they are being abused, and it is ridiculous. If they are not capable of doing 100 kph on a 110 kph road they should not have a P-plate. It creates more problems than it solves.

I am involved with a program at the moment because there is a problem with rider training on motorcycles, it has come into the system recently. People are no longer being assessed at that stage and then made go back and do another course it is just the way the system works now. Everybody gets ticked off, basically, and they are coming out of the training courses with a lack of skills. It requires that to be looked at.

One of the other biggest bugbears on Tasmanian roads is the merging situation. Some years they introduced a zip rule but our people here did not realise that it was not quite the same on the mainland. The underlying plank that underlines all that is that if you can see the blinker of the car in front regardless of the lane you give way and that carries over to where you are merging here on highways. In a mainland situation, if you are out there with your blinker on the traffic on the main road will slow it does not matter what they are they will let you in. In Tasmania you see they have the right of way because

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they are on a 100 kph road they will actually accelerate and drive up alongside you. We need to develop cooperation and not competition at the intersection lanes. That plank that is missing is the one about the blinker on the car in front, if you can see it you give way.

CHAIR - Malcolm, I am aware that we do not have a lot of time left and so to allow some questions from members - is there anything else that you have?

Mr EASTLEY - Yes, one other important one. Wire rope barriers. We are making some inroads there in that recently there have been some changes made with padding on barriers and everything else, but it does not change the underlying system that there needs to be a set of guidelines where on a given curve there is a certain diameter which you should not use wire barriers on a reduced curve and there should be a buffer zone of a number of metres from the running surface to the barrier. It is not going to work very well just padding the things. You have to move them away a little bit.

Some work has been done but the problem remains that with your recommendations I would like you to recommend that some changes be made to the Road Safety Advisory Council. What you have at the moment is 10 members; there are seven public servants who probably never drive out of Hobart, and you have three road users. You have a cyclist, a motor cyclist and the RACT. I have just resigned from the RACT because they have not protected the rights of country drivers well enough. Their version of all this was that they have endorsed the change to allowing some 100 kph roads to stay but that does nothing. It quarantines some roads from that drop in speed but it does nothing to solve the problem that people are driving faster through the curves. The whole thing should be changed around it; get rid of it and concentrate on the underlying thing which is drive to the conditions. That is traffic conditions, the vehicle you are driving, and a whole range of things. We can only do that. We are undermining that basic proposition.

Mr FINCH - This idea, I take it you are opposed to dropping it from 100 kph to 90 kph?

Mr EASTLEY - You got that, did you? Took a while.

Laughter.

Mr FINCH - How would you describe that move? Do you say it is foolhardy, not necessary; we can safely leave that speed limit where it is without the sword of Damocles being the 100 fatalities and serious injuries over the next six years, that there could be other ways perhaps mitigating that sort of carnage and result on the country roads?

Mr EASTLEY - Absolutely. They are savings based on the fact that they are assuming a 5 per cent drop in speed. It doesn't happen. There will be an increase in accidents if they do this because of the fact that people are driving faster on the curves. They have dropped that off and thrown out the only proper scientific evidence they have; they've thrown it out the window. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

Mr FINCH - So you see no need for a change to the speed limit on rural roads?

Mr EASTLEY - No. I think on the social cost, it is already where it should be. Monash measured that social cost as being the average speed of 86 kph. We're already averaging

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85 kph on country roads. It's already there on the accident side alone where it's basically on the drop-in speed; they got that wrong too. It's increased, not decreased. There is no winning argument here; it's just wrong.

Mr FINCH - What sense do you have about the condition of our rural roads? If you were to do an assessment of the roads that we are talking about altering, what is your sense of the quality, the width, the safety or otherwise of those roads? The condition they are in?

