

# PUBLIC

## THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE MET AT HENTY HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM, GROUND FLOOR, CHARLES STREET, LAUNCESTON, ON MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2021

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### ROAD SAFETY IN TASMANIA

**Mr RICHARD SHERRIFF** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Ms Armitage) - Welcome, and thank you for your submission. I remind you that the hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, but anything you might say outside the hearing won't be afforded such privilege if you repeat anything to the media or outside. Also, there is some information for witnesses, if you haven't read it and would like to.

The procedure we follow is for you to speak to your submission, and then we can ask you some questions. We will be putting it on *Hansard*, so it will be recorded and published on the website.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss this with you. Road safety is always an emotional issue, and that is understandable. There would be very few people not affected by trauma, either now or in the future. It is often a difficult subject to broach.

I have always been of the belief that laws are made by wise people, and they are policed accordingly. In these issues, in framing laws, you need to remove yourself from the emotional thing, and draft and legislate laws that will be respected and have broad community support.

The easy political fix is to say we are going to reduce speed limits, but that doesn't always work well, and you probably ought to talk to David O'Byrne about that. He was proposing to do that a few years ago.

Sometimes, increasing a speed limit can have a positive effect. A case in point is that for many years, provisional drivers had to drive at 80 kilometres per hour, under the thought that if they drove above that they would be a danger to themselves and other drivers. That was increased to 100 kilometres per hour, and it has been a very positive move. It has improved traffic flows, and it has also helped the provisional driver. They haven't got impatient drivers trying to pass them on highways and things like that.

Then, a reduction of speed limits doesn't always work. The Southern Outlet is a case in point. The one out of town at 90 kilometres per hour has created a lot of congestion. You have two lanes of slow traffic, and if you are in the right lane it is sometimes very hard to find a gap to exit the Bass Highway.

So, you have to really think about what you are doing with speed limits and things like that.

The Tasman Highway is often discussed. The nature of that highway usually dictates the speed at which you drive anyway. Sometimes you are driving at 70 and 80 kilometres per hour in some of those kerbed areas, but you need those straights at 100 kilometres per hour to be able to pass at an appropriate speed. If you reduce that to 90 kilometres per hour, you are going

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to have trucks and everything moving about 90 kilometres per hour, and you'll have conga lines of traffic, which will create impatience.

Driving to the conditions is a very important educational tool. There probably ought to be more signage on that road to keep reminding people to drive to the conditions.

That is basically all I wanted to say, if you want to ask some questions about my submission.

**Ms PALMER** - I am sure there are lots of questions. I wanted to ask about the bit at the end of your submission about dual-lane highway designs, where you mention single-lane sections and the use of directional arrows that are painted on the road. I know some lanes and highways do have them. Are they not bright enough, is there not enough distance, or do you think they need to be used more? I am wondering if you could flesh that out a bit.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I think they are bright enough, but there needs to be more of them. We are on the highways all the time, but if you reflect back when the highways first changed and you go on them, it is quite confusing, particularly for tourists, now that we quite often have these passing sections and it goes from dual to single. They should use more of that, particularly when you come out of a T-junction. You get somebody who is used to driving on the right-hand side of the road, and they are coming out from a country drive, and they turn onto a highway which is just a normal two-lane section. There needs to be directional arrows to guide them to the correct side of the road.

**Ms PALMER** - So, at each T-intersection have an arrow showing that this side of the road is that way.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes, on the major ones that come out, from places like Queenstown and where the major tourist routes are. I did make a comment about T-junctions. All the T-junctions onto our major highways have a give-way sign right at the turn; there is no warning. I am sure you have noticed you could easily - particularly at night - drive straight through, not realising that the road stopped. It probably needs some more signage back further: slow down, T-junction ahead. We only have a give-way sign right at the T-junction. I think there are some accidents at those.

**CHAIR** - A bit like how they warn you that an 80 km/h zone is coming up.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes, T-junction ahead, slow down.

**Dr SEIDEL** - I was also interested that you mentioned the short-section dual-lane design, which is quite unique to Tasmania, isn't it? You literally don't see that short a section for a dual highway anywhere else.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - On the mainland it is usually on the major highways, the dual-lane side drive. I think it probably, is and there have been some accidents exiting those.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Yes, that is right. I am not sure if that is something you have heard of or experienced, because the way the speeds are, is awkward. Some people want to overtake when there is a short section. They will often do more than 110 km/h unless the other party is slowing

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right down, which also has effects - and because it has an effect on a short section, there is not much room for compensating or common sense.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - That's a good issue to discuss. I had made reference to that, and I don't know what it is. I think it is more the nervous driver who approaches it and sees a wider section of the road and decides to drive a little faster, but it is an everyday occurrence that the cars that approach at a slower speed then speed up through the section, and often you have to exceed the speed limit to pass them. It can be quite dangerous.

We need some education about that, and probably even some signage. It should be law - certainly etiquette - that a car approaching those passing sections at a slower speed should proceed through that section at the speed they approach it. I think some people are not aware of it. The nervous driver just sees a wider section of road. I don't think they are even aware there's a car wanting to pass them.

**Mr WILLIE** - Isn't it inattentive driving, where they've slowed down and then they see the car next to them at the speed limit and realise, and then they speed up?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - There is a bit of both. There is a bit of aggression in it. There are some people don't like you passing. It is an issue. I heard somebody talking on ABC radio about it; and if you're sitting around with your mates, they all complain about it. They really do. In fact, of late, some of the trucks seem to be travelling at about 110 through them. I think we need to get back to some education that those -

**Dr SEIDEL** - There were this morning when I drove up. It's actually a lived problem.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - It's a very common occurrence. You see it daily, and it's very frustrating. What's happening then, you've sometimes got both lanes coming, they could be doing 120 to try to get around. You've got two cars coming together at high speed. Yes, it's an educational thing as much as anything.

**Mr WILLIE** - You made comment in your submission about mobile phone usage. I'm interested in whether you're aware of good strategies to address that; whether it was driver education or policing methods or cameras. Do you have a suggestion for the committee in terms of tackling that issue?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - The key to it is the policing, I would suggest to you. I don't think education will make any difference. When I come past Bunnings in peak hour when the traffic is slow, it's very common to look in your rear vision mirror and see the person behind you like that.

**CHAIR** - Looking down.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I drive now with a bigger gap in front so I can sort of see if they were on their phone. It's a very common thing to see people on mobiles. I've got brothers and friends in the trades and it's not uncommon to see people looking down on the open road. It's a real issue.

**Mr WILLIE** - It would be pretty hard to police, wouldn't it?

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**Mr SHERRIFF** - I think they've got cameras now and there needs to be more policing on the current laws. Police can tell if they're on the phone by looking at the phone anyway if they pull them up, because the time you're texting is on the phone.

**Mr WILLIE** - We have heard some evidence in previous hearings that because of COVID-19 the traffic management unit of the police has been diverted to COVID-related duties. Do you think that's a factor in recent times, a lack of policing on the roads?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - It could be, yes. It could be that the policing needs to be, I think, increased. There's nothing like a marked police car to remind you that you've got to drive within the law on the road, even at my age. It's a reminder that you've got a responsibility out there. If you had cameras they would want to be mobile, otherwise people get used to where they are. It's very common around town here, to see people texting while they're waiting at lights and things like that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Would you deploy the cameras mainly in urban areas?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I think urban areas. It wouldn't warrant the cost, to put it in in country areas; it would be fairly remote you would catch someone. Ultimately, the way to do it would be to have the technology so you can't text while the car is moving. The technology is available.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, that's the other issue. I'm happy for you to pick up on that.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Isn't the issue more distraction per se? Currently, we are texting on our physical device and the alternative is to tap on the display - in modern cars you can literally do everything but you always see fingers going all over the place.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes. GPSs and that.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Or people just put their mobile device on the holder, which is the same thing but they're tapping away so they're also distracted. They don't look down, they look sideways or somewhere else.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Is there a point to ban the use of electronic devices whilst you are driving at a certain speed; or do you think that would be overkill?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Mobile phone answering and that, if it's hands-free, I don't see as a major problem but certainly texting, messaging, is. That would be a fair distraction on a driver, I would think. It would be interesting to drill down on some of the crashes to see if there was texting or that sort of thing going on. That task needs to be done, to drill down and look at some of these accidents and what actually caused it. Sometimes it is easier for police to put it down as speed, but there are a lot of other factors in there.

**Dr SEIDEL** - A proper root cause analysis would be good, wouldn't it, to see what happens.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes, you need to drill down on what it is. Was the accident within or at the prescribed or posted speed limit or was it above; was it excessive?

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**Mr WILLIE** - Would you like to see more publicly available data on those sorts of issues? You wouldn't want to identify road crash victims, of course.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - The difficulty is the people involved, don't want too much ongoing publicity with it. It would have to be a general thing rather than on a specific accident.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, that is what I mean.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I can't remember when I have been pulled up to have my tyres checked or anything like that. Years ago it would be a regular thing. Going to Hobart, they would pull you across and check your tyres and I am sure you would be surprised at the number of cars that can't brake in straight line, they have faulty brakes. Under extreme, quick stops, you have real issues with that, particularly in the wet. There needs to be more emphasis on that.

I can remember many years ago, I went to Victoria and sold a car. It had to be checked before I sold it. There are a lot of cars sold privately that probably ought to be checked before they're sold. It is a bit like boats. People are buying boats, and they're riddled with holes and they aren't aware of it; it's just patched up. There should be more emphasis on mechanicals - certainly on brakes and tyres.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Do you think a compulsory road worthy check at the point of sale would be appropriate, whether that it is a private or commercial sale?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes, it would.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is that feasible, given the amount of vehicle sales?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I suppose the car yards would have to certify they have their own thing. There would be a charge for it. If you are going to sell your vehicle, you would have to get a roadworthy certificate for it.

**Ms PALMER** - Or perhaps vehicles over a certain age?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes, cars over a certain age.

**Ms PALMER** - Which tend to be the cars that our younger drivers can afford.

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

**Dr SEIDEL** - I am looking at Ms Palmer, because my car is 50 years old, so that is quite good.

**CHAIR** - About the mobile phones, have you seen that in Queensland, they now have covert cameras? What is your opinion on those? Covert cameras were installed in July, with the new laws coming into effect on 1 November. In the first four days of the ban, 57 drivers were caught on their phones or without a seatbelt, and 57 drivers were also caught two or more times in the first four days. What would your opinion be about covert cameras that look down into the car and spot that you have a phone sitting on your knee?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - That is modern technology. They have them in Victoria.

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**CHAIR** - What do you think about something like that? Do you think that is impinging on rights too much, looking into your car, or is it worthwhile looking at?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I suppose you have to balance that out. Is it in impinging on somebody's right to be texting on a phone and probably have an accident. I think people would accept that sort of technology. About 95 per cent of the people don't text and they are not happy about those people who are doing it, so I think it would get support. I think they have a camera at the lights, where they have stopped and they can see in the car.

**CHAIR** - They have to be able to identify you as well though, wouldn't they, so they must have some way. Can they read the number plates?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - The registration plate, yes.

**CHAIR** - They can do that, can't they, when you are driving along. They can pick up a car; they ping if they're not registered.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - That technology is the sort of thing that will come and people are going to have to accept it.

**CHAIR** - It is quite a lot of revenue apparently that they raise so now they have caught nearly 2000 people in the first week.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - It is staggering to think people are being caught twice at it. That is the difficulty we have with educating people on the road.

**CHAIR** - You get double demerit points apparently if you get caught twice.

**Mr WILLIE** - You made comment on the 40 kilometre speed limit travelling past police vehicles with their lights. Are you able to expand upon that?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - You should investigate that accident out the back of Westbury. I have no criticism of what was happening but I believe there was a police car operating at the time. There was a head-on of a vehicle that was braking or making an incorrect passing manoeuvre and it could have been caused by somebody obeying the law of 40 kilometres an hour past an emergency or a police car. You need to get the coroner's report to find out why.

I think it has happened in Victoria too. They have changed that for any highway with a speed limit of 90 kilometre and above, they have changed it from that 40-kilometre speed back to 80 kilometres. The 40 kilometres an hour cutting back is fine in speed limits of 80 and below. The emphasis has to be to pass those vehicles operating, like police, et cetera, with due care, but if you are on the highway and you have a conga line of traffic and somebody jams the brake on at 40 kilometres an hour, it is a big drop.

There was a comment in the paper that they put it down to inattention. That could very well be the case, particularly if you were following a truck and you didn't see what was going ahead. That is an important one that you should investigate. It may be that Tasmania might need to recommend that we do something with it here.

**CHAIR** - I have an idea they might be.

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**Mr WILLIE** - You support the principle of it to protect emergency workers and whoever they have with them?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes, absolutely. Road works have signage, 80 ahead and then 60 and then 40. You will notice that authorities made a comment that police were to pull vehicles up in areas where it is safe to do so. There has to be a bit of thinking on that side as well.

**CHAIR** - That is true because the road works do slow you down gradually. They go from 110 to 80 to 60 to 40.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - It is a good thing. Again, there needs to be more education on it for people to be aware of it. I think there would have been a line of traffic that morning and suddenly it was either an incorrect passing manoeuvre or braking to stop a rear end accident there.

**Ms PALMER** - Just a comment, it comes back to driving to the conditions. If you see up ahead that there is an incident, you would like to think most people would take care and slow down rather than having laws that say you must drop from this to this to this. Again, it is about commonsense and what decent courtesy would be, slow down, take it easy.

**CHAIR** - I guess 40 is quite a drop from 110 on the highway.

**Ms PALMER** - It is a huge drop.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Particularly if you are behind a truck and you can't see what goes ahead and suddenly, even if you have a reasonable distance in it. It is worth looking at anyway.

**CHAIR** - That is good. You have brought up some great points.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - It is quite obvious if you drive of a morning, particularly in fog, people drive with park lights on where it is useless. What is happening is that a lot of drivers are retrofitting headlights and there should be a standard on the low beam. A lot of lights now are just too bright. They are so bright - they are so bright they're dazzling. High beam is fine when you want some extra lights to help you, particularly for country driving, but there should be standard of so many lumens for low beam. Have you noticed that they're brighter, some of the lights?

**Ms PALMER** - Some cars - I don't know if it's new cars - they almost look blue.

**Mr WILLIE** - It probably goes back to that earlier point about vehicle inspections, and making sure there's a frequency around that program.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes. That's right.

**CHAIR** - Especially when they hot them up and put all the extra rows of lights on. Sometimes you do flash your lights and that car has its lights up and they still don't do it; they're just still bright.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes, particularly on low. I'm sure some of them have brighter lights than are reasonable on the road.

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**CHAIR** - Is there a legal standard at the moment for lights?

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I'm not sure. There would have to be on lumens.

**CHAIR** - We can ask the police when they come. It would be good to ask about that. There's a legal standard, isn't there, for things like your window darkness and so on.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes. Sometimes, with six cars coming towards you, you'll think the middle one has its lights on full but it hasn't. Sometimes if you flash them they'll put them up, and you realise then that they have some added lumens that they probably shouldn't have.

**CHAIR** - You have certainly raised some really good points, Richard. We appreciate you putting it all altogether, particularly as someone who travels a lot, because obviously you've been on the road such a lot.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - I've probably done about 3 million miles, I suppose. I'm still commercially on the road, but I did put a submission into Don Winn's thing and that's why I'm still interested in it.

**CHAIR** - It's important with all the experience that you have. I know that when you were mentioning the arrows on the road, every now and then you're driving along and you go onto these two lanes and you do think, gosh, are these two my lanes - and then you see an arrow, and it's really good to see that, so you know the cars are actually going to come towards you.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - You can get distracted about where you are, particularly if you are talking on the phone, even though it's hands-free, and all of sudden you're at Campbell Town, and you wonder how you got there.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - Can you imagine people from the mainland, tourists - it's very confusing for them.

**CHAIR** - Yes, it would be even worse.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - It really is. I compliment you for getting involved in this. It's something that continually needs looking at.

**CHAIR** - We've had a lot of accidents of late, particularly this year.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - The current law is more policing, more high-profile policing.

**CHAIR** - And more marked police cars.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - They are doing a fantastic job. I have no criticism of the police. Every day they are catching people who are doing 180 km/h and on drugs and that sort of thing, so with the resources they have, they are doing an excellent job.

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**CHAIR** - There are a lot of unmarked police cars, too, I've noticed. You only see them when you see these nice flash Subarus on the side of the road with those two little lights flashing when they've pulled someone over.

**Mr SHERRIFF** - They do play a part in it, too. It makes you aware that the car behind you - it might be a ute, a utility or flat tray - there could be a policeman in it.

**CHAIR** - That's right. Thanks so much for coming in, Richard. We really appreciate it.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

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

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Nigel. Just to let you know, we are taking sworn evidence, and what you say in here is protected by parliamentary privilege, but anything you say outside the hearing may not be. The evidence we take will be recorded and published on the committee website afterwards.

To start off, as an introduction, would you like to make some comment about your submission and then members will ask some questions.

**Mr COATES** - Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to present. My name is Nigel Coates. I am a traffic engineer with 38 years' experience in local government traffic engineering in the UK and Australia, and with a particular focus on safety and provision for vulnerable road users. The views expressed here are my own. I am not speaking on behalf of my employer, City of Launceston. They are happy for me to be here presenting but I am not speaking on their behalf.

I work for the City of Launceston where I have developed, sought funding for and implemented 30 blackspot projects and more recently 12 vulnerable road user projects and four safer rural road projects. I do, therefore, have an infrastructure bias in my work but in seeking to address crashes, recognise the important contribution of the other elements of the Safe System - safe people, safe vehicles and safe speeds. I have also recently become the representative for the Australian Local Government Association on the Austroads Road Safety Task Force.

As we seek to adopt the Safe System, the best practice in improving road safety on our roads, one of the most important resources is accurate and informative crash data to understand the causes of the crashes and which elements of the Safe System should be deployed to address them. For this we are dependent on police reports which are summarised in the Department of State Growth crash and stats database. At times in the past we have had direct access to individual crash reports, sometimes even to the hand-written police reports and they have also been able to generate collision diagrams showing the direction of vehicles and pedestrians involved. This is no longer easily available to us in local government.

Two elements which I am going to suggest to try to increase access to crash data. The crash data we are able to access from DSG as local councils has reduced significantly in its usefulness in recent years. We no longer have access to the RIMS, is the roads database, which enabled us to generate collision diagrams to understand patterns intersections better. Our current access is a data base spatial data portal which anyone can get access to. That gives us some basic information about crashes. It doesn't include their contributory factors, which the attending police officers include in their assessment of the reason a crash happened. Often this has included inattentiveness, or inexperience, but also when alcohol is a factor in crashes or when the driver has exceeded the speed limit or travelled at excessive speed.

It is important information to try to understand when we are looking at how to address crashes into the future. It helps us to understand whether an infrastructure fix is the most appropriate way of addressing crashes or whether it needs to look at other ways.

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Subject to confidentiality, we at local government level should be able to access as much information as is available regarding the crashes without having to ask the crash stats team at State Growth each time. They are willing to provide us with information if we ask them but it is every time we need to ask them for the information.

**CHAIR** - It used to be a matter of course, and now it is not?

**Mr COATES** - Yes. It used to be that we could log onto their RIMS database.

**Ms PALMER** - Is that R I M S?

**Mr COATES** - Yes. I can't remember what it stands for. Something like road information management system, I think.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Why do you think it has changed? Were you in your position you are in now when those changes occurred? What is the rationale for it?

**Mr COATES** - My understanding is the changes are mainly technical in terms of external bodies having access to an internal State Growth database. I don't think there is any other reason. There is the confidentiality side of it. I suspect they wouldn't allow us to see those hand-written police documents any more. That may have changed but the RIMS database did give us the opportunity to look at individual crashes as well as doing crash reports in terms of patterns of crashes and researching different road users and that sort of thing.

**CHAIR** - And when you're applying for black spot funding, you would use that as information, as evidence?

**Mr COATES** - The spatial data portal gives some basic information. It looks at individual crashes and through that we can look at patterns but certainly not into the detail that we need to understand what's been happening in those crashes.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Your work would be easier if you have access to the granular data, I would imagine.

**Mr COATES** - It would.

**Dr SEIDEL** - And the grants and the applications you are sending out for black spots would be more meaningful if you had access to it.