Mr EASTLEY - The condition they are in at the moment is better than they have been. We have been doing 100 kph as a base rate over the last 50 years. Cars are better, roads are better, we are tackling black spots as and when they are identified, and so we should. But saying that they are not suitable for 100 kph is quite wrong. What we should be pushing is drive to the conditions. What you are doing by saying, okay 90 kph will be safe, you won't be safer if you hit a 70 kph corner. If you leave the speed limit at 100 kph and drive to the conditions then you'll still be safe. That's what they're doing; they are undermining that basic skill of driving. We can't keep identifying the speed of the slowest section of road and set the speed limit on that.

Mr FINCH - One more, Mr Chairman. The expression 'drive to the conditions' is something I have only heard in about the last five or six years. Do you think that is part of the training enough? Do you think we inculcate our learner drivers particularly with that message?

Mr EASTLEY - No, I don't, Kerry. That should be covered by the driver training course right at the very start. There's been a very good MAIB plan to improve rider training on motorcycles by giving them a discount voucher on their rego if they do the riding course. The same could apply to driving.

Mr DEAN - Stay upright.

Mr EASTLEY - Yes, same as the stay upright course.

Ms RATTRAY - I think some insurance companies do that as well which has been a positive particularly for younger drivers. It wouldn't hurt us more experienced drivers as well, I would think.

Mr EASTLEY - I fully agree. The other point I should probably make is that there is an oncoming problem with motorcycles. MAIB have been in the process of changing the MAIB premium. Cars will go down because of crash history; motorcycles will rise. The biggest problem we have with motorcycles is that there are too many young fellows with unregistered motor bikes and no gear riding and having accidents. That has, in part, been caused by the cost of registration on motor cycles. It is \$530. My motorcycle now is more than the car. I run two motorcycles and three cars and there are only two of us in the family and I am paying five MAIBs. Sooner or later I get to the stage of these idiots. I am trying to do the right thing but sooner or later I have got to make a decision do I take a risk on a weekend and I am only riding that motor bike six times a year, what do you do? Do you register it or you don't? We have to change the system a little. We have to try to encourage people to register their motorcycle and ride safely.

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Mr DEAN - You have given us this evidence of the statistical data involving Kingborough and you did not refer to the Tasman one, so I do not know if that is really on the net because that was disastrous or so we are told by the Tasman Council mayor, but what is the reason for going down the path that they are going? How do you perceive that?

Why are they fixated on decreasing the limit from 100 kph to 90 kph if the statistical data they have does not really add up, and it certainly does not add up in some areas in my view as well, and I have asked for further statistics in relation to the number of crashes and when and how those crashes have occurred. So we are waiting on that evidence to come to the committee now. What do you think is really behind it?

Mr EASTLEY - It is driven in part, the original suggestion was from the Tasmania Together thing that just gave them thou shalt drop speeds. They did not say anything about how to do it or why to do it, or whether it was a good idea but it was an instruction basically.

The second part of the problem is Monash University is driven by ideology, if you wish, and they have a problem in that they have accepted that dropping the speeds across the board was a good idea, and they do it by saying, 'Oh, they do it in Sweden'. Sweden has a completely different set of situations than we have in Australia. Once they locked themselves into that system they could not get out of it.

I can tell you - and I realise I am on camera here this time - but the head people in the Road Safety Advisory Council had not read the Monash report. When I first started working on this, the first two people I spoke to said no I have not read it but we have people that do. The next one said I have not read it but I think it went to Treasury. The other one was saying we will save 20 lives a year. No, it is 3.8 on the country roads that go back to 90; the other 1.2 was on the gravel roads and that is where the basis of the five they are saying at the moment come from but that is all dependent on getting five kilometre an hour drop in speeds. It just does not happen. Their figures do not add up.

Mr DEAN - I had heaps of others but I will probably -

CHAIR - Malcolm, thank you very much for the submission that you and the others put in. I know you have done a tremendous amount of work on this and in some depth. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much for the time and effort you have put in. We really do appreciate it.

Mr EASTLEY - Thank you very much. I appreciate what the Legislative Council is doing. It is the first time that people have started to listen.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Ms DONNA LOUISE ADAMS, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, TASMANIA POLICE, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Hall) - You are very much aware that whatever you say here is covered by parliamentary privilege? However outside you may not be so.

Ms ADAMS - I do, yes.

CHAIR - Obviously, you have read our two terms of reference.

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

CHAIR - I invite you to make some opening comments.

Ms ADAMS - I start by saying that Tasmania Police takes the position that we don't make public comment in regard to the setting of speed limits across the state. We primarily focus on the enforcement of speed limits and other traffic laws, whether through enforcement activities or through deterrents - through our high-visibility policing operations. We also work with other government departments and broader partners across other agencies in campaigns to heighten the awareness of safe driving behaviours. We also like to promote the leadership role we have in the community in terms of raising the awareness of the need to drive safely, but also the risks that come about if you don't.

So having said that, it is important that you're aware - and I'm sure you are - that the Road Safety Advisory Council put forward this proposal in respect of rural speed limits, and the commissioner is a member of that particular committee. He has, therefore, been a party to the proposal that has been put before the parliament.

CHAIR - That was a succinct. That's the way we like it.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you.

CHAIR - I will open it up for questions from the committee.

Mr DEAN - While you don't set positions in relation to speed limits around the state, the police have said that if there were an issue with speed in a certain area, they would bring it to the attention of the right people.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that's certainly true. Again, that is part of our leadership role in the community and across government. When we get information, whether from local government or community members, we make an assessment and if we think the concern is valid, we put that information to DIER.

Mr DEAN - Have the police, to your knowledge, ever put any position forward to DIER, or to the Road Safety Advisory Council, in relation to rural road speed limits?

Ms ADAMS - No, we haven't.

Mr DEAN - Have country police raised those issues, to your knowledge?

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Ms ADAMS - In terms of country areas and speed limits, absolutely there have been concerns, because we do our own traffic enforcement, and planning for high-visibility operations. There have been several high-risk operations in rural areas, but they're normally as a result of a trend, or local government feedback. We respond with specific planning, but not more broadly.

Mr DEAN - I will put that question in a different way. To your knowledge, where the speed limit has been retained at 100 kph in rural areas, have any issues come to the attention of the police with regard to the speed limit and its impact on accidents and crashes?

Ms ADAMS - Not to my knowledge. We have a governance arrangement in terms of the way that we deploy our resources for traffic, and we have what's called a senior traffic officer's forum, which is held every two months, and I'm part of that. That's where concerns, trends and even lower-level comments by some of our country officers are responded to, and that's where the planning strategy is set up for the following two months. Through that forum, which has been in place since I have been in the position, there has been nothing raised that would indicate a concern such as you have described.

Mr DEAN - Are you aware of any rural road area with a 100-kph zone where there have been a number of crashes, deaths and casualties, where that limit has been maintained?

Ms ADAMS - I am not, again, focussing on the limit. Certainly we look at the roads in terms of where the crashes are occurring and I have been provided with three different maps that you can have a copy of if you wish. If you look back over 10 years, between 2003 and 2012, 25 per cent of the fatal and serious crashes have occurred in 100-kph zones that are not highways. I will provide that to you -

Mr DEAN - It would be good if you can table that?

Ms ADAMS - I can do that.

CHAIR - Donna, have you any supporting data as to whether speed was the issue?

Ms ADAMS - No. We take information at the time of a crash and that is later analysed by DIER, who are the gatekeepers of information in terms of crash causes. We receive it, but they are the gatekeeper and the holder of that information.

Mr DEAN - I appreciate that.

Ms RATTRAY - In relation to the maps and the crash data that you have, Donna, does it give the years?

Ms ADAMS - For every one?

Ms RATTRAY - I know it is between 2003 and 2012. I am thinking about advances in vehicle safety.