**Mr COATES** - Yes, certainly the directional information. That's vital when you're trying to understand the directions the vehicles involved in a crash are coming from, and that's not so readily available to us anymore.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Do other jurisdictions have the same concerns? Has the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) been involved in addressing this?

**Mr COATES** - I think LGAT has made a similar submission but maybe that was based on what I said then, I'm not sure, but certainly when they were seeking council's input to the inquiry they made a similar point.

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**Dr SEIDEL** - You would only be interested for your municipality. You wouldn't be interested in something that happens in Hobart.

**Mr COATES** - Yes, of course. I don't know how the other councils perceive this, to be honest with you. I haven't been in touch with them about this issue, but I assume that concern is reflected statewide.

**Ms PALMER** - Chair, I know we've interrupted your presentation but this was quite an area of concern. In your opinion, is there anything on RIMS that you could see would be an issue with regard to confidentiality? Would we need a modified program, in your opinion; or do you think it's fine the way it is?

**Mr COATES** - The way it was.

**Ms PALMER** - The way it was.

**Mr COATES** - Yes, I think so, because it was filtered to ensure that we didn't have any information about the parties involved in the crash. Obviously, it's -

**CHAIR** - The parts were redacted.

**Mr COATES** - Yes.

**Ms PALMER** - Does RIMS not exist anymore?

**Mr COATES** - I think it probably does exist but my understanding is as an external party we don't have access.

**Ms PALMER** - It is still a current data base.

**Mr COATES** - That's my understanding, yes.

**CHAIR** - But they've withdrawn the use of it.

**Mr COATES** - It slowly reduced. We clicked on the link and tried to log on. It wasn't like an intentional thing that it was taken away; it's more like the technology involved in giving us access to it and going through fire walls and things between different organisations. That's my understanding of the reason why it happened.

**Mr WILLIE** - Also, sharing information with councils is really important. Do you think the data that's publicly available is transparent enough if we're going to hold decision makers to account, having publicly available data where the community understands crash patterns and areas of concern?

**Mr COATES** - For the community what's available on the spatial data portal is probably really good and I refer people to it if they're asking me about road safety issues on our network. I say, have a look yourself, this is publicly available data. You can have a look at the crashes and how they're reported here.

**Mr WILLIE** - So, you're comfortable with that?

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**Mr COATES** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Is that on the police website?

**Mr COATES** - No, it's the spatial data portal, on the State Growth website.

**CHAIR** - Are we able to get a copy of that when you've finished?

**Mr COATES** - I'll give this to you.

**CHAIR** - That would be great. Then we can print it off.

**Mr COATES** - The second issue and thought is if we really want to take road safety seriously, we need a better understanding of the cause of crashes, maybe through a dedicated unit to investigate them. I have referred to a UK 2020 report which explores how crashes are investigated. That's the Royal Automobile Club Foundation's *International Review of Road Collision Investigation Approaches*, and it's what's called Forensic Accident Investigation Services.

When rail crashes or plane crashes occur, there is a very detailed investigation into why those occur. Also, in the health and safety field if a workplace accident happens there's often a very detailed investigation which happens into the causes of that and the potential ways in which future incidents could be prevented.

Many European countries have an independent body to investigate road crashes. Sometimes, this is the same organisation as the rail or plane crashes or similar.

The RAC report includes Australia as one of the countries that it looks at and picks out New South Wales which has a body of this sort. Apart from that, most of Australia doesn't have anything similar.

In most cases the police do the investigation, often with a dedicated unit. But an important element of the investigation and how this relates to the safe system is the investigation into the blame for it. That investigation is done because the police are often there to try to ascertain what has happened and whether there is a prosecution needed as part of the crash, whereas an independent unit could be looking into a crash and the safety system is intended to be a blame-free idea: what was the system failure in this case and what can be done to prevent it into the future?

The UK is probably in a similar position to Australia in this area and that is why I am thinking this is something which should be considered and looked into. The UK report has 13 recommendations. I will read out three for you which might be worthy of consideration here. The first one -

- It is recommended that the purpose of a UK Road Crash Accident Investigation Board (RCAIB) includes the independent investigation of road traffic collisions and other incidents occurring on the UK road network in order to identify the causes of these incidents and the factors influencing their outcomes as well as to make recommendations aimed at reducing the occurrence and the severity of future incidents.

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This is the purpose of an independent body. The second recommendation -

- It is recommended that the UK RCAIB should be established as an impartial investigator, independent from the existing judicial investigation process operated by the police.
- It is recommended that there are different potential models for the UK RCAIB that will have a significant effect on its required staffing levels and financial budget and it recommended that this issue is given careful consideration.

Obviously, having an independent body is going to cost some money, having people there who are employed to make

**CHAIR** - It might save lives.

**Mr COATES** - Yes. A similar unit in Tasmania needs to be investigated against the benefits, but normally speaking, we would find that the benefits in preventing crashes far outweigh the financial impact required to have a body of this sort in place. We do have the road safety levy which provides a dedicated funding stream which might be beneficial or might potentially be used to fund this sort of a body.

**CHAIR** - MAIB as well?

**Mr COATES** - Yes. It is something that needs investigation and is worthy of looking into. One of the ideas of a body like this is that the people in it would be able to attend the sites of crashes. In a lot of Australia, it probably could mean travelling a long way

**CHAIR** - In Tasmania it would work quite well.

**Mr COATES** - In Tasmania, that is what I was thinking, it could possibly work reasonably well because you could probably be on the site within an hour. Often when a serious crash happens, the road is closed for a significant time to investigate the reasons. That's the second thought.

Then the third one is for significantly more publicity around road safety, using expertise that most local governments don't have. There was a recent pedestrian safety campaign and there was some misunderstanding of that. Some people thought maybe blaming the wrong party because they saw those pedestrian symbols on the footpath. But, it was an effective way to increase awareness of the issue and the responsibility for addressing it. There is a corporate responsibility and you need to look at all road users involved in road crashes.

**CHAIR** - Do you think there should be more education in schools? I am not sure how much they have in schools now.

**Mr COATES** - I don't know. I am not sure.

**CHAIR** - Particularly high schools?

**Mr WILLIE** - I think there are some driver programs in some schools.

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**Mr COATES** - There you go. There are my three hours for further thoughts.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Anyone with some questions?

**Dr SEIDEL** - Your second point when you mentioned the dedicated units - you would still see there is a huge role for the police or the initial investigation, but while they are starting the investigation as the first on the site, you would then call the unit in almost like a secondary survey?

**Mr COATES** - Yes. I think that's how it would work, yes. Obviously, the police are going to have a role because -

**Dr SEIDEL** - You would look at having that decentralised, so, I would imagine three or four units -

**Mr COATES** - Possibly. But, like I say, obviously the resources to do that would be fairly big if you had three but, in trying to get to a site quickly, then it would probably be necessary but, yes. I think it just needs investigating further and I haven't got a suggestion as to how the model would work for that.

**Dr SEIDEL** - You could argue the work needs to be done anyway.

**Mr COATES** - Yes.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Whether it's now by the police or by - I don't want to call it a neutral unit but an independent unit.

**Mr COATES** - Yes.

**Dr SEIDEL** - So, again, it would - the police are stretched for work anyway so -

**Mr COATES** - Yes, of course.

**Mr WILLIE** - Could it be funded through infringement revenue?

**Mr COATES** - Maybe. I don't know.

**CHAIR** - That money is supposed to go back, isn't it, into safety, a lot of it.

**Mr COATES** - Yes. Okay.

**Ms PALMER** - I had some more questions about the data side of things. We have covered a bit of it. I want to know, in your capacity with the council, have approaches been made to try to get back to how it was in getting that information from RIMS?

**Mr COATES** - Yes.

**Ms PALMER** - And has that been rejected? If so, by whom and what reason was given?

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**Mr COATES** - Yes, certainly. We've continually tried to - like I say, it was suggested it was an IT issue and we've had our IT people working with their IT people to try to resolve it and nobody seemed to be able to find out exactly what the reason was.

**CHAIR** - When you say an IT issue -

**Mr COATES** - Yes, in getting access through firewalls to their system.

**CHAIR** - The computers talking to each other?

**Mr COATES** - Yes, exactly.

**Ms PALMER** - That can't really be that hard, can it?

**Mr COATES** - No. You wouldn't have thought so.

**Ms PALMER** - I'm not an IT person but I -

**Mr COATES** - Nor am I, so I'm obviously dependent on others in what I say they can and can't do.

**Ms PALMER** - But the only reason was just it was an IT issue? There's no other issue with you accessing that information?

**Mr COATES** - As I say, I do not think it was intentional on behalf of those people who manage the data, no.

**CHAIR** - Josh, do you have any -

**Mr WILLIE** - Nothing further.

**CHAIR** - Tania, you have just arrived so you've missed out on -

**Ms RATTRAY** - I have missed out. I will be reading the *Hansard*.

**CHAIR** - Nigel has a handout for us for his presentation which is really good.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thank you.

**Mr COATES** - I can leave that with you.

**CHAIR** - That will be great. Just asking you, Nigel, about the UK, you were saying that they've been doing it. How long have they been doing it?

**Mr COATES** - I don't think they have. I don't think the UK would have yet set up this body.

**CHAIR** - Right. They're considering it, is it?

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**Mr COATES** - Yes. There's a 2020 report by the Royal Automobile Club in the UK with a suggestion -

**CHAIR** - A suggestion to do it?

**Mr COATES** - Yes. But there are bodies in Europe. I think it was Sweden in particular -

**CHAIR** - Finland did a -

**Mr COATES** - Yes. I think so.

**CHAIR** - The attachments that you've sent along which -

**Mr COATES** - Yes. Have a read through that report. It summarises who in the world does this, and it is predominantly European countries that have these bodies in place.

**CHAIR** - It has been suggested to us as well with regard to signage - now, obviously, Launceston City Council, you've got your 90 going up the highway but sometimes that can actually cause more grief than good. Have you found that has been helpful changing that 110 going out of Launceston to 90? Has that improved because you still hear a lot about accidents occurring on that same stretch of road. You're involved in that section with the data. Has it improved, has it stayed the same, or become worse?

**Mr COATES** - It is a state road so it's a state initiative to do that.

**CHAIR** - Yes, but council still has involvement, though?

**Mr COATES** - Yes, that's right.

**CHAIR** - They've put in for the -

**Mr COATES** - I haven't looked into the data to see if it has -

**CHAIR** - No.

**Mr COATES** - Speaking personally, I find it a lot more comfortable driving up there now. You feel less like you're on a race track and trying to juggle space with other vehicles but I'm not sure if the data reflects that or not.

**CHAIR** - I wasn't sure whether you had seen it because I'm aware that council obviously put submissions in and puts evidence towards the changes to the roads in the municipality.

**Mr COATES** - I haven't looked into that.

**CHAIR** - No, that's all right. I appreciate that.

**Mr WILLIE** - One last question would be, is there anything else that the state government could do to assist local government to tackle this issue? Are there any other areas that could see improvement?

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**Mr COATES** - Just ongoing liaison. They do have education programs at times. They sponsor education about how to tackle crashes, and it will be beneficial to have that repeated every so often.

**Mr WILLIE** - More education programs.

**Mr COATES** - Local government, yes. In Launceston we are fairly well resourced with expertise, but certainly a lot of councils would be too small to have dedicated officers with that expertise in traffic engineering.

**Mr WILLIE** - Some of their roads would probably be high risk too, changing speed limits.

**Mr COATES** - Yes. The state is providing that vulnerable road user money, and the state rural road money, which is good. That has prompted us as local governments to be a lot more proactive in this area, and gives us that extra resource to enable us to fund projects to improve safety on the roads.

**CHAIR** - Talking about vulnerable road users - the bikes and the bike lanes - do you find that it makes a difference? How are we going in this local area? Are we proposing to put more in? Do we have enough width? Have they improved?

**Mr COATES** - Width and road space is the challenge. Hiking organisations are pushing us to put in separated bike lanes.

**CHAIR** - Will e-scooters make a difference to that? Will they then be using those as well? Do you think that will be an issue?

**Mr COATES** - The legislation around e-scooters is quite interesting, and doesn't enable them to be used on roads higher than 50 km/h. A lot of our bike lanes are probably on 60 km/h arterial roads.

**CHAIR** - But they will be on the footpath then, won't they?

**Mr COATES** - Yes, they will be on the footpath. Obviously, there is an interest there and we are looking at that closely. In Hobart we have that trial of two vendors being able to operate in our cities. In terms of the public using e-scooters, once the legislation is there they will legally be able to use them on the roads.

**CHAIR** - Around the suburbs, because most of those are 50 km/h.

**Mr WILLIE** - They are using them already.

**Mr COATES** - That is right.

**CHAIR** - Do you see an issue with them sharing the bike lanes, for the vulnerable road users?

**Mr COATES** - I don't think so. I don't think e-scooters and bikes will be an issue sharing that space. I think it will work okay. The challenge on our road space is always that to provide

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dedicated space, you need to take something away - and what you need to take away is often parking, which is very sensitive. People don't like losing parking on the roads to provide a facility, even though parking doesn't have any safety contribution.

**CHAIR** - And putting trees in, beautifying the roads.

**Mr COATES** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - It has been great you have put a submission in. Any other comment you would like to make, Nigel?

**Mr COATES** - I don't think so.

**CHAIR** - It has been good. Thanks for allowing us to take a copy of that. We appreciate you coming in and giving your insight into the roads, because as I said, I recall the many years when I was on council you have always been there. Are you still riding your pushbike?

**Mr COATES** - I do, but I am not as fit as I used to be.

**CHAIR** - Thanks so much, Nigel.

**Mr COATES** - All the best. Hopefully you will come up with some good recommendations.

**CHAIR** - I appreciate your thoughts today in putting the submission in.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**The committee suspended from 11.53 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.**

## PUBLIC

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

**CHAIR** - Welcome, and thank you for your submission. I remind you that the hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, but anything you might say outside the hearing won't be afforded such privilege. The evidence is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be available on the committee website afterwards.

The procedure that we normally follow is that if you would like to make some comments then members will ask some questions.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Right. Every six months, we get the full complement of figures, et cetera, off MAIB for registered motorbikes and for classes of motorcycles by postcode. Then we get a summary and at the end it is broken down into the sizes of the motorbikes, whether they are a full licence, a learner licence, provisional, et cetera.

This comes in very handy when we looked at the new training model for learners and for novice riders. Since it was introduced in 2017, the actual claims for the learners was 55 in 2017-18 and it is down to 23. The provisionals are down from 33 to seven. The P2s are 29 down to eight. As the motorcyclist's experience goes in, the claims for MAIB drop. That has proven to be the best thing that has happened to motorcyclists. Since 2004 when we started the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council, I and the other members have pushed to have an on-road component as part of the learner process and it is the best in Australia.

It was put together by the University of New South Wales, trialled in Victoria for 12 months and I and the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, et cetera, went to Victoria and met with the University of New South Wales. We had a look at the new training and thought it was brilliant. We came back and it has gone through and it has been done now, so that was very good.

The other thing that comes out, when we look at all the figures, et cetera, is MAIB. In 2005 there were 298 claims. That is with 10 000 motorcycles on the road.

**CHAIR** - That is only motorcycles?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Only motorcycles. Farm and off-road, et cetera, are not included in these figures. It is purely road registered.

We have been getting these figures for many years but it was only in the last couple of years we found out we were asking the wrong question. It is all in the manner of what is asked for. We asked for claims for motorcyclists, so they gave us claims. Included in the claims were restricted, Tasmania unknown, unlicensed and mainland claims. That was the full claims. But when you look into the MAIB charter, they are not to accept anyone who is unregistered or unlicensed. They don't pay them. Therefore, we came to, we would like to get a copy of the 'accepted claims'.

**Dr SEIDEL** - May I interrupt you? So, MAIB doesn't pay for the party that has caused the accident but may pay for the party that was affected.

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**Mr BULLOCK** - If a motorcyclist has an accident, comes off the bike and there is no other vehicle involved, by their charter they don't pay for any injuries.

**Dr SEIDEL** - That's fine.

**Mr BULLOCK** - If it involves another vehicle in Tasmania because it is a 'no fault' system, the other vehicle or the pillion passenger on the bike gets covered. That's it in a nutshell.

Those claims, they are around 290, 250. Since we've got the accepted claims, they are down to 170, 216 and 177 because 33 were rejected, 54 rejected; 45, 33 each year. It's an unbalanced view when they keep saying we are over-represented in accidents, in claims but they are dodgy figures because they have added ones that they do not pay for - so it makes it look very bad. We are now getting rejected claims as well so we can work on those.

**CHAIR** - A greater breakdown.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Have they given you a list of non-accepted claims and you said they were unregistered vehicles and unlicensed drivers -

**CHAIR** - You mean reasons for it?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Reasons for non-acceptance. Would that also be for drug and alcohol, exceeding the limit - that type of thing? They would be covered there as well?

**Mr BULLOCK** - That is a query that you may like to ask. I am not familiar with that. I have found out that all the figures they have been giving us are the full figures, which we asked for, but when we found out, no, we just want accepted claims. The rejected ones don't count because they are not supposed to be paid; so, why are they including them? They will not give us the breakdown at the moment because they are such small numbers that you would be able to pick out who was rejected.

**CHAIR** - You would be able to identify them.

**Mr BULLOCK** - That just shows the small numbers that you are dealing with. In the documents we've given you, we have had nine fatalities this year. In February we asked for funding to do a road safety campaign for motorcyclists. It was rejected, for their reasons, I don't know, and it was asked for from the Road Safety Advisory Council. However, the Road Safety Advisory Council has just about been split into two groups. They've got a subcommittee, and the subcommittee is police enforcement and education. I have never seen a subcommittee of any group or whatever that spends the group's money without going to the full committee to have it advised and passed.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is it ratified though, do you know? I mean, it could be ratified.

**Mr BULLOCK** - They come into Road Safety Advisory Council and say this is what we did. They gave \$20 000 to the North West Football Association and that comes under education for young people, 17 to 25, about drink driving. That's taken out of the road safety levy money, to sponsor a football team; but they won't give any money to support or help the motorcyclists who have been killed on the road.

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**Mr WILLIE** - I don't think it was to sponsor the team. I have had a briefing from the Road Safety Advisory Council. I think it was for education, wasn't it, trying to change cultures?

**Mr BULLOCK** - And there's another \$20 000 following that has just been done.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Because I am no longer on the Road Safety Advisory Council, the current president was advised that it is another year's \$20 000.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So they have rolled over that sponsorship?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, but it doesn't go to the Road Safety Advisory Council to say they have accepted and agreed to it. They do it themselves. That is because Paul Kingston is the CEO of MAIB and chair of this subcommittee. I don't believe it should be done. I think it should all be done through the Road Safety Advisory Council and they authorise or not - but that is how it goes. I have some other figures I put aside.

**CHAIR** - Would we be able to have copies of your documents?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. With the figures I told you before about the decrease in claims since 2005 through till now, we have more than doubled the number of registered bikes on the road. When you have a look at the number of bikes out on the road, the claims have remained the same or decreased. Motorcyclists do a pretty good job, with very little help being given. We applied for a grant from State Growth to do road safety things for motorcyclists. It was not accepted. They did their interpretation on our application and they changed what we wanted the money for.

I have finished my little introduction now.

**Dr SEIDEL** - You mentioned the number of Tasmanian motorcyclists has increased. Isn't it also the number of motorcyclists who come from interstate, like motorbike touring, which is probably disproportionately higher than the number of cars you would get when they come in groups and so forth?

**Mr BULLOCK** - No. We got the figures off TT-Line and we were looking at around 7000 bikes a year coming into Tasmania, that is excluding the Tasmanian bikes on the boat.

**Ms PALMER** - And that is visitors?

**Dr SEIDEL** - There is no rental market?

**Mr BULLOCK** - There are a couple but they are not large at all. There's not a great deal. They bring their own bikes nearly all the time. Tasmania has some of the most beautiful roads anywhere. It takes you five minutes to get out of the city and into some nice roads, whereas on the mainland they ride straight for hours. It is a big incentive for people when they come over here.

We had a lot of accidents from mainlanders when they came over initially, but the Motorcycle Council produced Ride Tasmania safety pamphlets and they were given to people

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who got on the boat. We went to the Government; and if they booked for the boat to come over with their bike they were given the Ride Tasmania safety pamphlet. They have videos on the TT-Line about motorbikes and riding on Tasmanian roads. State Growth has just done a video and that is being cut down to being a 30 second ad on TV about Tasmanian roads. That was a film that was done a few years ago that they put on the *Spirits*, so they had all the footage. We asked them to take out different parts of it and use in their advertising, which they finally did. It is a good video.

**Dr SEIDEL** - So the direct peer education has made a significant difference?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, since the Motorcycle Council has been involved in it. I have argued and fought that anything you want to do as far as advertising, should be done from the motorcyclist's point of view. Other motorcyclists will listen to motorcyclists. Simon Richardson, of Richardson's Harley-Davidson, was my vice president for years. We have Malcolm Campbell, the racing driver. He is in the video that the Government has put out there, telling people to be aware.

**Ms RATTRAY** - He and Robbie Scollier [TBC] were very good bike riders.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, they have put it together and it is from motorcyclists. Motorcyclists listen to it because it is a warning from people who are experienced riders. When you give something to a private company - and the Government is a bad one for doing it - they are sitting at a desk. They've never ridden a bike. They know nothing about motorcycling and then they come up with these programs to put on TV as motorcycle safety. It doesn't work and we had a big blue with State Growth about the latest one. We said we reject what you put forward from this company and they went back and they did what we said and it's lovely.

**Dr SEIDEL** - That PR company also didn't consult with you as the largest riders so they just went away, found other sources for ideas and messages and you felt it just was not going to cut it for your -

**Mr BULLOCK** - I've done a couple of road audits for State Growth. I did the Great Eastern Drive from St Helens through to Hobart and presented to them. They were doing one on Bothwell. We couldn't get there early enough to go out on rides; we went down the week before and we did the audit. It's good because we were aware of the roads and all the rest.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Yes, thank you.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Paul, when you do the road audit, do you give them a bit of summary of the quality of the road or lack of? Is that part of it as well, not that there's a lot S-bends? How do you do that? Can we have some idea?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I do it in the car because you can't do it on the bike and then pull over and write it down so you do it in your car. Then you pull off and I do it by the speedo, the mileage. When I did the east coast, I start from the Midland Highway and I go 23 kilometres, 15 kilometres or whatever - 'road breaking up on edges', 'culvert too close to the road, on a bend', and these little things like that. There were a lot of culverts from down around Orford way and they were right on a bend and the culvert was about this far from the bitumen so if a car cuts the bend a little bit and you move over, you can be in a lot of trouble. We put in things like that.

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Bothwell - there were a couple on that road, and they put extenders on the culverts and moved them away from the road. Different things like that. It takes a lot of experience.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You would expect, particularly if there's a road upgrade that that would just come as a matter of course, looking at all road users, not just a vehicle -

**Mr BULLOCK** - You just had Nigel in here from the Launceston council. Nigel is a wonderful person, an engineer. He rides his pushbike to meetings if you have a meeting with him about a section of road or something. There are pieces of infrastructure they put in which are unsafe for cyclists and I tell him, 'You ride a bloody bike, what are you doing, doing that for?'

A typical one, a good one, is going along Hobart Road and turn into Carr Villa. There is a step-out for pedestrians to come out and it goes onto the road. They said it only comes out as far as a car if a car is parked there. That's okay. Then you have an island in the middle of the road for pedestrians to stop at. I nearly collected a cyclist there because he comes up to that and then he moves straight out in front of you. It's a hazard. Why do it?

If you go along Invermay Road, they have just done up all of Invermay Road and there are a couple there.

When Rosemary was on the council I used to go in there -

**CHAIR** - I remember you very well.

**Mr BULLOCK** - They looked forward to my going in.

**CHAIR** - The question is, did you get any action?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Oh, yes. Which engineering department has come up with this bright one?

**CHAIR** - We had a few things changed, didn't we?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Cormiston Road. Then they started a road safety committee in there and that was going really until Jim Cox put his two bobs' worth in, going behind the committee and organising with engineers so that fell apart.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Paul, the message that I'm taking out of this - and correct me if I'm wrong - is that there needs to be more collaboration with all road users when they are developing roads, maintenance of roads, just anything to do with the roads?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I get angry with some of the things they do. A big one is in a submission about wire rope barriers. They are 1.8 metres, the centre barriers from the traffic going past. I said to them, 'That is very good. What if I hit it, it stretches three metres so I have a head-on with a truck coming the other way?' 'Oh, the chances of that is so minute it doesn't matter.' In Victoria it is a set policy, and I think Tasmania has taken it on too, recommended 4 metres from the traffic is the wire ropes. Absolute minimum is 3 metres yet the Midland Highway is only 1.8 metres. Why?

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If you have an accident with a wire rope barrier, say you are coming down the Outlet and you hit that barrier, the first thing you want to do is get your lawyer to find out when it was last tensioned because they do not do any maintenance on them. If you have a low-slung car and that tension is not on those wires, it goes up and it takes the roof off your car and you are sitting in the car. People don't realise. If you go along, all those posts have little nobbles on them that the wire sits on. Now, if you see a wire down below that, it is loose. I drive along because -

**Ms RATTRAY** - Because you are looking for those things.

**Mr BULLOCK** - I see it all the time and you tell them and they don't do anything. So if you have an accident you just sue the Government.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Are you aware whether that is part of the Stornoway road maintenance contract to assess that?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Who has the Government put in place to do the maintenance?

**Ms RATTRAY** - That's Stornoway.

**Mr BULLOCK** - It would have to be a maintenance contract.

**CHAIR** - I am not sure they are the wire rope barrier.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is what I mean. I am wondering who does actually assesses that. Is it Stornoway under their contract or is it another contract provider?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I don't know.

**CHAIR** - I do have answers. I asked the question in parliament so I do have some answers that I can provide later on.

**Mr BULLOCK** - I see it all the time. They aren't kept up to date.

**CHAIR** - The annual expenditure, just so that you know, for 2020-21 was \$462 000. That was the annual maintenance expenditure for wire ropes.

**Mr BULLOCK** - It is ridiculous. In my submission to you I put the cost. We couldn't get the cost from the manufacturers. We couldn't get it from the Government but I found it in Western Australia in *Hansard* that one of the ministers over there asked a question in parliament and -

**Ms RATTRAY** - The cost of buying?

**Mr BULLOCK** - the actual maintenance cost is 10 per cent. How many millions did they spend on the wire rope on the Midlands Highway last year? Where's the 10 per cent of that cost for maintenance. It's not there so they are putting in a dangerous piece of safety equipment which is ridiculous. The cost of putting cement down the middle of the road which you can make in Tasmania with Tasmanian manufacturing and put it down the highway will last 50 years but with the wire rope, it has a life span of 20.

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**Dr SEIDEL** - Just to follow up on this one, so even for the newer sections on the Midland Highway you were not consulted?

**Mr BULLOCK** - No.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Because your concerns have been on the public record for quite some time.

**Mr BULLOCK** - From day one. We got the evidence from 2007, I think it was about the countries in Europe that banned it, pulled it out. Britain, when they came up for their life span they were replaced with cement because it has 50 years plus and there is no maintenance. It is there. If you hit it, you slide along it. If it is damaged by a truck - well, a wire rope will not stop a truck; a truck will go straight through it. So the evidence we gave you on the updates, that was 2006 about the Netherlands and them pulling the barriers out. This one I entered in there with the car with the wire through the roof, that was on the Victorian government's website. It was given to the ambulance drivers and everything - if they come across something like that, they're not to touch that vehicle until those wires are de-tensioned. If you're in a car that has been involved with that, the ambulance won't touch you until they do it because they could be injured or killed -

**Ms RATTRAY** - If it lets go.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. That is an example of a low-fronted car and non-tensioned wire. It's not nice.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Was any reason given why they went ahead regardless for the newer section? Is it because we just do this now? Are there other reasons or the evidence is not conclusive?

**Mr BULLOCK** - It came back when Jim Cox went to Switzerland.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Or was it Finland?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Sweden.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Sweden. I knew it was a Scandinavian country.

**Mr BULLOCK** - We went over there and that was it, it was fantastic over there but we're not Sweden. They put it in over there because of the snow. The build-up of snow goes through it and it melts and it's gone. We don't have snow here so why not put up cement? They can try to compare us to them, and it doesn't work because we're not them. We've got big territories and everything.

**Mr WILLIE** - There must be instances where wire ropes have saved people though; that's why they keep rolling them out, isn't it?

**Mr BULLOCK** - If I go to the Road Safety Advisory Council and say, 'Look at that. If that wire rope wasn't there, that wouldn't have happened.' He said, 'That wire rope stopped that car from hitting from another one' so you're losing the battle because they're using it as their own little - 'No, it has saved lives. It stopped four cars from going across.' 'But there were no other cars the other side.' 'You don't know that.' It's a big circle; going - where?

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People have been dismembered, cut to pieces. There was one on the straight up near Ulverstone. He left Devonport; he was drunk, hit the post, and he got cut to pieces. They were picking up pieces of him everywhere. That's terrible. He would have been dead if he had hit a cement barrier, but he wouldn't have been in pieces. That's it. There has been other people with amputations and it's not the wire - they call them cheese cutters - it's not the wire, it's the posts that actually cause the problem.

**CHAIR** - Do they impale them?

**Mr BULLOCK** - They cut them. They have a round or whatever and they're small -

**CHAIR** - Because they're sharp.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, and they just cut them. There was a lady on the toy run just south of Conara and she had a big teddy on the back of her bike. The husband was ahead of them and they stopped at Campbell Town waiting for them. She got picked out of a group of half a dozen and blown over, came off, and her head hit the post under the W-beam.

To fix that they put what is called a rub rail - that's the flat panel underneath the W-beam, and that stops people going through and hitting the posts. That's their solution to it. A lot of the councils' engineers say they don't know. You shouldn't use that on a straight because you're not going to go under it on a straight. It's on a bend where you go down and not the inside. You put it on the outside of the bend so you only have to do sections of the whole road; you don't have to spend the money doing all of it.

**Dr SEIDEL** - You're saying there's lack of knowledge there as well that leads to increased cost just to patch up a system that probably shouldn't be used in the first place?

**Mr BULLOCK** - The W-beams are preferred to the wire rope.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Yes.

**Mr BULLOCK** - By just putting these panels on the bottom in the corners because when you come down you're sliding out. There's no good putting it on the inside corner because it's going to do nothing. You are just wasting money. Councils don't know about them. When we've spoke to the councils, 'Don't put them there.' You say, 'We'll save a lot of money.' I said, 'Right. Just do on the outside of the corners.'

**CHAIR** - You would dispute, then, what I received back from the Government on 22 September:

The overall maintenance budget is sufficient to ensure that all wire rope barriers are in good and safe working order and that wire rope barriers are visually inspected on a regular basis, re-tensioned in accordance with manufacturers' recommended frequency and repaired as required when damaged and, depending on the level of damage to a wire rope barrier as a result of vehicle impact, they also need to be re-tensioned as part of the repair.

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That was this year, in September. They also said they are given high priority with the overall maintenance budget to ensure that barriers are checked and maintained in good and safe working order.

**Mr BULLOCK** - I will dispute that.

**CHAIR** - That is good. You can make some comments. We can ask the Government, when we see them.

**Mr BULLOCK** - This is what I gave you about the *Hansard* of Western Australia and Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) -

The maintenance cost of wire rope barriers, conservatively estimated at 10 per cent of installation cost every year.

The Norwegian public road administration has argued that cable barriers cost a lot less than other barrier designs.

While it is true that cable barriers are cheaper to purchase, maintenance costs have proven to be astronomical and thus the total cost ends up comparable to other designs.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau are in charge of Australia. They are the ones who put it out to the engineers in the state governments and all the rest of it, so if the engineering departments or whatever in Hobart want to argue about it, fine. You take on the ATSB.

**CHAIR** - Interesting.

**Mr WILLIE** - We have seen a significant increase in the number of motorcyclists with a licence and also registered motorcycles. I am interested in whether there is somebody serving on the Road Safety Council currently with motorcycle experience?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, Mick Boyd.

**Mr WILLIE** - That is a regular position

**Mr BULLOCK** - He took over from me, being the president of the Tasmanian Motor Cycle Council and he has been accepted and he is on the Road Safety Advisory Council now. I was on it for seven years.

**Mr WILLIE** - Does the motorcycle community promote that person into the Road Safety Council or make a recommendation? Do you have any input into who is on there?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Whoever is president. The Road Safety Advisory Council was set up to be the top CEOs, managers or whatever, the police commissioner and all the heads of the different ones - the trucking association, et cetera - they are on the Road Safety Advisory Council.

**CHAIR** - Is it, or their secretary? It has to be the president or CEO.

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**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. The police has changed. The police commissioner used to go, now the deputy commissioner goes - Jonathan Higgins - and we have the chairperson now, Scott Tilyard. He has a motorbike and rides a motorbike as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - My follow-up question is, you have a representative on the council but you are unhappy with some of the council decisions.

**Mr BULLOCK** - I was on there for seven years arguing with them. I will argue against their expert from Melbourne, the professor who is on there. All he was interested in doing was dropping the speed limit. I turned around and my argument to him was 'righto, whatever decisions we come up with, they have to be acceptable to the public. What you are saying isn't acceptable and won't be'. 'Oh'.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We have already had that discussion a number of years ago if you recall, about reducing the speed limit.

**Mr BULLOCK** - I said, if you want to put it on a section, like you want to do from Scottsdale to St Helens, no, they won't accept it; but if you want to put in on Weldborough Pass or sections, okay, they will accept that. Not on the whole highway.

**CHAIR** - Just on dangerous sections.

**Mr BULLOCK** - You can't do more than 40 on it, so what's the use of mucking around putting speed restrictions or anything on there. Leave the thing alone.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It's confusing for people.

**Mr BULLOCK** - You've got that many different speed limits over the place.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I've noticed that councils are having a lot more input into reduction of speed limits in particular areas. I know from Derby now, used to be from where the township finished, the speed

**CHAIR** - Your question is with regard to?

**Ms RATTRAY** - I was asking Paul whether he has found that local government has been having more input into that.

**Mr BULLOCK** - There are arguments on both sides and the first thing you have to find out, is whose road is it; because 90 per cent of it would be State Growth.

I had an argument with the Launceston Council about the Esplanade and Tamar Street Bridge. Stop the right-hand turn and have the traffic flow more; we don't need the lights there to stop. They finally did it after how many of years arguing with the council over it. That's fine, but when they did it, they left the lights working and stopping the traffic - and it took another argument with them.

I have also asked the council to do George Street and the Esplanade, because there is a right-hand turn lane. A car turns there once every two hours. The left-hand lane turns to go across the bridge or go through to Kmart, and they're backed up into town because a pedestrian

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is crossing the road. The cars can't move, so you'll get three cars through the traffic and the lights change, but there is no-one in that right-hand lane. Do away with the right-hand turn and have that going straight through. Simple little things.

**CHAIR** - You should have been here talking to Nigel.

**Mr BULLOCK** - They took away the motorcycle parking outside the LGH.

**CHAIR** - Did they?

**Mr BULLOCK** - So I went in there and had a word with them.

**CHAIR** - Did they put it back?

**Mr BULLOCK** - They moved it. He was going to take the car park out over the road, and I said, don't be an idiot; between the pedestrian walk there and back towards Launceston there is a letterbox. There is nothing there. Put four motorbike parking spaces there. He said they were going to do that for drop-off. I said why? I said look at that sign there. There is a drop-off in the hospital. There is a whole U-turn and you can put six cars there, but he wants to put one out on the road as well. I said fine, put one there, that would be okay, but you still have four parking spots for bikes.

**CHAIR** - It would make it a bit safer too. What would you think is the main factor in the motorcycle accidents? Do you think it is speed? Do you think it is alcohol? Do you think it is the roads?

**Mr BULLOCK** - We get this every six months, and we have the -

**CHAIR** - But how do you think we can reduce the accidents for motorcycles?

**Mr BULLOCK** - When I get this on the computer, it comes up like this. We have registered bikes by postcode. There are 1096 bikes registered in Devonport. There were 18 accidents, because when you go down this line you pick out the accidents. How come there are 18 accidents in Devonport? We got in touch with State Growth. Where are they and what was it? When we went through it there wasn't one particular thing. It wasn't in one area. It was over the whole postcode area.

There are 1600 bikes registered in Launceston, but there are 7000 in the Launceston area, because it is not just 7250, 7248, 7249. They are included in the Launceston area, but in Launceston there is 'x' amount more.

**CHAIR** - But you get the data somewhere to say that those accidents were caused by going too fast, by hitting something on the road -

**Mr BULLOCK** - Cars pulling out, a ute doing a U-turn.

**CHAIR** - You have the difference between single-vehicle accidents, and the ones that have hit cars?

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**Mr BULLOCK** - We get these, and then we go through. If there are only two, four, five or whatever, don't worry about it, but if you have over a dozen, we want to have a look so we can have an audit on it - is it the road conditions, or what is happening?

**CHAIR** - If it is a blind spot.

**Mr BULLOCK** - If it is in one area, we can soon pin down what has caused the problem. It could be infrastructure needs doing. So, we try to do that - or I was doing it as much as I could.

**Dr SEIDEL** - You are representing motorcyclists, so my question is really about scooters and mopeds. Currently, you would need a licence for these?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, you need to have a licence for any of those.

**Dr SEIDEL** - What do you think would impact road safety if people could use their car licence to drive a scooter, as they can in South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory?

**Mr BULLOCK** - They are with a lot of mates. They all want to use their licence. They reckon, pay the licence and they can only drive one vehicle or whatever at a time, and they would love to do it, because I pay about \$600 for my bike.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Sure. Based on your experience, do you know whether it would affect road safety? Has it made any difference in the other states where you can drive your scooter having a car licence? It's not more dangerous?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I would not let them do it, for the simple fact that before we had the new training they were having accidents. When we introduced this new training, on-road with an instructor, they became aware of the dangers around them and all the rest of it. We have dropped so much, it is fantastic. So, you couldn't open it up.

We argued with State Growth when they raised the speed for learners in cars to 100 km/h on the Midlands Highway. We said we couldn't go along with that at the time because of the number of accidents we were having, so how could you increase the speed limit? Now, after that training is done, State Growth will not even look at raising it. We said it's dangerous doing 80 km/h on the Midlands Highway with B-doubles going past you and everything. You cannot do it.

Even the police motorbike inspectors we spoke to said it's dangerous, so we have asked the Premier to look at raising the speed limit to the same as the cars.

**CHAIR** - This is for learners, or for Ps?

**Mr BULLOCK** - For Ps.

**CHAIR** - For Ps on bikes?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, because they can only do 80 until they go up in the class, whereas a car -

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**CHAIR** - In a car you can do 100?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - I didn't realise there was a difference.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, but because we said we didn't want it raised initially because of the facts of the accidents, now we have proven that the new training has been fantastic, we have halved the amounts of claims - but they will not look at doing anything for motorcyclists.

**CHAIR** - There are certainly questions we can ask when we have the Government in.

**Mr BULLOCK** - How many millions have they spent for cyclists, and how many hundreds have they spent for motorcyclists? For anything over a 125, they raised the limit from 90 to 125 for the small bikes. For the posties, their bikes used to be 90, but they raised the motorbike engines to 110, so the Government changed it to 125, and that gets cheap registration. Anything from 125 through to the Harleys and the Indians all pay \$600-plus a year for registration. It's just ridiculous.

If you have a look - and we have asked MAIB and so on to do it - but he said the regulator has set it for the next four years, so you have 125s to 250; 250 to 500; 500 to 750, or whatever. They were the old ones before the power-to-weight ratios and everything came in. We want them to bring it up to date, so 125 is below 600, 660; or it's over 660. Make it simple for everyone.

**CHAIR** - I assume they would make the recommendations to the regulator.

**Mr BULLOCK** - If it came from the motorcyclist fraternity they're not interested. That's how unbelievable I've found it.

**CHAIR** - You have been pretty good with all the evidence you have given. You have provided a lot of advice, which has been really good. You have also given us a lot of questions that we can ask State Growth when we meet with the Government.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Look at that one there. You can see where we started getting the figures for the rejected ones.

**Ms PALMER** - We can have a copy of that?

**Mr BULLOCK** - That's yours. That's fine.

**CHAIR** - We will copy it for each member, which will be really good.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. They are the actual figures. Here's another one - the Road Safety Advisory Council. That was a very good thing. Does it need to be thrown out? Replaced? Updated? Because the agenda for meeting number 43, which was in March this year -

**Ms RATTRAY** - Before you retired?

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**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes. One to five was to endorse minutes of the action of the previous ones, and the next ones were crash statistics, RAC media. Endorse one, automated speed enforcement - and the rest are all 'to note'. Not to vote on, not to do anything, and that's where that subcommittee comes in. You don't have a say. You don't find out about it. I had to ask how much did you give to north west football? It was \$20 000. Very well worth it, very well received.