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Ms ADAMS - These particular graphs or photos don't but, for each crash there is a significant amount of information - the factors, the types of vehicles, the speeds, the weather, a range of things that make it -

Ms RATTRAY - Some of that information might come when we get the information from the department that Mr Dean has talked about.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, I am not sure whether you have also been provided with what we call a crash report but the information contained in a crash report, to help determine the factors that may have caused the crash, is significant. We have just moved to an online crash reporting system where police input all the information into a computer system, which obviously allows for quicker analysis. There is a lot of information they have to take to determine the cause of a crash.

Mr DEAN - That might help. It might be online, but it would be quicker if you can provide it.

Ms ADAMS - I can give you a copy that is fine.

Mr FINCH - Can you bring to mind evidence in respect of the speed influence on crashes on rural roads? Can you be definitive?

Ms ADAMS - My IT people have done a few searches for me. I have a table here that is entitled 'Fatal and serious injury crashes by road type and speed limit' and I can tender that document.

Mr FINCH - On rural roads?

Ms ADAMS - It is by road types, as in speed limits, and it will tell you whether it is a highway or whether it is an 'other road'.

Mr FINCH - Thank you.

Ms ADAMS - The table notes that 32 per cent of them occurred on highways, 21 per cent occurred in 100-kph and 110-kph zones on a highway and 25 per cent of the fatal and serious crashes occurred in 100-kph zones that were not categorised as a highway. I have a couple of different graphs in relation to that which you may or may not want.

Mr MULDER - What percentage was on non-highways?

Ms ADAMS - Non-highways was 25 per cent, and 32 per cent occurred on highways. There are different speed limits for the highways, which this particular table breaks down, to provide the different speeds that were posted for the crashes.

Mr FINCH - Do you think that 25 per cent on non-highways is a compelling statistic for the Road Safety Advisory Council or for the commissioner when they are thinking about bringing down the speed limit? Do you think that figure would be compelling?

Ms ADAMS - The figures that relate to serious and fatal crashes are compelling in themselves. We are definitely concerned about the infrastructure. Those road systems

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do not have the same level of support as the major highways, so, for us, speed is a factor in those crashes, and in the severity of those crashes.

Ms RATTRAY - Do you have any comment, Donna, on the 110-kph speed limit? I know it's policy, but from the policing perspective, if we reduce limits by 10 kph on the rural network for safety reasons, should we go to the next stage and put forward a 10-kph reduction in 110-kph zones?

Ms ADAMS - The big difference there comes back to the infrastructure and the road system itself. With the highways, there has been a concerted effort over the years to separate the lanes, to provide more shoulder width on the sides of the roads and a number of treatments to alert drivers to the potential dangers and risks associated with poor driving behaviour. The same effort probably hasn't been invested in the 100-kph road systems, or the non-urban roads that we're talking about.

Ms RATTRAY - Are you aware that 70 per cent of the driving public travel on those roads, and about 30 per cent on the roads that we're looking at?

Ms ADAMS - I am, yes.

Ms RATTRAY - So, do you not see that we're probably focusing on the 30 per cent when we ought to really be focusing on the 70 per cent?

Ms ADAMS - If you look back at those tables and the maps, the serious crashes and fatalities have occurred on the roads that you're examining at a far greater rate than they have on the main highway.

Ms RATTRAY - That's in more recent years? We'll find that out when we dissect that.

Ms ADAMS - They're over a ten year period; the statistics that I've got. I'm sure that DIER will be able to provide you with more because the crash data management system has been in place for close to 40 years - since they've been collecting data relating to crashes.

CHAIR - A supplementary question, Donna - are you also aware that on a lot of rural and regional roads where those deaths occurred, inattention and other factors are by far the most predominant factor, outside speed?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, absolutely. There are a number of common denominators in some of these crashes. Obviously speed, but inattention is another, as well as drinking and being under the influence of drugs. Sometimes it's very difficult to categorise a crash down to one of those particular factors. You might find there's been a combination of circumstances that have contributed to a particular crash. It's difficult to attribute all the time to one particular factor.