**CHAIR** - So does your President - that's Mick from West Tamar, I am assuming?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Yes, that's him.

**CHAIR** - Does he provide a copy of the minutes to your group - or is he allowed to?

**Mr BULLOCK** - Confidentiality, and that is absolutely unbelievable. It is not on the agenda, that's not confidential, but anything else -

**CHAIR** - So the minutes are confidential, and can't be shared with the organisations they represent?

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

**CHAIR** - Verbally they could be discussed?

**Mr BULLOCK** - I have given things verbally, because you have to sign your confidentiality forms to start with, but I think the meeting minutes might be okay, so I have done put them up on the Motorcycle Council Facebook page and webpage.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Paul. You have given us food for thought and certainly some questions that we can ask when we do have the Government in, with the variety of different areas that they cover.

**Mr BULLOCK** - Thanks very much.

**CHAIR** - We really appreciate you coming in. Thanks Paul.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

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**Mr BARRY OLIVER**, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome. Any evidence you give here is protected by parliamentary privilege, but it does not apply outside this hearing. The evidence is being recorded and a Hansard version will go up on our committee website. If there is anything you want to say in camera, please let us know.

We appreciate your submission. If you would like to start with a few comments, then we can ask you some questions.

**Mr OLIVER** - Thank you. I have prepared a statement to begin with to back up the submission itself.

**CHAIR** - Are we able to have a copy of that after you have finished? That saves us taking too many notes, and then we can just listen and concentrate on our questions.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We can concentrate more on what you are saying.

**CHAIR** - We can concentrate on questions then.

**Mr OLIVER** - Firstly, thank you to the committee for the opportunity to speak in support of my submission which was made out of a genuine and deep concern for the safety of our first-time and most vulnerable drivers. I have endeavoured to establish my bona fides in the submission based on 60 years of driving experience and the conduct of over 700 structured one-day defensive driver training courses between 1992 and 2009.

In my honest view, from those experiences and many years of careful observation, I am prepared to state without apology that the overall standard of driving competency in Tasmania is well below par. It is obvious over the years that we have been prepared to accept a system that meets basic, set criteria to secure a licence without really understanding what is needed to ensure safe and competent drivers. Understanding road rules, being able to reverse park, three-point turns, giving way to the right, et cetera, is all very well but what about understanding the dynamics of the vehicle and the myriad other factors such as observation, awareness, anticipation skills?

The submission details a range of areas that are critical to safe driving but many are either not mentioned or glossed over in the licence application process. The mandated minimum hours behind the wheel for a learner, subject to state requirements is a joke at best with many parents admitting to me they fudged the hours because Billy has been driving around the paddock since he was six and he knows what he is doing. The question has to be asked: how much does Billy learn driving to Hobart from Launceston and back when it is unlikely he will have to pass another vehicle, hardly use the brake, not have to negotiate any sharp corners, while dad is asleep in the passenger seat?' 'But hang on, he can claim five hours, right?'

As I said in my submission, the overwhelming majority of course participants struggle with the very basic elements on the one-day course and yet they are the ones who, in the main, will take the responsibility of training their offspring for their future as drivers.

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It saddens me to relate an experience of conducting weekend courses specifically for P-platers who were new to the world of independent licensed driving. I decided that in addition to the standard program we would undertake a brief one-on-one drive around the Symmons Plains circuit, not as a race track but as a public road with a maximum speed of 80 km/h. The results left me and the credentialled co-instructor, Tony, dismayed. We both left at the end of the day questioning the inadequacy of the licensing system.

The young drivers in the main were unable to judge when to brake for the hairpin at the southern end of the circuit even though it was clearly obvious what they were approaching. They were unable to brake and change down at the same time and arrived at the turn-in point with too much speed and in the wrong gear. The basic and fundamental process of ensuring that all braking and gear selection prior to turning into the corner clearly had not been taught. The net result was the car ran wide, which could have resulted in a head-on collision in a real world situation. That happened at three locations in the space of 2.4 kilometres. In my view the current licensing system is a recipe for adding more inadequately-prepared drivers to an already dismal driving standard and is no more than a bandaid solution.

As I said in my submission, there is an element in the driving world who don't give a toss about Towards Zero as evidenced by the driver who at the weekend was clocked at 110 in an 80 km/h zone with a blood alcohol reading of 0.135. The road toll in 2013 was 36, in 2016 it was 37, and in 2020 it was 37. They were the highest figures since 2010. As at this weekend with the death of an 18-year old down south, the 2021 toll stands at 34 and we have a month to go. In my view it is too late to do anything about the current licence-holders and the focus now has to be on our future drivers. We need to protect our young drivers and try with example and training to instil what has been said ad nauseum: one mistake can be fatal or destroy your life and in the process devastate those who love you.

I make no apology for my emotion on this issue as a father and a grandfather, in respect of parents who agonise over the safety of their children. It is my hope that the relevant authorities put aside any preconceived ideas and misconceptions to give consideration to a pilot program funded by the state government to enable young licensed applicants to undertake a course encompassing the components outlined in my submission. It will not be the panacea to fix the issue, but is that a convenient excuse to do nothing and just accept that it is a fact of life?

We have no problem finding the funds for myriad events and community activities which is all part of the fabric of our society but for far too long this life and death issue seems to have been an acceptable part of life. Well, it's not.

I offer this submission to the committee with respect, understanding the requirements of the terms of reference and in the hope that my contribution will be accepted as a genuine and considered view for the safety of our future drivers. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you so much. Questions.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are you aware of any other jurisdictions that have mandatory defensive driving provisions?

**Mr OLIVER** - None in Australia.

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**Mr WILLIE** - Internationally?

**Mr OLIVER** - I think you will find in some European countries. Certainly the requirements to get a licence in places like Germany and so on are far greater than what we have here.

**Mr WILLIE** - So there is an evidence-base where that was introduced and you could see the impact on road safety?

**Mr OLIVER** - I can't honestly say that I have checked out exactly what they do and what the result has been, but I do know that in quite a few European countries they do in fact go to a great deal more trouble. Not only that, the person who is wanting the licence is paying for it. What they are basically saying is, if you want the licence, (a) you are going to have to pay for it, and (b) you are going to have to satisfy us that you really do know what you are doing. We are not doing that here.

**Mr WILLIE** - My other question would be feasibility; whether it is possible in the current capacity to mandate this?

**Mr OLIVER** - Let's put it this way, the facilities are available. I hear the argument, 'Why do it at a race track?'. One of the issues that has been raised in the past is that by taking a young person to a race track you are giving them the wrong impression. This is where people drive fast and do things like that, but at the end of the day you make it clear that we are treating this as a public road and they are not going to be racing, they are not going to be driving fast. I am sure you have looked through my submission.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr OLIVER** - As I said the maximum speed is 80 km/h. What I am saying is we have Symmons Plains sitting there and different governments over the years have poured millions of dollars into Symmons Plains and also to Baskerville; you have the perfect opportunity in a controlled environment to be able to do this. There are classrooms available. There is a track available. It is all sitting there. When I was running the courses we also used the Wynyard Airport. Now obviously you can't do a lot of the items in my submission out on the public road. You are not going to be able to drive down the road and find a wet section and start doing emergency braking. It is just not going to happen.

As far as cost is concerned, as I said in my statement and also in my submission, should we really be arguing over dollars and cents? I think I said in the submission, the sort of money that it is costing the community when somebody becomes a quadriplegic or suffers permanent brain damage -

**Mr WILLIE** - I understand that. My next question is affordability for all the population? Will we be shutting people out of getting a licence and having access to transport, or I guess the government could subsidise that perhaps, I don't know.

**Mr OLIVER** - I think they should, to be honest with you. Are we prepared to accept 30-odd deaths a year every year? That is what has been happening since 2010? It's a graph, it's a straight line.

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**Mr WILLIE** - Clearly, we are not because we are sitting on this committee. We think it is a huge issue.

**Mr OLIVER** - But it is not the first time I have made representation on this. I can go right back to the early 1990s, and talking to people in Hobart. Not interested: 'university studies have shown that if you put people onto a defensive driver training course they come away over-confident and they are going to be dangerous to themselves and everybody else'. Really? And if you ask these same people, 'Have you ever done a course?' 'Well, no.' 'Well, do you know what we do?' 'You teach people how to get out of a skid.' We don't. We teach them not to get in the damn skid in the first place. So you know there is a barrier there that has frustrated me for years and I worry about our young people.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We can sense that, Barry.

**Mr OLIVER** - I have a son and three daughters and six grandchildren that I am very proud of. So far we have been immune from that, but I can't imagine what that poor woman in Hobart is going through at the moment after her son was killed.

**CHAIR** - It would be absolutely dreadful. You can't imagine it.

**Mr OLIVER** - Yes, you are right about the cost but, as I say -

**CHAIR** - What cost is a life or someone permanently incapacitated.

**Mr OLIVER** - But it is an ongoing thing. I tried to get current figures for what it costs the community for a fatality or a serious injury and there is nothing available that is current.

**CHAIR** - A serious injury would probably cost more than a fatality because of the ongoing -

**Mr OLIVER** - Yes. I'm not quite sure how they establish those figures but we are talking in terms of millions of dollars.

**Dr SEIDEL** - So the European example states that if you make getting or obtaining a driver's licence more difficult, rigorous training, 12 hours of theory, 12 hours of practical driving with overland night driving and the cost is \$2500 for the whole course, it is not a barrier for training for a driver's licence. It doesn't seem to be a barrier because people want to drive their car. The German example was they had age limits where you have to be at least 18 before you get a licence because they know it works, the training works, they put it down to 17 now so it's lower.

The counter argument is to say cars are so safe now - we look at autonomous driving - that most of the functions a competent driver would need to have has now been taken over by technology. Therefore, we do not need to have structured training anymore because autonomous driving is just going to be much safer because we take out the human factor. Do you have a view on whether the safer the cars are the most autonomously they drive, that we need less structured training even compared to what we have now?

**Mr OLIVER** - No, because there are still aspects of driving that that technology is not going to necessarily cover you for and a simple thing, observation skills. Now, clearly people

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are not using their eyes and you can argue that yes, with technology the car is going to give you a warning when it gets too close to the vehicle in front, or if you get into a skid that it has traction control or whatever, lane departure warning, et cetera. But there is no substitute for using your eyes and seeing the problem early enough. I am amazed at the number of times I have seen people have crashes simply because they weren't looking at where they were going. They are not using their eyes.

I did quite a number of one-on-one courses for a government department where we took a driver out and sat beside them for two hours and took them through the city, out on the road and all the rest of it. At one point I said to them, 'Let's spend the next 10 minutes and I want you to tell me exactly what is going on around you. I want to know what is up ahead of you, what is on the side, what is behind you,' et cetera. In other words, we call it commentary driving and the purpose of that is to establish just how people think and look and understand what is going on around them. They would be driving along and they would say 'There's a Metro bus about 200 metres up the road, over on the right-hand side is a lady with a pram, there is a guy over here on a push bike,' but one of the things that really came out was, what was behind. In that 10 minutes, most of those people missed what was behind them. It never occurred to them to look in the mirror. How many times would you have driven somewhere and thought 'that person doesn't even know I am here'.

So, yes you are right as far as technology is concerned and it has helped us, but the facts of life are we are still talking about, and you are here for this reason, a death toll in the state which is a straight line. In my submission I pointed out all the different attributes that we now have now in our vehicles and all the improvements that have been made in our roadworks, et cetera, but we are not improving. I made the point, if this was a business operation and I was the boss, I would be asking my staff, 'What is going on?'

Is there any aspect of the submission that you would consider inappropriate?

**CHAIR** - No, I thought it was a great submission. It is a good present for children for Christmas and birthday presents when you consider it. If my boys were still here I'd be buying it for them for Christmas to go and have a course.

**Mr OLIVER** - Rosemary, in fact most of the young ones that finished up coming out to Symmons Plains to do the course, it was a gift. But there were very few parents who looked at it and said 'I think that would be a wise thing to give my son or daughter,' and the majority of those came as a result of mum or dad being sent by the company they worked for, or the government department they worked for, and doing the course, and they went away and thought 'Hang on, my son should be doing this, or my daughter.'

**Dr SEIDEL** - If I can chip in there if you do not mind, Chair. Why were people like the company you said were sending people to you? Are they truck drivers and areas where that is compulsory for their profession, or why are people being sent?

**Mr OLIVER** - No, it was purely Occupational Health and Safety. The more progressive companies realised that they had staff and they were spending a lot of money training people, they were valuable to the business and so it was in their interest to make sure that they stayed around. That was the prime reason: it was purely OH&S.

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**Dr SEIDEL** - Obviously they must have sensed that the experience was a positive one otherwise they wouldn't have told their children or relatives, 'This is worthwhile, you should be doing this,' so it just took that element of exposure and they said, 'This was beneficial to me, you should be doing this too.'

**Mr OLIVER** - Yes, exactly.

**Ms PALMER** - Could I quickly ask a question? I have to slip out for a 2.30 meeting but I really wanted to ask you, I agreed with what the member was saying about technology but when my kids bought their cars, they had about \$5000 or \$6000 to spend on a car. There is no technology in it at all. I like the idea of the defensive driver course but I was wondering about your thoughts. Most kids learn to drive from their mum or their dad, my kids did, and I ended up learning things from my kids that I didn't realise were road rules. I am wondering what you think about the fact that the people who are training kids - I would consider myself a reasonable driver but there were still things that I had missed - do you think there is a problem even a further step back with who are training the kids with those general road rules and general learning how to drive? And do you have any idea of a solution?

**Mr OLIVER** - Yes, absolutely. I suppose one of the prime reasons I am pushing the defensive driver training course is to have trained people who really understand what is required to be a safe driver, rather than just mum and dad. From my experience, so bear in mind that over 7000 drivers went through my courses so I have seen a lot of drivers, and my concern is that a big percentage of those people that went through the course in my view were not capable of safely teaching their son or daughter to be a good, safe driver. I don't want to be disparaging but it is a fact of life.

**CHAIR** - It is a long time since they got their licences too.

**Mr OLIVER** - I watched them battle to do very simple exercises at Symmons Plains and Baskerville and I am thinking, 'If you are struggling with this, how on Earth can you train your son or daughter to be a safe driver. You don't have an understanding of your vehicle.' I mean a simple thing like tyres. People have no idea of the importance of tyres, none whatsoever. They're round, they're black, sometimes they go flat and they're a damn nuisance because they cost money. But they are your only contact with the road, for God's sake. I shudder when I think back to when we checked the tyres of the vehicles that turned up to do the courses.

Tony, my offsider, would spend three quarters of an hour at the beginning of the day just checking every single vehicle. Rarely did he find a vehicle that met all of what we would consider to be safe criteria. There was underinflation, over inflation, badly worn tyres, damaged tyres, mis-matched tyres. They're on the road with you and me. How many parents would be able to say to their child, look once every month or once every fortnight you should check your tyres. Would you have done that, Jo?

**Ms PALMER** - Well no, but their dads did. I didn't even think of it. But both the kids' dads - dad and step-dad - did. The thing I found interesting when I was teaching my kids to drive is there was no guidance for me. I actually asked 'Is there a brochure, is there like a list, 1 to 20, these are the top things?' There was nothing for me as a parent training my child to say, 'Here's some guidelines'. I thought that was interesting.

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**Mr OLIVER** - Well, back when I got my licence and that's 60 years ago, basically you turned up and you went around the block once and that was it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Did a hill start?

**Mr OLIVER** - I didn't even have to do a hill start.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Didn't you do a hill start?

**Mr OLIVER** - No I lived in Invermay and it's all flat. How many times I've heard the story of people who live in country towns and turn up to get their licence and the cop says: 'Well I've been watching you drive around the street for the last two years, you're right mate, go for your life.'?

**CHAIR** - Yes, the local policeman.

**Mr OLIVER** - The local policeman.

**Ms PALMER** - Good folk.

**CHAIR** - We've got one coming next.

**Ms PALMER** - We have.

**CHAIR** - Right, Jo, seeing you have to leave do you have any more questions that you want to ask?

**Ms PALMER** - I was interested in any feedback you had around - I know in our family it was something I struggled with and then realised I was missing things. Believe me, I tried very hard to teach my children how to drive properly. I took it very seriously but no guidance and I missed things.

**Mr OLIVER** - When they first introduced the 50 hours right back in the beginning, I went to Hobart and sat down with the person who was driving that program and said to this person: 'How do you know that people are going to be honestly filling in that 50 hours?'

**Ms RATTRAY** - Now it is 80.

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

**Ms PALMER** - You wonder if it's quality versus quantity.

**Mr OLIVER** - Her answer to me was: 'Mr Oliver, you need to understand that there are very significant penalties for failing to do so.' My next question was, 'Well, how do you know?'. How do you know?

**Ms PALMER** - Sorry, Chair, I will have to excuse myself.

**CHAIR** - That's all right. Bastian, do you have a question?

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**Dr SEIDEL** - Barry, do you think that getting your licence when you are young is almost like an entitlement whereas maintaining it is actually the powerful licensing one. It seems to be quite easy to get a licence. There's no checks and balances. But I'd be getting a licence for whatever reason, culturally or whatever, and then you have to make an effort to maintain it. Once you have an accident it is quite easy for you to lose your licence again. But the first step is quite easy, isn't it? Against any form of evidence, it's easy to get a licence?

**Mr OLIVER** - Absolutely, very easy. Too easy.

**Dr SEIDEL** - It doesn't make any sense, there's no evidence base for that really, is there?

**Mr OLIVER** - It's too easy and people don't appreciate what a privilege it is to have a licence. You are saying to somebody, 'I'm going to allow you now to drive a lethal weapon'. It's no different to me giving you gun. I'm one of these oddball people in that I love cars, I love driving, I'm passionate about my driving. I look forward to driving a car safely, and being able to steer it and drive it as a professional person. But I'm in the rare part. Most people just get in the car, turn the key on and away they go. There is no more thought to it at all. I really don't know what more I can say apart from the fact that at the moment it is frustrating and we really have to do something about it.

**CHAIR** - So many things have changed, haven't they? When I met with Allan Roark at one stage, he was telling me, and he mentioned this morning, even where you hold your hands on the steering wheel - I always thought it was 10 to 2, but with the air bags, if you have your arms up, they come back and your watch hits you. So, I guess there are a lot more things since we learnt, even younger people like Bastian and Josh.

**Mr OLIVER** - In the submission, I talked about ergonomics and actually physically taking the person out to the vehicle and getting them to sit in the vehicle. Overwhelmingly, young people, particularly, sit far too far back from the wheel. They seem to think that you have to have almost straight arms and if you have the hat on back-to-front and you are laying right back, well that's even cooler.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Don't forget the arm out the window.

**Mr OLIVER** - A la Peter Brock, yes, that's right. Then you say to them, 'Put your seatbelt on', and they put their seatbelt on. But what you often find, especially with the more modern vehicles, there's an adjustment on the B pillar but how many people think to bring that down to the lowest point so it's on your shoulder and not across your neck? Imagine in a crash, which is violent, and you have the seatbelt in such a way that it is going to come across your neck, so all of a sudden you've got a neck injury. You talk to them about open windows - well, what's the problem with that? When your car rolls, where do you think your arm is going to finish up going?

**CHAIR** - Somewhere down the street because it comes off.

**Mr OLIVER** - Exactly. Half-open window: now, even though you are wearing your seatbelt, in a crash you're still going to have significant movement. The belt is not going to hold you absolutely dead firm. So what's to stop your head from banging on the top edge of that half-open window? Talk to the ambos and they will tell you. All of these things. But is any of that included when we're teaching our young people to drive?

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**CHAIR** - No.

**Mr OLIVER** - Ask then to check the oil or the water: 'How do we do that?'

**Ms RATTRAY** - Usually, 'How do you open the bonnet?', 'Where do you open it? Where's the latch?'

**CHAIR** - Tania, you had some questions?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thanks, Barry. I tend to disagree that it's easier now to get a licence than it was in the past - but that's just you and I might disagree - because the 80 hours and the requirements that you go through are quite significant. I do agree that I don't believe people are actually honest about the 80 hours, but that's another story.

I have a motorcycle licence. Not much of a rider these days, I don't have a bike. I got that in my 40s. It was a Stay Upright course. I felt like I was more aware of what was going on around me as a vehicle driver and a motorcycle rider. I am interested in your thoughts around those courses attached to motorcycle driving that might help vehicle drivers be more aware of all those who are on the road. Have you put your mind to that at any stage, Barry?

**Mr OLIVER** - I've always felt that what they're doing with motorcycles is a step in the right direction. We really should be following that system, that format, that idea. There's no doubt in my mind that if you're on a motorcycle, you've only got two wheels not four, you're much more vulnerable and I think they went the right way by saying, okay, you've got to do what you would have done to get your licence.

**Ms RATTRAY** - A DECA or a Stay Upright or whatever it is?

**Mr OLIVER** - Exactly. And you are certainly far more aware of what's going on around you, absolutely.

**Ms RATTRAY** - A course like that you can actually do more local. I represent a lot of the more outlying areas - rural areas. For everyone to be able to get to Baskerville or to Symmons Plains and undertake a defensive driving course might not necessarily be accessible, achievable or affordable. I'm looking for a compromise position there and I'm thinking perhaps that type of Stay Upright DECA course might fit with a vehicle licence.

**Mr OLIVER** - Are you thinking in terms of being able to do it within the area where you live?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Yes. For affordability, access and all those issues that we struggle with sometimes when you're not city-based or built-up area-based.

**Mr OLIVER** - That raises the question then about having the right people to actually do that and being available to go to those locations. I suppose that's why I was suggesting that if we had central locations, whether it be Wynyard, Symmons, Baskerville, whatever the case may be, then it may be a little easier. I understand what you're saying about people may not always be in a position to travel for that.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - I'm just looking for perhaps a compromise position - full defensive driving courses against a broader awareness course that a learner driver could undertake.

**Mr OLIVER** - Food for thought, definitely.

Your comment about easier to get your licence, probably what I should have said was that I feel we should be doing more. It's not so much that it's easy - we should be doing more.

**Ms RATTRAY** - But not necessarily just in extra hours.

**Mr OLIVER** - No.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I agree.

**Mr OLIVER** - There's no point in having 80 hours if they're going to do just what I said, the trip to Hobart and back.

**Ms RATTRAY** - They're not learning anything.

**Mr OLIVER** - As I said in my submission, you're not required to do any gravel road driving. You are in a rural area. How many gravel roads have you got?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Hundreds.

**Mr OLIVER** - Exactly. We have to work on the premise that young people at some point are going to be on those gravel roads. But there's no requirement at the moment. It took them a while to actually include night driving, for goodness sake, and I could never understand that.

**CHAIR** - What do you think would be the biggest cause of accidents? Do you think it is speed; do you think it is inattention; do you think it is things like mobile phones? Noting that some of the states now have covert cameras where they look into your car to see if you've got a phone on your lap. What would you think would be the biggest cause that we have of accidents now? Lack of experience or inattention?

**Mr OLIVER** - Inattention is certainly one of the big ones but in a lot of cases it is a word that's not been mentioned so far today -

**CHAIR** - Inexperience?

**Mr OLIVER** - No, attitude. I go back to the comment I made about the people who are not going to take any notice whatsoever. It's not that many weeks back that the police had a weekend blitz. I can't remember the figures but it was in the hundreds who were caught speeding, using the phone, inattentive driving, all the rest of it. A lot of those people are just going to continue to do that.

**CHAIR** - Even when they are caught. They found, using covert cameras, in Queensland that the same people were caught over the course of four days.

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**Mr OLIVER** - It doesn't make any difference. I live at Newnham so every day I have to travel down the East Tamar into the city. Once you go onto the East Tamar Highway it is an 80 km/h speed limit all the way through to the main street overpass. Every day, without fail, I drive down there on cruise control at 80 km/h and I get passed not just by 10 km/h; people are just totally ignoring the speed limit. They don't care.

Today for example, I don't know how many cars passed me that would have been doing at least 100 km/h. There was the young woman who raced up behind me, clearly frustrated because she couldn't move into the right-hand lane to go past, so she tailgated me, like two metres off my backside, and then when she got the opportunity to move over into the right-hand lane, came up alongside and gave me a one-fingered salute.

**CHAIR** - And you were doing the right thing.

**Mr OLIVER** - Because I was doing 80 km/h. With that sort of an attitude, what hope have the police got? None.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Do you think those people are fit to drive?

**Mr OLIVER** - I really wonder at times if people are mentally stable enough to be driving. I really do, but of course we do not do anything about that do we?

**CHAIR** - Or what they might be taken or have taken or be on.

**Mr WILLIE** - On that, if you have people who are being caught with traffic offences repeatedly, should they be forced to do a course like this at a certain trigger point? Will that improve anything, given their attitude?

**Mr OLIVER** - My concern would be if their attitude has been all along just to ignore the fact that they have been caught repeatedly, are they really going to take it on board?

**CHAIR** - They might have a bit more experience and we'd hope they mightn't have an accident but they probably won't take any notice, no.

**Mr OLIVER** - No.

**CHAIR** - At the moment you have to do 40 km/h coming up to emergency vehicles on the highway, slowing down from 110 km/h. The question was raised as to whether that should be 80 km/h. I think in some states it is 80 km/h that you slow down to, rather than 40 km/h. You might be driving on the highway and all of a sudden you come around the corner and there's police or an accident or there are emergency vehicles of some type with flashing lights, and you have to slow down from 110 km/h to 40 km/h.

Do you think there should be either a bit of a difference with that, that maybe it should be 80 km/h rather than 40 km/h? Have you any thoughts on that? It was felt that it is dangerous to suddenly to slow down to such a speed because you can't have warning that you are going to slow down because you don't know where the accident might be.

**Mr OLIVER** - No, true. I guess what you are saying is that there is always going to be circumstances where you have limited forward vision.

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**CHAIR** - Absolutely, coming around a corner, particularly.

**Mr OLIVER** - Yes, and the other issue is if you suddenly stand on the brake, you have to assume that the person behind you is watching what they are doing and left enough space to be able to react and then stop the vehicle before they run into you. If I look at it from a very personal point of view, my eldest granddaughter is a paramedic. I think about her on the side of the road so it's a hard one; it is really difficult.

**CHAIR** - Or 40 km/h if it is safe to do so.

**Mr OLIVER** - Yes, 40 km/h if it is safe to do so.

But again, we have to get people to change their attitude. How many people slow down when they see the school bus sitting there with the indicators going?

**CHAIR** - On the side of the highway, particularly the rural school buses.

**Mr OLIVER** - I did the other day. This was Alanvale Road. The bus pulled up and I slowed down to 40 km/h because I could see kids getting off the bus. I am not to know if they will suddenly dart out but the person behind me was obviously upset about the fact that I'd jumped on the brake and eased up. This attitude has to change.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Just a question in regard to the people who come to our state, tourists and the like, particularly international tourists. I know we haven't had so many in recent times but it is often suggested that they don't really understand our road conditions and the terrain and the like. Can you make any suggestions or comment on that, Barry?

**Mr OLIVER** - Only last week I was given an instance where a person was driving down the road and came around the corner and found a rental car sitting in the centre of the road. The driver had got out of the vehicle to take a photo. I was also told that in some cases people who are coming in from some Asian countries have got their licence online.

**CHAIR** - I think they get them in simulators, don't they?

**Mr OLIVER** - From simulators, that's what I meant.

**CHAIR** - Yet they haven't ever driven on a road.

**Mr OLIVER** - No.

**CHAIR** - Rather than just getting an international licence, do you think that you have to do something when you arrive? Particularly for an international licence as opposed to an interstate licence.

**Mr OLIVER** - I really think we should.

**CHAIR** - Sometimes when we have four lanes, they might go only for a very short distance. There are some very short overtaking areas. Then, all of a sudden, you're on two lanes. You can be driving along and you start to think, are these two lanes mine? I know I've been driving along where there are two lanes and I think, okay, there might be two lanes over

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further, but it might be an old road and there might not be two lanes coming back the other way. It can get quite confusing for us when we're driving.

Do you think that's a real issue with interstate drivers? Should we have more arrows painted on the roads when we get back to two lanes to say, an arrow coming this way; that that isn't your lane? Do you think that would help interstate drivers? Or do you have any other suggestions? Obviously, they have a lot more four-lane highways, whereas we have four lanes going into two and some very short overtaking lanes.

**Mr OLIVER** - I agree, we should. I can think of a fatality that's occurred in recent years where the driver was clearly confused as to what lane they should've been in.

**CHAIR** - Some more arrows painted on the road - something simple.

**Mr OLIVER** - Another thing is that I don't quite understand is, when we spend zillions of dollars reconstructing roads and giving us four lanes and all the rest of it, why at different times, all of a sudden, we've got to go back to single lanes? An example is on the Bass Highway, just past Westbury. Why did that happen? Did we run out of money at that point?

**CHAIR** - It gets very confusing.

**Mr OLIVER** - Yes. The number of times I've been on that road and two lines of traffic suddenly have to merge into one. Then you get an argument between the drivers as to who should go first.

**CHAIR** - It comes down to attitude again.

**Mr OLIVER** - Right. But bear in mind that coming the other way, you have traffic in the single lane that's now going to go into two lanes. We're not helping.

**CHAIR** - Thank you so much for putting your submission in. It's very much appreciated. Are we able to get a copy of those pages? That would be wonderful?

**Mr OLIVER** - That's the statement that I made and you would have my submission.

**CHAIR** - Yes, your submission is in front of us. We really appreciate you coming in. I think it would be really great for all us to do defensive driving courses. There're so many things. You don't appreciate something as simple as holding the steering wheel and all the different areas you mentioned.

**Ms RATTRAY** - What is the correct position?

**Mr OLIVER** - Quarter to, quarter past. When an airbag goes off, it basically fills the entire steering wheel. So, if your hands are here at ten to, ten past, then my glasses are now smashed into my eyes. There's a whole myriad of things for different reasons.

**CHAIR** - Seeing as we all drive so much on the highway, maybe we should ask if we could all do defensive driving courses. It would do us all the world of good.

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**Mr OLIVER** - There were a number of government departments that sent people over the years to do the course.

**CHAIR** - So, a precedent's been set.

**Mr OLIVER** - Apart from the one-day defensive driving training courses, I also ran two-day four-wheel drive training courses, primarily for forestry and the mining industry. I have had a lot of experience over the years.

**CHAIR** - Thank you so much. We are very appreciative of you coming in.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW**

## PUBLIC

**Mr BRETT SMITH**, APM, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - As you are no doubt aware, the evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege while you are in the room. Should you say anything outside the room you will not be afforded the same privilege. The evidence you present is being recorded by *Hansard* and will be published on the committee website. If there is anything that you would like to say that you do not want to be published that you want to keep in camera, just let us know before we go. Otherwise the procedure we normally follow, is if you would like to give an overview, and we all have a copy of your submission and then we will ask you some questions. We have allowed 45 minutes.

**Mr SMITH** - Thank you very much for the opportunity. Regarding my submission, I won't make this too detailed because you may have some questions. The whole thrust behind what I have written and why I have submitted what I have is that, in my observation in my nearly 40 years as a police officer and even as a road user, I do not think people across the community take road safety seriously enough. If we are to change the way we want to approach road safety, the purpose of what I have written is saying that we should be thinking about doing things differently. If we continue to do the same the things and expect a different result - a well-known quote from Einstein -

**CHAIR** - The definition of insanity.

**Mr SMITH** - Indeed. In my experience, what I have seen is that we tend to treat the symptoms of road safety, particularly the fatal five - speeding, drink driving and so forth - when we should be focusing on what I consider the primary cause and that is attitude. I am talking about the people who drive motor vehicles. I am also talking about the attitude of government towards road safety, of community right across the broader spectrum.

**CHAIR** - Interesting you should use that word. Barry Oliver, who was in here earlier, said that the one word that he felt summed it all up was attitude.

**Mr SMITH** - Attitude. I am suggesting is that whilst it would be very easy to put forward what I consider to be, and, as I have written in my submission, some very simple technical solutions such as raising fines, speed limits and all of those sorts of technical things, we need to think about it differently. We need to think about how best we can change people's attitudes. The example I used was COVID-19, when - and I think most of us would agree - our whole attitude change towards our own hygiene practices. This was as a result of really solid, constant, consistent messaging by people in the right positions and with the right levels of credibility. And it is constant.

That's really the thrust of my submission. I am very cautious to offer any tangible solutions other than those I have offered in the submission because I think there needs to be a little more research done. They're just broad-brush thoughts.

**CHAIR** - Constant saturation.

**Mr SMITH** - Yes, constant saturated messaging. As I said, I am sure you have all been down to Bunnings or any place where a heap of people go and people's attitudes have changed.

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If we can do that with COVID-19, then why can't we adopt a similar approach with road safety? That's the general philosophy of what I am saying.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thanks, Brett. Who are the right people to deliver that message?

**Mr SMITH** - You have to have credible people. I think you need people in relative positions of authority and power, with the right balance.

**Ms RATTRAY** - The Commissioner or the Premier?

**Mr SMITH** - Certainly the Premier. What we consider to be good role models who we know that the community will lean to.

**Mr WILLIE** - A bit like the vaccine rollout. We have had political leaders, community leaders, civic leaders -

**Mr SMITH** - Yes, that's the same stuff, Josh, that's what I am saying. But you can't just do this for one month and then let it go for another six months. You have to keep going and going and going. One of the problems is that it's going to be expensive. Well, it depends how serious we want to take road safety.

**CHAIR** - Deaths and incapacity are expensive.

**Mr SMITH** - They are indeed.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We heard earlier today that the motorcycle riders' safety campaign has the likes of Malcolm Campbell - this is how you ride. Not everyone will remember Malcolm Campbell but you and I will. Do we use somebody who has a presence or has a reputation as well?

**Mr SMITH** - In my personal opinion, it can be a double-edged sword. I will go to the Road Safety Advisory Council strategy, Towards Zero, has a motorcycle racing person who uses the line 'You just can't afford to be complacent', which is true. But there's also a line which I find a little concerning. It can be read a number of ways depending on people's view:

It was really hard to effectively pass my motorcycle riding test. It was much harder than racing around on the race track.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is this Malcolm Campbell?

**Mr SMITH** - No, it's not Malcolm Campbell; it's someone else.

**CHAIR** - Wayne?

**Mr SMITH** - I can't think who it is but it's someone local. What I am saying is that you have to be careful of that type of messaging. Having someone that races cars and motorbikes out the front delivering a message I think it is a little risky, more particularly for the younger male generation. It could be read a number of different ways. So, you have to be very careful about how you select your role model.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - Hence, my question. It is about finding that right person to deliver that message, which I believe and totally agree is an important aspect.

**Mr SMITH** - I don't want to sound negative toward the RSAC plan at all. I do have some views on it, of course. By and large, you have to be careful about who is giving the message and what the message is.

**Dr SEIDEL** - I am going to be a bit controversial now on purpose because I would argue that COVID-19 messages would only reach 90 per cent to do the right thing voluntarily; 10 per cent have to be mandated to do something. If we apply the same standard to road safety, we still have quite a gap. We have 10 per cent of road users who probably would not do the right thing. I would argue wouldn't it be easier to, say, mandate the technical things: roadworthy certificates for cars every year; making sure driver training is compulsory and extensive; making sure the car standards are better compared to what we currently have? Isn't the argument that we can actually mandate that against the resistant? And once it becomes the norm, it is just easier to build upon those laws.

**Mr SMITH** - What I am suggesting is there is no one single fix here. There is a combination of things and it has to be a combination of the right type of control measures put in place through legislation, as well as the attitudinal change. The reality is that I don't think you are going to get your 100 per cent agreement on all of this, it just won't get there. That is certainly a utopian viewpoint, I would think. What I am talking about in my submission is changing the hearts and minds of people to think that it's the right thing.

**Dr SEIDEL** - I'll follow up on this one again because, as you said, you have been in the force for 40 years, you have seen things not working and we are still talking about Towards Zero. All we have done so far, let's say, has failed. What can you clearly state hasn't worked but has been tried that we need to move away from?

**Mr SMITH** - I think what hasn't worked is the apparent singular focus on enforcement. I don't think it gets the desired result. I made a mention in my submission of a couple of things about enforcement that you can purely rely on. I think it is necessary that we need a suite of other things as well. Just relying on it, that hasn't worked.

The Tasmania Police cautioning system, whereby if you hadn't had an offence in three years, you write into the district commander and say, 'I'm terribly sorry, I won't do it again', a note of caution. I have read so many of those over the years and there is a strong sense of entitlement about a caution. In other words, 'I have a life' or 'I've got one "get out of jail free" card'.

**CHAIR** - I didn't know you could do that, so you have taught me something. I didn't know you could write in if you hadn't had one for three years.

**Mr WILLIE** - You wouldn't get caught for anything, though.

**CHAIR** - Well, I haven't, but if I do, I know now that you can do that.

**Mr SMITH** - You would have had to write to me and it might not have gone well.

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That in itself, I don't think it is a stand-alone strategy. There is the cautioning program. We continue to send very strong messages around the 'fatal 5', but we're not consistent with it. We don't follow through with it.

The 'fatal 5', in my view, is symptomatic of this attitude thing, just singularly focusing on enforcement. Again, looking at the RSAC Towards Zero plan, a lot of it is around enforcement, around catching people, as opposed to educating people.

I agree, Dr Seidel, that it is really important to make sure that we provide education but at a range of junctures. It is not only about the young people that the RSAC plan talks about. What about the older people who have issues with their driving? There are quite a few people right across the age spectrum who have issues with their driving. Why isn't that important?

**CHAIR** - A question that was asked earlier when we were talking to Barry Oliver with regard to people training their children, do you think that maybe to be able to train your children to learn to drive, you should actually have to have some sort of course yourself? You are obviously a bit more trained than the rest of us but we have all learnt to drive maybe over 40 years ago and then we might be teaching our children to drive. Do you think there should be something for people who are teaching these new road drivers? We know it is expensive to have a course. Any thoughts?

**Mr SMITH** - It is an interesting one because I taught each of my three children -

**CHAIR** - But you are a police officer so you are up with all the road rules.

**Mr SMITH** - They have all had bad crashes and they have all lost points. So I can't stand here and say that I am a great teacher. I know what you are saying.

**CHAIR** - Yes, you are a bit more experienced than those of us who have gotten our licence 48 or 50 years ago.

**Mr SMITH** - Any opportunity to provide some education to any road user is a good thing. I like the idea of every time there is a licence renewal, get on, do an online education program, do it that way, so that you are continually reinforcing that message. It's the continual reinforcing of the message. And do it in such a way that it's constructive and not destructive.

**Dr SEIDEL** - To follow up specifically, you would argue for self-assessment that can be done online, very low threshold, just a reflective exercise, really?

**Mr SMITH** - Yes. There's another matter on what you talked about, Dr Seidel, about going from the enforcement side of things. I'm not convinced that my former organisation - there needs to be a dedicated enforcement approach to traffic policing by Tasmania Police. I've advocated that for years with the current RPOS (Road and Public Services) model which you've probably heard about. It came about in 2012 because of the state Budget situation and that was a consequence of one area that got cut. But, of course, they tend to be the stop-gap for everything else. So while they are the stop-gap for everything else, road safety has taken a back seat.

**CHAIR** - Manning the stations.

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**Mr WILLIE** - In COVID-19 times.

**Mr SMITH** - Exactly right. So I think there needs to be similar to what we have done with serious and organised crime. We've sectioned off people to do that. We need the same for road safety.

**CHAIR** - Dedicated traffic people?

**Mr SMITH** - I do, yes. When you look at the models around the country, and even in my current work with the AIPM at the moment, the dedicated approach to traffic enforcement by a lot of other jurisdictions. There are some very good models there to look at as well.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Any one in particular?

**Mr SMITH** - New South Wales or Victoria, and Queensland as well, that type of model. It might be unpalatable to Tas Pol for a range of reasons but if we are serious about it, we should commit to it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I have a question around your suggestion of looking at increased visible signage on highways. For somebody who drives our roads a lot, I often am not sure what the speed is. It seemed to have been a long time ago since I looked at it and I am thinking, 'Is it 100?'. I know that's probably not the only aspect that you were looking at but I'm interested if you might explore that a little bit more.