Ms RATTRAY - Would we be able to find out more of that detail when we drill down into the data you've got? Not that I'd want to be taking time to read every crash investigation that you've undertaken in the last ten years.

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Ms ADAMS - Yes, DIER is able to provide the information that relates to a crash. They can also provide information that it may not be just a specific cause of a crash - it might be a combination of two or three factors that led to a fatality or a serious crash.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you.

Mr MULDER - I have a couple of question and I think some of the issues will - on that 25 per cent on the non-highways, which is a fairly broad brush that probably captures the roads we are talking about. No doubt we'll get a feel for it, but wouldn't there need to be a significant number of those accidents whose substantial primary cause was travelling at 100 kph?

Ms ADAMS - Sorry?

Mr MULDER - I would expect, for this policy decision to be made, that a substantial proportion of those accidents - that 25 per cent of all accidents occurring in these areas - would have to be occurring when people are travelling below the speed limit -

Ms ADAMS - There would be some, no doubt, but I can't tell you -

Mr MULDER - No, of course you can't, but I'm just wondering -

Ms ADAMS - Absolutely. It depends what the cause of the accident was.

Mr MULDER - I'm not asking you to make decisions and judgments on other people's use of this data, I'm just trying to extrapolate what I think would be an important piece of data.

CHAIR - He's just trying to be tricky as usual.

Ms ADAMS - As you know, data can be used in a lot of ways.

Mr MULDER - I do take exception and ask the Chair to remove that most derogatory remark, with no evidence whatsoever.

CHAIR - I withdraw it unreservedly - that you are tricky

Mr MULDER - In these accidents, what confidence do you have in a police officer's ability to estimate the speed at which the car was travelling immediately prior to the accident?

Ms ADAMS - I am very confident. I spoke to our crash investigators this morning in relation to that and I had a briefing last week in relation to a specific accident and the training that they are provided now is first class. It is accepted nationally that we are among the best in terms of our crash investigators.

They tried to give me a 101 version of how to estimate speed but essentially there are about six different calculations they can provide to do with tyre marks, skids, the way a car has drifted, the impact of the two vehicles, if the vehicle has left the roadway, or anything that leaves the vehicle, whether it be a passenger or something that flies from the vehicle.

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There are lots of calculations they can do. They have been recognised in numerous court cases whether they be in the Supreme Court, or not, where they have been challenged quite vigorously and on most occasions it has been accepted that their evidence is expert.

Mr MULDER - So these are your trained expert investigators?

Ms ADAMS - They are.

Mr MULDER - Expert witnesses, that is fine. Are all the accidents in the serious accident category investigated by trained accident investigators?

Ms ADAMS - I would say, 'No', just because of the volume of them, but certainly anything that looks like being a fatality or involving multiple serious injuries would be investigated. There are no specific terms of reference to determine which crashes they attend.

It depends on the severity. Over the years we have obviously invested more effort into crash investigation, so if you are comparing how many we had back in 2002/2003 to how many we have now, our capacity is greater now than it has been previously.

Mr MULDER - Of those 25 per cent, is the police department in a position to provide information as to which of those accidents in, say, the last three years were attended by trained accident investigators?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, we could. Yes, absolutely.

Mr MULDER - Compared to those that were not?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, for sure.

Mr MULDER - Can I ask about your level of speed enforcement activity in these areas, given the fact that 25 per cent of the serious accidents are in these areas? The commission gave an undertaking in estimates that they were reviewing this, so how is the enforcement of speeds in these areas going now?

Ms ADAMS - You will be aware, like everybody, that we have suffered from the decision to reduce our numbers. We have lost 108 police officers over the last 18 months, but what is extremely significant in terms of our ability to undertake traffic enforcement is that we previously had close to 80 traffic positions across the state, which were dedicated traffic positions, plus what was supplemented by our uniformed people.

As a result of our restructure statewide we now have 104 road and public order officers dedicated to public order and traffic policing. Before we had a dedicated group that would pick up the high visibility and larger operations, but now their time is spent between public order and traffic, so that has had an impact. There is no doubt our enforcement activities have suffered as a result.