**Mr SMITH** - I totally agree. Any opportunity to put increased speed signage, increased information for people. A lot of our message-boarding stuff is just a plain message board. Nothing gets the picture across better than a picture. I understand that some people might be confronted by some pictures that they see if you are driving around the mainland. Queensland, in particular, is pretty savage with some of their pictures. They will probably put a car that's been involved in a fatal accident on the side of the road. But it creates something. It does it with me when I see it, even the crash markers for example, which, dare I say, I remember raising this issue quite some years ago with an acting assistant commissioner, who said at the time, 'I don't think they'll take off'.

Opportunities for messaging, if you do it in such an aesthetic way that it doesn't detract from our landscape but at a point where it becomes impacting so that it is constantly in people's minds.

**CHAIR** - Like the ones you see like the spinal cord and it has this break in it.

**Mr SMITH** - Yes, that's something but you can do it in a range of other positive messages as well. I don't think it always has to be negative. Another strategy that I was contemplating since I wrote that is, where are the rewards for good drivers?

**CHAIR** - What sort of positive message would you have on the highway?

**Mr SMITH** - I reckon if you don't get a ticket in three years we might give half off for your next driver's licence renewal, for example. An option. Something that reinforces positive behaviour rather than this high focus on this negative behaviour, so it is a bit more balanced.

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If it is a bit more balanced I think people are willingly going to change their attitude rather than being forced.

**Mr WILLIE** - It is the carrot and stick.

**Mr SMITH** - It is, exactly.

**CHAIR** - The honourable Jo Palmer has just joined us.

**Mr WILLIE** - The evidence we heard previous to you was an advocate for mandatory defensive driving courses. Do you have a view on that, or is trying to change attitudes more important?

**Mr SMITH** - Driving programs are good. I am always concerned about mandating it generally. Maybe it might be something that is mandated after a period of disqualification or suspension perhaps. This was always a concern when I went through as a young recruit many years ago. We were taught how to drive under the British Roadcraft defensive driving program. I think we came out a whole heap worse with that because we were pumped on false confidence.

**CHAIR** - You thought you were pretty good.

**Mr SMITH** - Exactly right. Particularly as a young 18-year-old male who actually topped their driving course, I might add, on my cadet course, I probably didn't have the right attitude if I was perfectly honest about it. I am quite sure some of my former supervisors would agree with that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is that because you thought you could push the limits and you would be fine?

**Mr SMITH** - Exactly, because you were taught, it was reinforced you were a good driver and we were taken down to the skid pan. Those types of behaviours, with a significant degree of immaturity, I think are very risky things to do. A lot of it, while we see people get killed, a lot of it is through immaturity, particularly with younger people.

**Mr WILLIE** - Males, in particular.

**Mr SMITH** - Indeed, no doubt about it.

**CHAIR** - For parents to buy something like that for a son or daughter who has just got a licence, so it might not necessarily be what they are hoping for then?

**Mr SMITH** - Probably not. I think anything has to be measured. If you want people willingly to do things, mandating forces people's hand, as you were saying about the carrot and stick. Providing the opportunities is really good. I will give an example. I crashed a police car about four years ago. I missed the traffic lights leaving Lindsay Street, cleaned them up on Goderich Street. You can imagine the stick that I copped at work over that.

**CHAIR** - Especially as the Commander.

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**Mr SMITH** - That's right. I had a policy of, as soon as you have a police vehicle crash your permit was suspended until such time as you were reassessed. I did the same thing. I went and did my reassessment with the driver training because I was worried that I was doing something wrong. Why didn't I see this traffic light that was sitting in the traffic island? Why didn't I see that? It was a really good experience.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Why didn't I see the tree on the road that I hit?

**Mr SMITH** - This is it. The other thing about the RSAC report - I don't want to appear to be bagging it out because I am not, I just see things in it - it talks about the European approach to accepting that people make mistakes therefore we have to build stuff around it to protect people from making mistakes. Shouldn't it be more about limiting the mistake-making in the first place? Shouldn't it be about reducing that rather than just accepting that people make mistakes because I think that adds to the complacency of road users on the road in my opinion.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Specifically on this one, how would you feel if it would be compulsory for people who have had an accident to seek medical attention and to have medical clearance for that? In case there could be a medical issue for not seeing that tree. How else are we saying, 'It's just an accident, happens to all of us.' That is fine, but also is there a cause for why that accident happened in the first place?

**Mr SMITH** - That is certainly worthy of further exploration. In the absence of any evidence, and of course there would be a whole range of downstream issues associated with that. Getting medical clearance and getting into your GP with a six-week wait at the present time is probably going to cause a bit of an impost. Philosophically, it's probably worth consideration. Again, it is another one of those strategies that puts road safety in the forefront of people's minds which is really important.

**CHAIR** - I want to ask you a couple of questions about things that have been raised with us over the last few weeks with regard to different submissions. The 40 kph slowing down on the highway when you come across an accident scene or a police officer or an emergency vehicle. Do you think 40 is appropriate, or do you think it should be higher? We have been hearing that to slow down, particularly if you have just come across it, come around the corner or all of a sudden you are behind a truck and you don't know it is up ahead, that you then have to slow down from 110 kph to 40 kph. The suggestion was made that perhaps it should be 80 and I think in some states it is 80 as opposed to 40. Do you have a thought about that?

**Mr SMITH** - I support the idea behind the law with it. It is largely about protecting the road workers, whether they be police -

**CHAIR** - But do you think it could cause more accidents if all of a sudden the car behind you doesn't notice that you brake suddenly to 40 and you have someone -

**Mr SMITH** - It probably could in situations where it was just around the corner and normally you will find with a police random breath test site for example, there will be a graduated reduction in speed particularly if it is done on the open road.

**CHAIR** - This is probably not so much something that is planned. It is more that someone has pulled someone over or an ambulance is on the side of the road.

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**Mr SMITH** - I think if it is done in that situation, I suppose you have to rely on the discretion of the people whether it be ambulance or the police and so forth, but it is mostly the police controlling that. Do I think 40 is appropriate? Yes, I do because it is about protecting the workers. Could it be structured better and is it going to be perfect? Probably not but I think also that people in charge of those particular sites, whether they be the firies, ambos or the police or whoever, perhaps there could be some greater safety standards employed. Ultimately, if someone was cleaned up in a process like that, it would be a matter for Workplace Standards. Again, I don't know what has happened since I left Tasmania Police but I am not sure whether there are any safety standards around the application of that. I am not sure.

**Mr WILLIE** - It is pretty hard to enforce isn't it, because if you are a police officer dealing with the situation, you are not going to get back in your car and chase the person that wasn't obeying the law.

**Mr SMITH** - I know there have been some prosecutions where a number has been taken -

**CHAIR** - They know you are going fast, just not the speed.

**Mr SMITH** - The number has been taken, they have caught up with it and so forth. This was discussed when it first came out and there was always conversation, 'How are we going to enforce that?'. The police are pretty resourceful; they will find a way to enforce it. As I say, they have picked up number plates and done it that way. I am not sure what the result has been as a result of that judiciary-wise but, philosophically, it is a good thing to do. Could it be managed better? Probably.

**CHAIR** - As a past police commander, could I ask you a couple of almost police questions? The other thing that was mentioned today was that P-plate drivers now can do 100 on the highway but motorcycle P-platers can't. Do you believe that a motorcycle P-plater should be able to do 100 as ? It was mentioned that they can still only do 80 whereas if you are in a car you can do 100 on P-plates? Do you believe they should be able to do the same, or do you think being on a bike is more dangerous and it is better to keep them at 80?

**Mr SMITH** - I used to be a motorbike rider and I gave it up because I got run off the road by a garbage truck. If you come off at 80 and you come off at 100, it depends -

**CHAIR** - I think it was more that you were on the highway at 80 whether you are holding up traffic, causing more hassles. You can only do 80, even the other P-platers can do 100.

**Mr SMITH** - Philosophically I am not opposed to people driving at a higher speed so long as they are switched on.

**CHAIR** - To keep with the flow.

**Mr SMITH** - To keep the flow going because slower drivers will create impatience for people who lack self-discipline behind the wheel. That ultimately ends up with people in trouble.

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**CHAIR** - I have a few police questions. Another one, lack of car checks. It was raised with us that we don't get police pulling us over now and checking our tyres, checking our brakes, so that would have stopped even before your time I would imagine.

**Mr SMITH** - We're back to the traffic -

**CHAIR** - The lack of police officers?

**Mr SMITH** - the direct approach to traffic enforcement, the consistent approach to traffic enforcement.

**CHAIR** - Was that something that just stopped?

**Mr SMITH** - No, it is part of discretionary time. I am quite sure the PAT would have gone on about this.

**CHAIR** - Actually I don't think they did.

**Mr SMITH** - It's effectively traffic policing. In the broad array of all of the work that police do, it is largely part of discretionary time. But if your discretionary time is chewed up with non-discretionary time, particularly where there is a shortage of resourcing, your discretionary time is down to this. Checking cars and that -

**CHAIR** - And putting yellow stickers, or are they orange or red?

**Mr SMITH** - They used to be orange and red. I'm not sure what they are now.

**CHAIR** - Do they still have those? I don't see cars around with them anymore.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We don't even have a rego sticker.

**Mr SMITH** - I don't think they have stickers but there are defect issues that now get -

**CHAIR** - But you would have to pull them over to find them.

**Mr SMITH** - Yes, but of course that will only happen if someone has been pulled over for something else usually. Could there be more work done in vehicle standards? Of course there could, but it is largely resource dependent.

**Mr WILLIE** - I was interested in this idea of changing attitudes still, and what the messaging would be like. Would it be like the AIDS epidemic where you have the Grim Reaper - a fear-based type or more a positive reinforcement from community leaders?

**Mr SMITH** - It could be a combination of both I think. This is where the government would need to contract and do the right market research to get the right messaging for the right community cohort. I could pluck a few ideas out of the air but they are just Brett's ideas. What I am talking about is philosophically having -

**Mr WILLIE** - Evidence-based.

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**Mr SMITH** - having a messaging-based approach. You could have a message that could be if you want to save \$150 over the driver's licence renewal, don't get caught for three years. That's an example of giving someone something back to drive safely.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Incentive.

**Mr WILLIE** - How young can you start? Would you like to see more of this sort of work in schools?

**Mr SMITH** - Definitely, no doubt about it at all. Again, if we are going to accept that driving on the road is a risky behaviour, which it is, it is very risky and it is very dangerous, then why wouldn't we start to educate at a much younger age.

**Mr WILLIE** - So, every kid has this sort of education before they leave year 12?

**Mr SMITH** - Indeed. In fact, one of the most annoying experiences I have had in my career was that I was working some years ago at a country station. I pulled a guy up who was speeding. He overtook five cars and I was one of them in an unmarked car. He had himself, his wife and three kids in the back. It was just an absolutely blatantly stupid act. I pulled him over. I was cranky about it and I gave him a serve as a police officer. He wasn't interested in that. He was interested in how I spoke to him in front of his kids. He wasn't interested in what sort of role model he was in front of his own children. Of course he made a complaint and you can just guess how that ended up.

But the point is that there is this level of indignation when people are pulled up by the police. There is this sense of entitlement. I mentioned it in there. A lot of people when they know you are a cop they will come up and tell you about their worst experience getting pulled over by the police. I say, 'Well, why did you get pulled over?' 'Because I was speeding but don't worry about that I want to talk about what the police officer said'. You get it all the time. What sort of an attitude is that? That just tells me what sort of people they are, very sadly, and it need not be like that.

**Ms PALMER** - I am sorry I missed the first part of your delivery and I do not want to go over anything but I know in your submission you had a lot to say around what was done with COVID-19 and how the community responded to that. What I wanted to ask you is if there was one pool of money that became available to be thrown at this, at reducing the death toll and the awful accidents - because lives are also changed when you are alive but you have horrific accidents - what do you think would make a difference? Is it education in the community? Is it dedicated police traffic units? Is it money spent invested into younger drivers? I find all those points really valid but I wonder in your opinion as a former officer, which do you think would actually make a difference? A real impact.

**Mr SMITH** - It's an easy one: messaging. My former colleagues are probably all yelling at me now saying 'don't forget the traffic police'. The reality is it is messaging. It can have the single biggest influence - and consistent messaging can have the single biggest influence over people's attitudes. Having said that, we still need to do a range of other things to support it through the back end and that includes fixing the roads and adding more police to the equation. I would say that the best place to start is messaging.

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**Ms PALMER** - We see a lot of road safety ads on TV and in newspapers. The one that springs to mind is the mum text messaging right in front of her face while she is driving. If that is not working, because we are still seeing pretty high rates of people using mobile phones, what are we doing wrong with the messaging?

**Mr SMITH** - In my opinion only, I am not convinced that we are getting to the right cohort. We have to find other mechanisms to get to the right cohort. Where does the messaging come from? How do you get it to the right people that we need to get it to?

**Ms PALMER** - Do you mean as in the different mediums of where you can do that.

**Mr SMITH** - Yes. I will give you another example. You have a look on the RSAC Facebook site at how many likes and shares - not many. We have to find a very effective medium. You go back to the COVID-19 stuff, the Premier's spiel every day on TV, early on there were people lined up tuning into it.

**CHAIR** - Maybe RSAC need to start sponsoring on Facebook so that they appear randomly.

**Mr WILLIE** - I think they do.

**Mr SMITH** - I think messaging is the best place to start but you have to follow it through with other stuff. My whole point about the paper was that there is no silver bullet here. There is no one strategy, it is a combination of things. It is a systems management approach. Rather than working in isolation we work in connection.

**Ms PALMER** - I agree with what you say about the COVID-19 campaign but I look at that and I think, well, we all tuned in because there was a chance we were all going to be impacted. Whereas with road accidents, until you are impacted you do not have that urgency.

**Mr SMITH** - Then it is too late.

**Ms PALMER** - Then it is too late. It is interesting.

**Mr SMITH** - How do we create that sense of urgency for people that aren't impacted? I do not know the answer to that. I don't come here with all those answers but I see that is one clear pathway forward.

**CHAIR** - Tania, did you have a question?

**Ms RATTRAY** - No, some good messages.

**CHAIR** - I would like to ask you about the covert cameras that they are doing in other states and your opinion on those. They are looking into the cars and picking up people with phones on their laps and not wearing seatbelts. In Queensland they have just started and in four days they have picked up a couple of thousand people and many repeat offenders. Do you think something like that is worth trying?

**Mr SMITH** - It is another tool in the toolbox that would support a whole range of positive and some negative messaging as well. It is quite an age-old police idiom that if you are not

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doing the wrong thing you have nothing to worry about. That is a line we trot out all the time. The reality is that it is true.

**CHAIR** - You still feel you are though when you see a police car behind you.

**Ms PALMER** - Even my kids start behaving and they are not even driving the car.

**CHAIR** - We see a lot of unmarked police cars on the highways, but do you think sometimes more marked police cars improves behaviour as opposed to the flash, black Subarus? You only spot it when you see it when it pulled over and the little flashing light is in the grill.

**Mr SMITH** - Yes, I have always been big on high visibility - a combination of high visibility and covert. One thing I have always liked to see is a vehicle pulled up on the side of the road and an unmarked car with blue and red flashing lights behind it. A lot of people will say, 'I didn't know the cops were driving those these days'. That again creates that heightened awareness.

**CHAIR** - I have taken notes of the Subarus.

**Mr SMITH** - I had an Amarok for a work vehicle. There were only a couple in the fleet. Many a time you would pull people over and they would say, 'Didn't know the cops were driving Amaroks these days'. There is always a lesson there.

**CHAIR** - I think there is a dark grey one in the fleet. I saw it the other day.

**Mr SMITH** - I reckon it might be my old one. There is no one size fits all. It's a combination of things. What I think is missing in the current equation is more emphasis on changing people's attitude.

**CHAIR** - Any more questions? Any last comments you would like to make, Brett? Attitude is the emphasis that we have been getting from you and also from Barry Oliver, who came in previously.

Thank you so much for putting in your submission and coming in to see us today. It is very much appreciated. Any ideas and suggestions we can put in our recommendations, anything we can do at all to change people's behaviour and attitudes and, hopefully, improve the road toll can only be of benefit. I hope you have a safe drive home and continue to enjoy Greens Beach.

**Mr SMITH** - I will do, don't worry about that. Thanks very much.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**The committee suspended from 3.27 p. m. to 3.37 p.m.**

# PUBLIC

Ms **MICHELLE HARWOOD**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TASMANIAN TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome. We are taking sworn evidence today. Everything said in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege; however, anything said outside is not. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it is available. If there is anything that you want to say in camera, please let us know so that if there is anything you feel you would like to say but you do not want it published or recorded. We cannot use anything in our evidence but it might be information if there is something that you feel you need to say. If you could make the sworn declaration, we will ask you to speak to your submission and then we will ask a few questions. We have allowed an hour.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Thank you for the chance to put in a submission and to be here to answer any further queries about it.

My name is Michelle Harwood. I am the Executive Director of the Tasmanian Transport Association. The TTA is a member-based employer association, effectively the peak body representing the interests of employer-operators in the transport industry in Tasmania, which extends to road, rail, shipping, ports, warehousing and the livestock sectors. Within road transport, even, there is a whole range of different sectors. We have quite a breadth of membership across large and smaller operators. The industry in Tasmania is characterised by a lot of smaller operators. Obviously, there are the large players, but a huge percentage of the industry is made up of owner-operators, or one- and two-employee businesses.

Our members, and the transport and logistics industry in general, as you are likely aware, provide services that are essential for Tasmanian businesses, for Tasmanian communities, for all Tasmanians. They are critical for the security and growth in the Tasmanian economy. We have seen how our industry keeps going through COVID-19, I think through the responsible nature of people in the industry to make sure that we have freight and freight supply chains continue working, even against the backdrop of a lot of onerous responsibilities, testing regimes, uncertainty around border crossings and border closures. It is an industry that does put a lot of responsibility into its activities.

Road safety is a workforce safety matter for our members, particularly for those in the road and the rail sectors of industry. Exposure to risks on the roads is one of the highest risks that our members in those sectors really do have to contend with and to do what they can in their workplace risk assessment models to try to manage.

As for any industry, we focus a lot of attention on the safe-systems approach that is obviously part of the road safety system and the road safety strategy model. We put a lot of attention into safe drivers, safe vehicles and safe speeds. Through the TTA, in particular, we do what we can to influence the safety of the road network, and the roads and the infrastructure that sits around the road network.

We have a lot of safety controls. They can be legislated controls but there is also a whole raft of those that are adopted by individual businesses as part of their workforce processes, or as part of industry accreditation systems that people take on as a voluntary pathway for their businesses.

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Modern vehicles have advanced safety technology. They have rollover prevention systems, they have a range of advanced braking systems, lane departure, onboard telematics monitoring. You will find that in a lot of fleets there is somebody at a distance who can monitor the speeding, any harsh braking incidents. Also coming out with vehicles, or even retrofitting into vehicles, there are fatigue monitoring systems that can look at the state of the driver's alertness. We have regulations as part of mandatory speed limiting of heavy vehicles and the quite strict work-rest regime that heavy vehicle drivers are subject to under the heavy vehicle national law.

What we don't have is an ability to control the behaviour of other road users. We have really limited capacity to influence what other road users are doing when they are sharing that space around heavy vehicles or even, from a rail perspective, what they are doing at level crossings. It is a real concern for our industry, the limited awareness of the physical and operational capabilities of these much larger vehicles or of trains.

Our members see the unsafe behaviours of other road users on a daily basis. Some of the common ones that are subject to a lot of discussion are poor decisions, pulling out in front of heavy vehicles, late indications, late notice, late decision-making, tailgating, inadequate following distances, overtaking when it's unsafe to do so, unsafe speed for conditions and a lot of examples of driver distraction of all sorts, a lot of people using mobile phones.

There is a significant impact on our drivers, both the truck drivers and train drivers, who are constantly seeing this every day with the limitations that they have to make allowances for those poor decisions other people are making. Train drivers, in particular, as we have put in our submission, have really limited actions. They can't swerve to avoid somebody.

There's also the phenomenon of people choosing suicide by motor vehicle, or suicide by train. That has a deeply traumatic impact on drivers.

A lot of the narrative when there is an incident involving a heavy vehicle implies that it was the light vehicle that was impacted by the heavy vehicle, that it was the truck that was at fault. A lot of heavy vehicle drivers carry that as part of that trauma I have been speaking about. We know, however, and it's backed up by all sorts of research, that around 80 per cent of the time where there is a fatality involving a heavy vehicle and a light vehicle, that it has not been the fault of the heavy vehicle driver.

I talk about all of those factors in the submission. When thinking about what we could do, we have turned our thoughts to better education for light vehicle drivers and all vehicle drivers, particularly around sharing the road safely with heavy vehicles. We have a national resource in the safety truck, which we brought to Agfest this year. Agfest was such a subdued event this year that I don't think we had a great impact. We certainly had hundreds of people through it and it is quite a powerful exhibition. That is just one example of the sorts of things we could be doing to provide better education for road users.

We have also talked about better infrastructure for truck drivers. I know I have spoken with Tania about this on occasion - the need for more opportunities for drivers to manage their own health and safety, their fatigue, by providing places that are safe for them to pull over. The wire rope barriers are a great contribution into the safe systems but they have eroded our industry's ability to find somewhere that is safe for them to pull over when they need to for breaks or to check loads.

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We think it's important to protect freight corridors, to plan for the increase in freight volumes we are likely to have, and which we are having in Tasmania. We are only going to see that increase as our population increases. To provide corridors which don't cause too much conflict between heavy vehicles and other users of the road network, be they light vehicles, pushbikes or motorbikes.

We have also commented in there about the need for reform in the heavy vehicle driver licensing process because it doesn't cover the full range of skills that somebody would need to be an all-round safe and professional heavy vehicle driver. It doesn't address things to do with load restraint systems, axle mass, the fatigue management requirements. It doesn't cover all of those aspects.

I close at this point by saying that we are deeply committed as an industry to road safety. It's a factor that is front of mind for our operators and for those drivers who are on the road and for the train drivers.

**CHAIR** - They are on the road a lot, aren't they?

**Ms HARWOOD** - They are. That's their living, that's their workplace.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I am interested to explore those designated rest areas, or areas where they are not only resting but they're checking loads and the like. We know the tragedies around unsecure loads. Things move, that's what happens; they might be tightened when you take off and leave, but halfway through. What work is your organisation doing with government and vice-versa. What conversations are you having around that? Is that being discussed through the Road Safety Advisory Council as well? I know that your organisation is a member of that.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Thanks for that question. When I started in the role, which was about four years ago, there had been a lot of conversations about the lack of facilities on Tasmanian roads for heavy vehicle drivers for those reasons exactly - to check their load, to pull over for a break, to check if there's an issue with the vehicle itself, if there's a tyre issue. Modern heavy vehicles derate if there's a mechanical problem, therefore there is only a limited time for a driver to find somewhere and pull over safely. There had been a number of industry conversations about it but there hadn't really been anything put forward by way of what we needed.

The transport association conducted some research where we looked at key freight routes. We haven't covered the entire state. We've looked primarily at Smithton through to Launceston and down the Midland Highway. We have compared the availability of facilities against the Austroads guidelines for rest areas. We have found the same things as an audit in 1996, which found that Tasmania was well behind and lacking in these facilities. Our research demonstrated that further. Indeed, we found that a lot of facilities that had been there which were commonly used by heavy vehicle drivers - what we would call informal facilities, places where people who had carved their own track out of desperation and had then used over time - we found that a lot of those had been eroded through network upgrades and bypasses. So, the opportunities for drivers to pull over for exactly those purposes were continuing to diminish.

We provided a report which recommended the establishment of a rest area strategy for Tasmania and the development of a number of facilities at different classes: some high-class facilities that had full toilet facilities and the like, and others which were just a space where

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somebody could pull over for a break or to check a load. Those recommendations were adopted and the minister, Mr Ferguson, released that strategy on the 20 November last year. That information I have provided to the Road Safety Advisory Council. With the launch of the strategy there was also an announcement of \$4 million from the federal government and one from the state government to advance facilities. We know that there are some of those in the planning stages, some of them have designs done but I don't have a time frame of when some of these will be done.

I also know that a lot of roadworks activity would have already been planned and I appreciate, now, the lengthy time that it takes to get something included in some of these plans.

**Dr SEIDEL** - I will follow up specifically on this. From an industry point of view, I would imagine that is one of your priorities, isn't it?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes, it is.

**Dr SEIDEL** - You talked about your workforce, an older workforce now as well. They suffer health issues. You talked about fatigue management, but if you don't have designated rest areas with facilities and that are well lit I would imagine in the middle of the night to make sure people can check their load, it doesn't make any sense to have the plan that probably is not going to be implemented any time soon.

**Ms HARWOOD** - It is very frustrating for drivers as well because we have been telling them we have done this research and you have been heard, but they are waiting to see things and they are continuing to see facilities that they did once use become less available. It is really important. Not all of them need to be really full-on. They just need regularly-spaced areas because you don't plan when you are, all of a sudden, going to be extremely fatigued and needing to stop. If you at least know that there is going to be one in 15 kilometres or 10 kilometres you can make it that far, but if you are guessing and it is two in the morning and you are trying to work out where the next place is, it is a poor situation indeed. Yes, it is a priority for us.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is it a priority for Government? That is the question.

**Ms PALMER** - Not if only \$5 million is being allocated.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Basically you are an essential service now, aren't you?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes.

**Dr SEIDEL** - If supplies chains are being held up then we know where the problems are worldwide now, so it comes as a cost.

**Ms HARWOOD** - It plays in together as well, the regulations on drivers for meeting their fatigue obligations, quite apart from them needing to rest when they need to, that is a separate matter to the regulations. If they are missing a rest break that is mandated under their work-rest hours, then there are quite severe fines applied to drivers for that. If they are unable to find a location, it is really grossly unfair.

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The comment that you made around there being only that allocation for it, the commitment that we have had as well as those projects will be integrated within future infrastructure developments so that they are not needed to be a separate allocation. Some of the ones that we really want done, the more serious ones, the bigger ones, they will require significant investment.

On the Bass Highway between Deloraine and the Birralee turnoff is a really strategic area for capturing a large volume of drivers. In each direction our recommendation was that a large facility be built on either side of the road that would accommodate 20 heavy vehicles and have toilets and parking and that type of thing, and that is going to be a cost. I don't know that that funding has been found or that it has been allocated. We would probably need to look to some of the federal grants programs that are available to assist with those facilities. A lot of the smaller ones could be improved even through maintenance.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Those conversations around additional funding and funding from the feds, has the Road Safety Advisory Council been supportive in that approach? Is that something they have been on board with? Is it just the industry trying to make its own voice heard through this?

**Ms HARWOOD** - To the extent that the initial \$1 million was approved through the Road Safety Advisory Council then, yes, they were supportive of it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - To identify those -

**Ms HARWOOD** - No, that was for the first rest areas that were announced to be developed. That includes one at Howth, for example, which will be quite a large facility. Yes, they were supportive of it.

**Mr WILLIE** - Following on from the rest area. Your submission around heavy vehicle drivers as first responders is quite shocking. The stat that you provided of 75 per cent of drivers saying they had been a first responder for 30 minutes until professional help had arrived was in the Northern Territory and Western Roads Federation. Have you any idea on Tasmanian statistics?

**Ms HARWOOD** - I don't. I am really interested to implement that survey here as well. Anecdotally I know that drivers tend to be first responders more often than not in terms of these incidents. I also know that often they are quite concerned before they get out of their vehicle about what they are going to be confronted with and exactly what they are capable of doing. The other bit that concerned me was the lack of intervention back in their workplace and they were just told to keep going.

**Mr WILLIE** - Post-traumatic stress.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Harden up and get on with it.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Just not even acknowledging it, I felt.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is your plan to do a survey like that for Tasmania -

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes.

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**Mr WILLIE** - And then potentially have an evidence base for the pilot program for post-traumatic stress support and that sort of thing?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes, the Northern Territory Road Transport Association is completing its report at the moment. I wanted to learn from their survey questions and how they had structured it to work out whether it was right for us to go ahead and replicate that here.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are you aware whether transport employees have reporting mechanisms for this sort of thing in Tasmania?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Certainly the ones who make up my board do. They tend to be larger operators. I think it is something that we will find in larger operators and maybe not so much in the middle-sized or smaller ones. From the Transport Association's perspective, it is another area where we may be able to contribute and assist them with their systems and their processes and their awareness of this.

**Mr WILLIE** - I was quite shocked to read that in the submission and thought it is an area that deserves further exploration and thought for drivers. I imagine every day they go on the road they see bad behaviour and the potential risks worry them -

**Ms HARWOOD** - I heard a quote from somewhere several years ago. I think it was around one of the memorial events. It might have been the Takata one or somewhere like that. It spoke to a degree of unresolved trauma within the transport industry as a result of all the things that they see all the time and the near misses and the stories that every driver has of things that they have seen.

**CHAIR** - And the cars coming towards them as if they are going to veer in front of them.

**Ms HARWOOD** - If they are going to go back on the right side of the road and then trying to work out what do they do.

**CHAIR** - Some of them do it on purpose, don't they? That must be terrifying.

**Ms HARWOOD** - That's correct.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Chair, it's not a question but I shake my head at the number of people who don't give way to heavy vehicles when they don't have enough room to come around a corner, particularly on narrow pieces of road. They just head straight into the corner and don't back off and the heavy vehicles can't get around.

**Ms PALMER** - Following on from the comments just made, I wanted to open up the conversation around suicide. I can think off the top of my head of so many accidents where the death is put into the road toll but it is a death by suicide. I wanted to know a couple of things. Do you think that should be included in the death tolls we have each year? I am really interested to know the data around it. I haven't been able to find it as yet. We look how the death toll has plateaued over the last 10 years but is some of that attributable to a mental health issue rather than a road safety issue? Those stats are put into the road toll. They are associated to heavy vehicles when perhaps we are looking at a mental health thing, rather than dangerous driving.

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I wanted to talk to you about. I can't even imagine the impact on your drivers with something like that. I wondered what the industry felt.

**Ms HARWOOD** - There are a couple of steps to that. First, is to have proper investigations about what has occurred in a road transport fatality involving heavy vehicles. The aviation sector has a dedicated safety bureau to investigate those accidents to try to understand and unpack all of the factors that have contributed. We do not see that with the road transport industry.

Second, yes, I think it is unfair that they are reflected as a road transport fatality. As I understand it, it is very difficult for them to be attributed to suicide unless there is evidence such as a suicide note or something like that. A lot of our indicators are that the numbers we have are probably underreported because the information is not readily available, unless it is determined through a coronial inquiry.

**Ms PALMER** - You made some points in your submission about people's attitude to heavy vehicles. Often in news reports it is 'the heavy vehicle collided with' and often that is not the case. Has your industry ever written to media to make a recommendation around broadcasting being aware of that language and making sure it is accurate? Media outlets really take on board those types of comments from how you refer to people with dementia, to how you refer to suicide, to whatever it might be.

I was wondering if you had gone to some of the news directors in Tasmania and said, 'Can you help with this?' It happens a lot in news rooms. People will come forward and say, 'Stop saying people with dementia are suffering. They are not suffering. The people around them might be suffering but they are not suffering. They take offence at being told they are suffering'. That type of thing. Have you thought about that or if has it happened and not been picked up?

**Ms HARWOOD** - We have not done that. I thank you for that as a suggestion. I definitely see that is a positive step that we, as the association, can take.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, it would be worthwhile.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Even the words you have used, that was exactly the case quite recently. It caused a lot of upset and angst within the industry.

**Ms PALMER** - When we talk about the mental health of your drivers, that might be a subtle change that our community will pick up on. It could be a step in the right direction.

**Ms HARWOOD** - We have one of the lowest scores in terms of any thriving workforce in deaths. Mental health is a really big problem throughout the industry and physical health is also a challenge, the two being interrelated.

**Dr SEIDEL** - I am trying to understand the challenges of the industry. You might have a 'nice office', like a very fancy new truck but you still share your workplace with other people who use it privately, which might be a road. You are potentially paying a significant amount in taxes and licence fees and so forth to use that shared road. As an industry, do you think you have much of a say in how you can make that 'work building' safer? You have full control over the vehicles and I would imagine there are incentives to get more expensive and more modern

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ones. Yet, you cannot control anyone else on the road. We talked about the resting facilities. How much of a challenge is that for an essential industry that we all rely on?

**Ms HARWOOD** - It is a challenge. We do have some capacity through the black spots committee, for example, to provide some advice and some input. The Road Safety Advisory Council is another forum. Certainly, we make significant contributions to the cost of the roads. I think that the voice of people who use the road network, the voice of the drivers can be sometimes difficult to organise and to reach.

The short answer is that I do not think we do enough to influence.

**Dr SEIDEL** - I'll go a bit more specific then. Other organisations like the tourism council, for example, would be quite loud and say 'our roads must be better otherwise tourists won't come', and they typically get what they want - more funding or programs. You never hear that from your industry to a certain extent. Earlier we talked about attitudes when it comes to traffic and road safety, and so forth. Do you think it is time for a wake-up call almost, to say, 'We are an essential service, what we do is important, we are struggling. If we don't work, the country, the state is just going to fall flat, nothing is going to move.' What does it take for that wake-up call to occur so that you get the funding for places where your drivers can rest and so forth?

**Ms HARWOOD** - I guess the work that we did for the rest area strategy was a start on some sort of wake-up call. We do need to continue pushing that because some of those other matters are closely associated with the rest area aspect of it, as in we were pushing all sorts of things through that process also.

Whether it's time for a campaign? We are very busy with COVID-19 response at the moment as well but, yes, it probably is time that, as an industry, we flew our flag a little higher and reinforced the professionalism and the fact that the road is the workplace and should be recognised and treated as such.

**Ms RATTRAY** - More than a bumper sticker campaign.

**Ms PALMER** - It would be interesting if you can include in that campaign: look after these guys because they could quite possibly be the first responder if you are in a car accident.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - I have been reading in here about them being first responders and about some of the other training. Is there a suggestion that they have first aid training, or do they all have first aid training?

**Ms HARWOOD** - No, it wouldn't be as a matter of course that they have first aid training. That is part of the research that Western Australia and the Northern Territory were doing, to make sure that there was a greater emphasis on first aid training for truck drivers.

**CHAIR** - It must be difficult for truck drivers if they come across an accident or they have had a light vehicle crashed into them on purpose. I remember doing a first aid course a long time ago and it was 'if in doubt, don't'. That is one of the hard parts. With your truck

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drivers, I guess that is one of the difficult things for them - whether you could actually do something that makes it worse without the training.

**Ms HARWOOD** - I think that, by and large, drivers are like the rest of the cross-section of the community. If they feel that they could possibly render assistance, they would want to. I think there is also a proportion of them who don't want to go there and see what might be in front of them because they don't feel that they have the right capabilities. There might be a group of those that could be supported to feel more confident in going to render assistance.

**CHAIR** - And how long they're going to be there before emergency services arrive.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - The other question I would ask you, looking at the driver licences, it is mentioned about the multi-combination licence class and the heavy vehicle MRs, HRs and HCs, is the fact that they don't have to have a driver medical against those. Do you think even a self-assessment would help for those, something on a driver licence? We discussed that earlier with other people who were briefing, when you are renewing your licence. Do you think a self-assessment would be something to look to, even for those classes that don't specifically have to have it?

**Ms HARWOOD** - There needs to be more awareness and more education around it because it is an expectation that a person would declare if they had a medical condition that breached any of those driver medical standards. But I'm not sure that people are aware that they need to do that or even what conditions would be a breach of those standards. The level of undiagnosed sleep apnoea within the driver community, from some national research projects, was identified as being very high. That is something where there should be programs to support drivers to get diagnosed for that, not so that they lose their jobs but so that they have some help.

**CHAIR** - They have appropriate medication or the help necessary?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Does the industry, then, support compulsory medical assessments? Is it already happening now, knowing that it is very limited what is being asked and how it is being asked in those compulsory driver licence assessments?

**Ms HARWOOD** - A lot of operators in the industry embrace those and go beyond those medical standards through their industry accreditation models. They will do broader medicals, they will do annual medicals, they will meet TruckSafe standards, for example. The question around whether industry would embrace a mandatory medical, I think some would. Some would also see that as an additional cost and an additional problem for them to overcome to stay in the industry.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Do you have an idea of how much it could cost for this to be like an annual health check, as it would be in other industries like the mining industry, who do that on a regular basis?

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**Ms HARWOOD** - I don't know. The cost of, say, the driver medicals to a workforce health assessor or somebody like that are probably around the \$200 to \$300 mark. Then there's the wages for the person and the time they are not working. I'm not sure of everything that would go into costing up what the real cost of doing that would be.

**Dr SEIDEL** - If cost was not an issue, would it be more accepted by the industry?

**Ms HARWOOD** - I think so, yes, because ultimately all employers want their drivers to be safe and healthy, and to know if there are some undiagnosed health conditions.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Even time away from work for the day to have the assessment done, let's say that would be work time, would it be something for the industry to consider?

**Ms HARWOOD** - I think industry would consider that, certainly.

**Ms RATTRAY** - There is such a shortage of heavy vehicle drivers now that companies are desperate to get a driver and perhaps that's one of the impediments.

Michelle, regarding the recommendations in your submission, you talk about the TTA recommending programs for Tasmania to support truck drivers. You mentioned already that there are aspects of obtaining a licence that are not covered. Can you expand a little bit on that?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes. In terms of the driver licence, we know that that is a very minimum skill set, focused around -

**Ms RATTRAY** - Three or four days?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Three at the most, I would suspect. It is a very minimum standard. It is to the Austroads standard, which only applies in, I think, three states but it is a national competency framework with pre-developed test and assessment instruments the providers use. They do what they need to do to meet that framework but it doesn't include things like load restraint. Load restraint is something that is particularly important and can have a big impact on road safety, in the light vehicle fleet as much as in the heavy vehicle fleet. But, obviously, anything that goes wrong with a heavy vehicle can have much greater consequence than light vehicles on many occasions.

The nod to load restraint in the current heavy vehicle licensing model is the requirement to be able to tie two different knots. You would know, Tania, that knot tying is not really such a load restraint control. There are so many other aspects around load restraint that need to be addressed in terms of the size of the load, where it's sat on the vehicle, how many straps are required to restrain it adequately. These are all determined through engineers and there is a load restraint guide that sets out all of that information.

For a driver to be aware that there is this book, there is this guidance note, there are these resources that give them instruction around the level of engineering restraint required for different types of loads is really important. I don't think we are adequately preparing people through the licensing system for work in the industry. That is being picked up by the employers who, of course, have a workplace health and safety duty to make sure that people are safe for their workplace but -

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**Ms RATTRAY** - It is a chain of custody responsibility.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes, it is

**Ms RATTRAY** - Nobody uses knots to tie; they use ratchet straps.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes, that's right.

What we have been advocating is what we call an HVDL plus model. At the moment we can't change the licencing system. We are participating in the Austroroads review; we believe it needs to be changed. We believe it should be based on developing people appropriately for the industry. We could then do away with some of the age restrictions. Just because you have held a heavy rigid licence for 12 months doesn't mean that you have been driving it, but you are eligible to do your next licence upgrade. We would like to see a review of that.

In the absence of that, industry is picking up and providing training for people who have just got the licence but haven't got the experience. We are proposing that and trialling it now. We have our first group. Hopefully we will start next week. We will take them through load restraint. We will show them how to fill in their work diary. We will tell them what to do at a weighbridge, what a compliance person is looking for. We will explain all of those aspects of the tasks of the industry to them. We believe that we are doing a better job of developing people.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You need to have industry on board. Not everyone has a prime mover with a load that they can have access to. It is going to be in the industry's benefit to have people properly trained. Do you agree?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes, I agree. For that reason, our members on the north-west coast are using a different transport business every day over an initial five-day period. They will provide their health and safety people or trainers and they will provide resources. We are picking that up. Then they will each take somebody for a week and give them some driving experience.

**CHAIR** - Can I ask you about speed limiters? Do all trucks have speed limiters? Or is there a percentage? Do they have to have it or is that up to the individual owner as to whether the trucks have them or not?

**Ms HARWOOD** - It depends on their year of manufacture. There was an Australian design rule. I think I put it in my submission and I don't want to quote it in case it is wrong. They are required to be speed limited to 100 km/h. Some businesses speed limit theirs to below that and others that are operating under permit also need to be speed limited below that. The A-doubles, for example, are speed limited down to 90 km/h or 95 km/h.

**Mr WILLIE** - Does that include going down a hill? On the way here, I was following a truck. I got to an overtaking lane and I am sure it was doing 110 km/h.