We have made other changes. Since 2009, when there were nine deaths on Tasmanian roads, there has been a complete review and a change to the way we undertake traffic policing. We invested a lot of time in getting the best information from across the nation,

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and internationally, as to what strategies we should be employing and where we should be going.

The crashes were predominantly happening on higher speed roads, or highways, so we developed what is called an arterial road strategy, which provided a clear direction to our people in terms of what we expected for our enforcement activities. Where previously they had discretion as to where they conducted their enforcement activities, we were actually pushing them to where the crashes were occurring. So, of course that meant more travel and obviously diminished time actually on the road.

There has been, I suppose, a number of different changes in the environment and the landscape that obviously have affected our ability to do enforcement activities. That's why one of the key strategies that we do have is around high-visibility policing, because it not only is done by the traffic people, it's done by everybody, and the number of unmarked vehicles - a number of things that we have done we have diminished, and everything is around high visibility. I think you can see that in the way we wear our uniform, our vehicles are marked up. So that opportunity to detect is obviously reduced.

Mr MULDER - Getting back to the issue which is the actual speed enforcement, would you say that 25 per cent of your speed enforcement, particularly through cameras and other devices, is now focused on the area where 25 per cent of the accidents are occurring?

Ms ADAMS - I couldn't say in terms of the percentage. I know that the statistics are analysed at that senior traffic officers' meeting every two months, and what has happened the previous two months informs where we go for the next. It's hard to say -

Mr MULDER - Even at the level of camera hours, do we do that per speed zone?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, we do with the road camera hours. Now, as you are probably aware, we have cameras deployed in trailers in high visibility marked up trailers, and also in covert vehicles. Again, there are specific criteria which are publicly available on the website as to how those cameras are deployed. But it is across the speed limits, and we do measure, or can account for, where the cameras have been and what speed limits around the state at any one time.

Mr MULDER - Also, I am aware you do research. From time to time you will put a speed camera in a transition zone or somewhere there, not for the purpose of issuing tickets, thankfully, but also - because I've seen the flash in the rear-vision mirror from time to time - with those sorts of things. Particularly in transition zones and in areas like the Tasman Highway now where you have variable speed limits - and I know you have done a lot of measuring there - what level of compliance are you finding in those transition zones and in these new signed-up areas?

Ms ADAMS - It does fluctuate. I suppose, from a public view, they are a transition zone from a high speed limit down to a lower speed limit, so it does vary. Obviously that is one of the reasons that we certainly don't do enforcement activities in there. It is probably a bit too early to say as well as to what the impact is, as to whether the driver behaviour has actually changed or altered as a result of the different systems.

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Mr MULDER - That is what I am getting at. It is one thing to put up a speed limit sign, but if the objective is to change the driver behaviour, then that is where your research is absolutely vital.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, and in terms of the variable speed limits, they are only very, very new and we are still obviously in that process of trying to gather the information as to how effective they are. It comes with a number of problems for us as well in terms of being able to deploy them when the system changes a number of varying zones throughout the system.

Mr MULDER - Certainly in those areas I don't think you can blame the lack of signage for non-compliance.

Ms ADAMS - Or high visibility signage, no.

Mr MULDER - Just one last one, and then, unless someone explores a new area I will vacate the field. We have heard on a number of occasions a lot of these accidents on these rural roads and straight sections could very well be results of suicide or other bits and pieces. When we are doing an accident investigation is there any look-back to see whether - excessive speed might be the cause - but whether people have a history of them, and is that factored into the fact that it was not necessarily speed, but the reason the person was speeding might be something to do with it.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, absolutely. Last year we had two that were taken off the fatality road toll because the coroner determined that they were suicides. So from an accident-investigation perspective, they not only have to determine the cause of the accident, but we have to meet the coronial requirements of actually doing the research around the driver's state of mind and all of those sorts of things that are actually happening behind the scenes to basically give the coroner the information to make an appropriate cause of death. So, yes, there is a fairly rigorous emphasis on that, to basically determine the appropriate cause of death.

Mr FINCH - There would be a difficulty with understanding that if somebody has fallen asleep and travelled over the other side of the road as distinct from committing suicide.

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

Mr FINCH - Let us say, hypothetically, that we make the recommendation that the speed limit stays at 100 kph and the minister then finally relents and agrees and says, yes, I made a mistake -

Laughter.

Mr FINCH - we will leave it as it is. We have had some evidence about education for drivers, driving to conditions and that sort of thing. In your opinion, experience, knowledge, talking with people and dealing with this two monthly meeting, is there something missing? Is there something that might help that situation where the driver dropping it from 100 kph to 90 kph is the fact that we might save these 100 lives or fatalities or serious accidents over the next six years, is there something that might balance what this might achieve as compared to not doing anything but there might be

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something else in driver education that might help the situation and give us better drivers?

Ms ADAMS - That is a really difficult one because the research that I have done and when I was appointed to this position and a portfolio I tried to get as much information as I could as to what has happened across the world in regards to road safety. I am on a couple of national committees in relation to it and I had to accept that all the experts will say every time a driver gets behind a car, or 95 per cent of them, they will make a mistake. Whether that be 5 kph over the speed limit or they change lanes or inattention or whatever, they will make a mistake. It is a range of treatments and education that is try to trigger the consciousness of the driver not to make those mistakes I suppose. I find it extremely challenging in trying to balance our enforcement activities whilst also making sure that we play a lead role in getting that message through to our drivers. We have tried numerous things, using the media, education. It still does not stop the inevitable happening.

Mr MULDER - We could, of course, ban cars and then we would have no car crashes.

Ms ADAMS - At some point if the technology continues on the cars will not be able to collide so they tell me, but I am sure it will be a while.

Mr MULDER - We will find ways of making it happen.

Ms ADAMS - I am sure that is the case.

Mr FINCH - We heard some evidence earlier about driver training and those special courses that might improve the attitude of the drivers to the job at hand, the better concentration, further application.

Ms ADAMS - From discussions again at the senior traffic officers' meetings it is the view held by those in charge that actually our younger drivers although they are fairly prevalent in those serious and fatal crashes we have also noticed a change in a more acceptance of the responsibility that they have as a designated driver. I think there are a number of factors again that can impact upon that. They are certainly more experienced in terms of their driving as a learner driver than we were and just that competence and understanding and the fact that they are spending so many hours that they have to do them and the majority of times that is with their parents. There are obviously some benefits there are we have noticed that there has been a change at that younger cohort. However, it is still significantly there a cohort that is represented in those serious injury crashes so the actual outcome does not marry up with our perceptions and our day to day interactions. It is a very difficult problem for us.

Mr DEAN - Donna, an area that has always concerned me, and I continually raise it, is this throwaway line really that speed has been a contributing factor. If we are realistic about it, a vehicle travelling at 50 kph and there is an accident involved speed is a contributing factor. While ever a vehicle is moving that is a factor.

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

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Mr DEAN - So I have some real concerns about that because if we have, I will put this position to you, a driver who blows 0.18 or something like that, involved in a crash and is driving at 80 kph on a 100 kilometre zone road or a 90 kilometre zone road, very clearly you would say speed is a contributing factor, when if that person was cold stone sober travelling at 80 kph on a road that is a 100 on a straight section would not be and should not be a contributing factor. So I wonder why we continually throw that in there? If police in a report today put 'speed is a contributing factor' do they put the percentage in there? In other words, do they say that the main cause of the accident was because this guy was drunk and that yes they were travelling at 70 kilometres; when you are drunk you should only drive about 10 kph.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, you are absolutely right. A lot of times there is more than one factor that has contributed to the crash and obviously that is what we try to capture in terms of our statistical report at the time. The commentary around speed is a factor.

The policy for an education of our officers is that that particular comment is only to be used if we can prove, or there is evidence to suggest, that the vehicle was involved in a crash and they were driving over the speed limit. So your scenario around the 50 kilometre one we would not say speed was a factor if they were driving at 50 but if we have evidence that they were driving at 70 kph well then we can provide that comment because we are trying to use that public education through the media.

Mr DEAN - To take it a little bit further, if a vehicle is travelling at 95 kph in a 100 kilometre zone and the driver is drunk you would not use speed as a factor?

Ms ADAMS - No. It would have to have some independent evidence to actually make some comment about the drinking. For instance, when we have found an empty bottle of bourbon in the front seat of the car we have made comment that we believe that alcohol has been a factor. Alcohol, as you know, we need to get confirmed through a blood test so at the time of the accident it is difficult to make that.

Mr DEAN - I want to be perfectly clear here - where it has been identified in the DIER reports we are getting to say that speed has been a contributing factor in this crash if it is on a 100 kilometre zone road we are to assume, are we, that the speed of that vehicle was over 100 kph?

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

Mr DEAN - I just want to make that perfectly clear. The point I am making, Mr Chairman, is that where the DIER figures show that speed has been a contributing factor in that crash and it is on a 100 kilometre zoned road that the vehicle has been travelling in excess of 100 kph. That is the point I have tried to make clearer and we may well make it as a result of this committee, hopefully. Thank you for that, I wanted to get that right.

The other point was, I want to take up from what Tony raised and that is the percentage of traffic work now would be dependent on what is happening in the public order area, I take it. So if you have a lot of public order issues out there - say this week it might be protest actions or whatever it might well be - does that mean that traffic policing for that period would suffer? How does it work out? How does the percentage work?

PUBLIC

Ms ADAMS - It definitely will suffer but we have a dedicated permanent team of what we call the road safety taskforce in each of the districts. We have 16 people dedicated across the state and that is all they will do. They are measured on their outputs in terms of traffic enforcement.

Mr DEAN - That is the ones funded by -

Ms ADAMS - By the MAIB

Mr DEAN - That is still there?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that is right. That is a given and will not be altered and tampered with.

Mr DEAN - Just on that, what is their concentration on rural roads and so on, the road safety taskforce?

Ms ADAMS - Again it will come down to the planning and strategising from that senior traffic officers' meeting as to what we - I could not give you a percentage. They certainly have to record all of their outputs in terms of what activities they have done and that is provided in a monthly report which we acquit against to the MAIB as well, so there is some accountability there.

Mr DEAN - The reason I ask this - and you would be aware of the Auditor-General's report that came out, I cannot remember the number of the report, it was about two years ago now where they targeted and looked at speed camera, speed devices and where they were being located and so on.

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Where the Auditor-General made a clear recommendation that the cameras should be where the crashes are occurring and so on.

Ms ADAMS - That is right.

Mr DEAN - Is that still being adhered to?

Ms ADAMS - Absolutely.

Mr DEAN - Or is it difficult?

Ms ADAMS - No, absolutely.

Mr DEAN - I do not want to catch you out; you might need to take it on notice.

Ms ADAMS - It is. It was the briefing I received when I took over the position and if you look at the camera operating guidelines, which are on the public domain, you will clearly see there that there is no hiding where the cameras, in general terms, are actually deployed, and the criteria around selecting sites, and the approval process that we have to go through before we actually agree to a particular site and start deploying a camera in there. Obviously, that has been informed by that review.

PUBLIC

Would you like me to provide those? You may as well have them if they are useful.

CHAIR - You have some to table?

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

Mr MULDER - We could use some maps with the forest reserves shaded as well.

Laughter.

CHAIR - Donna, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much for coming in and being frank with your answers. Obviously, there were questions that perhaps we would like to have asked but we realise you are constrained by policy. Thank you very much for coming and appearing before the committee. We appreciate it.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.