**Ms HARWOOD** - They can over run the speed limiter down a hill but it should not be 110 km/h. The most it should be is 102 km/h or 103 km/h. If it is a one of the larger fleets they will have a speed monitoring system within it as part of the telematics. There will be an alert sent to their fleet scheduler that there has been an over speed.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - There will be a 'please explain'.

**Ms HARWOOD** - There will indeed be a 'please explain'. Yes, they can over run on downhills. The driver should really be managing that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is called a brake.

**CHAIR** - They can override it?

**Ms HARWOOD** - No, they can't override it. The question is very valid. Some people may tinker with the settings in a speed limiter model. That can be determined. Roadside inspectors can do a check of that. Tampering with the speed limiter does occur and is, quite rightly, a high-level offence.

**Ms PALMER** - We have heard a lot today at the public hearings about the education of young drivers, L-platers and P-platers. I was wondering if you felt that your industry was well represented in ensuring that our 16-, 17- and 18-year olds are aware of how long it takes for a truck to brake and what it needs to turn a corner, and what have you.

**Ms HARWOOD** - I think that we are not. When I went through the online knowledge test, I think there was only one question for novice drivers that related to heavy vehicles. I understand that there are some reviews occurring and that there will be some more questions. But no, I don't think there is adequate information in there at all, particularly around truck blind spots and understanding where the heavy vehicle driver can see you. You see a lot of people: here's the truck; here's the car travelling along like that and the driver can't see the car. It's just the operational limitation of the heavy vehicle. When I became aware of that I never wanted to travel in my car in that blind spot.

I think greater education for young people is really important around sharing the road with heavy vehicles. That is why the safety truck, as one example, provides a virtual reality experience for anybody to see things from the truck driver's perspective. I would really like to see more of that type of education, which appeals to young people and is accessible for them. Also, yes, I'd definitely like to see more attention given to that in the training given to new licence holders. That then extends into who is training them and the awareness that their parents or others might have in their understanding being around heavy vehicles.

**Ms PALMER** - Is the truck that you bring to Agfest brought in from the mainland?

**Ms HARWOOD** - Yes. It is a national resource. It is called SafeT360. It is organised through the Australian Trucking Association. We have secured bringing it to Tasmania for Agfest. We had industry assistance and we had sponsorship from our members, from the shipping companies and from transport businesses to bring it here. We also had a grant from the Road Safety Council, which was a small amount to assist with having it here for that time.

**Ms PALMER** - What would you think about it coming a week early or staying a week late and moving around the state and having all years 11 and 12 -

**CHAIR** - Places like Civic Square, up at the Silverdome, different places.

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**Ms HARWOOD** - That was my plan. I had spoken with colleges and schools and they were very keen to have it there. In the end, it wasn't available through the Australian Trucking Association. It had been booked for somewhere else and it just didn't work out. I resolved that it would be here for an extended period and we would do school visits because that is really the way that we will start to turn people on to understanding this.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It mightn't be booked out for August, if you get it for August.

**Ms HARWOOD** - That's it, yes. I had put in a request for the earlier time frame but I will change that.

**CHAIR** - Your submission was fabulous, particularly in that you had the recommendations after each of the issues that you had. Making suggestions is very helpful when we are putting our recommendations together to help the industry. That was really great. We appreciate you coming up today and giving up your time to speak with us. Thanks so much.

**Ms HARWOOD** - Thank you all for that opportunity. There is a raft of things to do. It was quite challenging to summarise it into some key themes in the submission. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - It was a great submission. I particularly liked that after you had given us the problems, then you actually gave us some recommendations which was very helpful. Thank you very much.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

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

**CHAIR** - We are taking sworn evidence. We appreciate you coming in today. All evidence taken at the hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege in this room but anything you say outside the room may not be afforded such privilege. The evidence you have given is being recorded by Hansard and will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. If there is anything that you want to say that you don't feel you would like to go on the public record please let us know, but obviously anything that is not public we cannot really use in recommendations. If there is anything though that you would like to say but you do not want it to be public just let us know before you do and we certainly can at least get an understanding. The procedure we normally follow is if you would like to speak to your submission and then we can ask you some questions, and we have allowed half an hour.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity. I have been intent on keeping the submission I made quite simple and concentrate on three particular avenues which I believe are the principal ones causing the problems. However, since Rosemary announced the inquiry, a couple of public announcements have been made by the chair of the Road Safety Council, and by the ex-chair RSAC, regarding speed limits. I am not very happy about that but the issue should have been dealt with years ago. There was an inquiry chaired by Greg Hall which looked purely into the speed limit issues. I have some further printed evidence, if you will accept it?

**CHAIR** - Absolutely, quite happy to.

**Mr EASTLEY** - I have been promised a meeting by the chair of the RSAC and the manager so that we can fully explain the problems with the Cameron report and why it was so dangerous, basically, and didn't give the results that they intended. The basic problem there is that it was completely back to front. There was a complete misunderstanding by the RSAC about the processes involved in the research. The issue is that the trials of any research are what is the scientific result. It is there to judge whether the research itself is robust. What it pointed up was that the work by Max Cameron was deficient in some ways. When it was released there was no transport representative on the RSAC so it fell to me. I was the only person ever to talk to Max Cameron about the shortcomings of it.

From a transport industry point of view, if they were successful in dropping the average speed limit from 85 down to 80 - the average speed on country roads is only 85 under the 100 limit - that would have meant a 6 per cent increase in time costs. Paid at the end of the day that becomes 10 per cent when you have overtime costs. On top of that they were under the impression that going slower reduces fuel costs. In the case of trucks on hilly country that is just not true. Fuel usage is more evaluated by litres per hour not kilometres per litre which we use on straight running up and down the highway. There is probably going to be, or very likely going to be, a 10 per cent increase in fuel costs as well, and they weren't considered in the research.

The research assumed that there would be a five kilometre drop in average speeds across the board. We told them that was unlikely even at the early stages because the average speed is only 85, and dropping the speed limit from 90 to 100 would never achieve that.

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When the trial results came in, it was more than clear that that happened. After you take into consideration the control area, which had a very small drop in average speeds, that measures the background issues, when you apply that to the results they got, the result was that in Kingborough and in Tasman the average speed dropped very slightly by about 1 km/h on straight sections but increased by 5 km/h on curved sections. What that meant was that instead of a 20 per cent reduction in crash costs which they were assuming, there was going to be a 10 per cent increase in crash risk, completely back to front. I will give a copy of this to you later if I may.

**CHAIR** - We can copy it as well.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Page 1 is the explanation of the problems with their research. Page 2 is straight from Cameron. It shows the expected benefit in crash costs across the different things they were going to do. The big one was going to be the speed reduction, and it did not happen, it went the other way. That shows just how drastic it was in the complete difference in what they were doing.

One of the problems they had was that dropping the speed limit in the research is based on what the average speed is and the average speed was only 85 km/h on country roads as measured by DIER and provided to Cameron. Cameron's calculations showed that the optimum average speed was going to be 86 which is about spot on with what you are getting with the 100 km/h limit. The RSAC people mistook the words 'optimum average speed' for 'speed limit', just a silly error and that appeared in their correspondence and all their activities. It is there in black and white. I have given you a copy of that.

Hopefully, this committee can hurry up the meeting with the chair. I believe I'm best placed to explain to them what their research meant. At the end of the day, Max Cameron was asked repeatedly to re-energise his arithmetic or withdraw the report. He refused to do that, and at the end of the day he just said 'it has been accepted by the RSAC and that's the end of the story.' Eventually MUARC withdrew that report. You will find no copy of it now on the MUARC website and it has been withdrawn from Max's own website as well.

I think the handling by MUARC was, I'm not afraid to say this, pretty terrible. They did not advise any other research people around the country as to what the trial results showed and what they had done. The council didn't deal with MUARC on the next issue; they went to CASRA in Adelaide. Adelaide had no idea and weren't told by MUARC or by the RSAC that there was a problem with the trial results shown. The recommendations from CASRA came down with the same background information that has always been used in the research. The only scientific research here now is the trial results out of Kingborough and Tasman. They are the only trial results done in Australia basically on that issue. It has been buried, basically.

The comments made by the people recently, including the chair, show that there is still a problem in the RSAC with data and with their understanding of how the research works. I am pretty upset about that because it involves a 10 per cent increase in death and in accidents. It is as plain as the nose on your face this issue should have been dealt with a long time ago.

The three activities I have tried to point out to you, one is that the two plus one construction on the highway between Hobart and Burnie basically, it's the Midland and Bass highways, has proved to be a problem with people mistaking which lane to be in. There is no doubt about that. It is not a new thing. I have given you a page -

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**CHAIR** - I think the arrows help on those. We were talking earlier about when you go back to two lanes to actually have an arrow showing that the other lane is not yours, that it is actually coming back. Do you think there should be more arrows painted on the road to make it obvious to people that you are now on a two-lane highway?

**Mr EASTLEY** - Absolutely, Rosemary, not only more of them but bigger. They are not big enough basically.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And a better-quality paint, they don't last very long.

**Mr EASTLEY** - That is true. I will draw your attention to what they do in New Zealand. They have a problem there with a similar thing but their problem is that they have people from countries driving on the right-hand side as a major group of tourists. Everywhere they pull back on the road, they have those arrows but they also use yellow lines to denote the division between the two lanes.

**CHAIR** - Rather than white.

**Mr EASTLEY** - There is a convention, if you like, about the colour coding on roads. If you look at the new sections of road they put in, somebody in DIER knows what they are doing. You have got red on the left of you, where there is a dual lane you have got a white one which means you can overtake on that and there's yellow over there on the right-hand side. On the old lanes they only had white lines.

In New Zealand, when it turns from dotted white lines where you can overtake to where you can't, they go to yellow. It stands out immediately and you can see it from a greater distance and it reminds that you should never be in a position where the yellow is on the wrong side of your car. You have to keep that on your right-hand side.

**CHAIR** - That is an education thing too, isn't it, to gradually let people appreciate that?

**Mr EASTLEY** - It is. The problem is that group on DIER that is putting in the new roading know what they are doing. Councils and the other crews haven't got a clue. They take a pocket full of yellow or white reflectors and put them in anywhere, so people don't get used to the convention. There would be not one person in 10 that understands that.

**CHAIR** - I just thought yellow was where you couldn't park because you get so used to it in the cities, it is just a yellow line where you can't park there.

**Mr EASTLEY** - That too. There was a high-profile accident many years ago where the police couldn't identify why the driver was in the wrong lane. I gave that diagram there to -

**CHAIR** - The one on the Midland Highway?

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes. I gave that to the head of RSAC at the time. Jim Cox was chair at the time, Ian Johnson was their expert. What it shows is that if you are driving down a new section of road, if you are in the overtaking lane which you are quite entitled to do, you have got white reflectors on your left-hand side. When you come to the next section of an old highway if you are driving with the white section on your left-hand side you are in the wrong lane and that shows quite clearly on that. I will give you that. Nothing was done about it.

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They moved that accident site to the top of the list and that was the first, or the next one that they renewed. They just hid the problem there from that particular site. They made no effort to change -

**CHAIR** - And they put the centre wire rope, didn't they? I think there is wire rope in there now, if that is the accident I am thinking about.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, they fixed the site up. There was no longer a case where if you are over the white line you are actually in the wrong lane. You might like to turn that up the way my wife does, turn the map upside down and you will see what I mean.

It is just so simple. In New Zealand what you would do is have a yellow line marking the demarcation. It is only necessary on the Midland and Bass Highways. It is not necessary on any other roads and they needn't get carried away there but there has been a number of different keys, if you like, that have led people to make the wrong decision.

I gave you one: a person drove alongside the truck I was driving coming from Devonport into Deloraine and it was just the exit road from Deloraine towards Devonport, he just drove alongside me. I pulled over, a car coming the other way flashed his lights. This fellow just flashed them back and stayed where he was. He made no attempt to brake or swerve. The other fellow stopped on the side of the road. I am on the far left side and he just kept going. The thing there was that he just glanced over there, saw another road coming in and thought there's two lanes there, one lane there, simple as that. It needs those arrows and it needs a yellow line. There's already a double white line there and he ignored that but the change in colour might be the key. There's no reason why they can't do that. Paint is cheap and it only needs to be done on that highway.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Thank you, Mr Eastley, because you mentioned that in your submission as well. I was struck by that because it is a cost-effective, common sense approach to be very clear when it comes to those markings. It's probably even cheaper to have one single line compared to two double lines, isn't it?

**Mr EASTLEY** - As long as it's yellow.

**Dr SEIDEL** - So you said it is convention, or that it is convention, how come we don't have standards to ensure there is consistency there? It is a no-cost option really isn't it, or little-cost option there, that could make a huge difference.

**Mr EASTLEY** - It is. There's nothing written as far as I understand in the legislation about it but it is one of those things that is a convention in several countries. New Zealand is the obvious one. You don't have to go there, you can google the thing along the lines to see what they are doing. I have noticed the same thing in films on America - they have a white line then it becomes yellow where it is not safe to overtake. It accentuates the point basically, it just so easy to do.

That covers that one, if you are happy with that.

The second one, I have been involved with motorcycling for 60 years and I have never had a fall on the road. I was involved very early on, in the 1970s, with a proposal that saw the 250cc limit come in. That went Australia-wide and it came from the Launceston motorcycle.

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It is time now to look at that again. The problem with motorcycles is that there are different categories giving problems. Returning riders are not getting enough refresher courses but also every year, there's a fresh crop of young people coming through. They've had dirt bikes. Their parents have bought them dirt bikes. But when they reach the age where they need a licence, they really have a problem.

We've got to look at it from their point of view. To get a licence and get on the road, rather than on a dirt bike, they've got about a \$700 fee for their licence training. You have to have the proper equipment, clothing, a motorcycle is \$600 a year to register for any motorcycle unless it is a 125cc or less. The theory there was that 125 scooters and very small bikes were needed to keep young people in jobs; they have a problem getting to work and it is the cheapest transport they can find.

**CHAIR** - They can do it at 16.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Not any more.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It's 16 and three-quarters.

**CHAIR** - But still, before they get to 17, they can still do it.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes. It's the cheapest form of transport for people who have only got part-time jobs or anything else. The registration costs on the 125cc is \$300; it is half what is on another one.

The 125s are no longer a category that is suitable on the road on highway use. They are just too small. They are okay around town but they're underpowered and dangerous in some situations.

**CHAIR** - They are more city vehicles, the 125s? Just for around the town.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, if you are delivering pizzas or something they might be okay because he's not going to get over 60 km/h.

**CHAIR** - Just going from home to work in the CBD-type thing?

**Mr EASTLEY** - Exactly. On the highway, I have been involved in mentoring and I have been the fellow at the back preventing them from being tailgated, basically, doing 80 km/h and that is about all the 125s will do on the highway at times with a bit of wind. It is dangerous, it really is.

After the last inquiry, it was a public submission we put through that the speed limit for P-plate drivers on the highway be raised from 80 km/h to 100 km/h. It has worked very well, particularly where you're merging in traffic. It is time it was raised for motorcyclists as well. For some reason they didn't raise it on motorcycles.

**CHAIR** - We have had that raised with us today. It's good you have followed it up.

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**Mr EASTLEY** - I have been the mug at the back looking after these P-platers for quite some time and I refuse to do it on a 110 km/h highway. It is just not safe. We have to teach them out on the other roads to be safe. It's time that was looked at and changed.

The other thing is if we can make that category of motorcycles now a 250cc class for the registration cost change, which it is on mainland states. There is usually a class in there. The 250 is the light bike now and above that is the normal registration. I would like to see them consider making it 250cc. It makes it more attractive for these kids coming through.

**CHAIR** - It would halve the cost of the registration.

**Mr EASTLEY** - It is an incentive there for them. If they can see their way through to get on a registered bike, they are getting the training and they've got to have the equipment. Motorcyclists are a bit tribal. Once one or two do it, their mates will do it anyway. It's just one of those things. But at the moment they are in a situation where they can't see a logic behind going to all that expense -

**CHAIR** - There's no benefit to them, is there?

**Mr EASTLEY** - No, not really when they can get away from the police at the moment anyway. Police are not allowed to chase them. It's too dangerous.

**CHAIR** - I guess if you are going to pay \$600 you may as well have a 1000cc bike.

**Mr EASTLEY** - The other thing is the LAMS (learner approved motorcycle) limited bikes - a 660cc with a power-to-weight ratio. But they are the same registration as the 1000cc bikes. I would like to see a three-step situation. It won't cost MAIB anything. I think they'll get more registrations if they make it a cheap 250cc limit because they'll pick up those. But put a step in between the 650s and the 1000s. It will encourage more people to stick with a medium-sized bike and not some of these things that are capable of 300 km/h.

**CHAIR** - What speed would a 250 do?

**Mr EASTLEY** - An ordinary 250 will do 100 km/h and sit on that in the line of traffic. The 250s that caused the problem in the past were race replicas, basically, but they are still outlawed under LAMS anyway. They fail the power-to-weight ratio. They are difficult to ride and I would never allow one of my kids on one of those learning to ride. If they stick to the 250s -

**CHAIR** - Like your Honda 250s, a standard type of bike.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, they've been making them for years, they still make them. But the high-powered ones are peaky and they're difficult to ride. They're just not necessary.

**Ms RATTRAY** - They make a lot of noise.

**Mr EASTLEY** - They make a lot of noise and you're better off with a bigger bike, quite frankly. But it's that 125cc limit which really is a problem. There's quite a few 125s around but there's only one -

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**Ms RATTRAY** - They're the posties, aren't they?

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, posties qualify. But at the end of the day, there's only one make you can buy, that's a little Honda. Nothing else qualifies. All the other bikes that come in are trail bikes. They've got no compliance plate, they can't be registered.

I think it makes sense to look at that system and we can cut down on motorcycle crashes in the same way we did back in the 1970s when they brought in the 250cc limit. That was good for a start, but it became bad after they brought in these race replicas. It took too long to bring in the LAMS limit. The LAMS limit really does work well.

Nobody wants to take away the option of people buying a 1000cc bike if they think they need it. I don't need it. The original problem was that you could spend \$1000 and buy something with the performance of a Ferrari. That's not necessary. On the other side of the coin, the 125s are underpowered. I think we can improve that.

**CHAIR** - Particularly depending on the size of the person on them, as well.

**Mr EASTLEY** - I'm a big fella and I've got a 125, fair dinkum, and they're not suitable to be out on the highway, they're just not.

**Dr SEIDEL** - Specifically on that, because we might just see electric motorcycles taking off as well, it's probably time for a review on class because e-bikes will have a different classification altogether, I imagine, where the cc's don't apply any more.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, I think that needs looking at in the long run. There are a few issues there with electric vehicles. One thing is they're not safe because they're quiet. People don't hear them coming. One of the reasons you see Harley-Davidsons with no exhaust pipes on them is basically that it's safer, people hear you coming. I don't subscribe to that entirely but, at the end of the day, e-bikes and electric pushbikes are a problem in that way.

As far as power goes, you would have to do a power-to-weight ratio thing that's similar to the LAMS thing. I don't know what would wind up being at 250 but the equivalent of a 250 conventional motorcycle should come in as the same thing under an electric bike. Personally, I don't believe electric bikes will catch up much, apart from commuting around towns. They're not going to be suitable for the sort of thing that motorcyclists do.

I think there's a very good chance we can improve motorcycling safety there.

The other issue is, what I've learned over the years, that there is a problem with training. It's improved to a certain extent but there are two issues that keep people safe on the road.

One is the convoy rule, which some groups use. That is, that each person in turn waits at the next intersection for the next fellow to come into sight and then goes on. That means everybody can travel at their own speed. The situation, otherwise, is that two or three get past a car and there's a gap while they wait for the next lot, then they go like one thing to try to catch up. The issue there is that they need to be trained to work those convoy rules.

The other section that's very important is that there's a technique of motorcycling called late apex cornering. It's like defensive riding for motorcyclists. In other words, you're not

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taking the fastest line through the corner from one point to the other. You are going in a little bit later, apexing a little bit further around the corner. That gives you the opportunity to position your bike coming out, not where it's going to be right on the centre line of the road, but it gives you a choice whether you keep to the left, head to the right, or whatever, and you can position yourself out of harm's way of cars that are not quite in the right place.

I can explain that with a whiteboard or anything else to anybody. Every motorcycle instructor knows it but they don't enforce it. What they have concentrated on is doing track days to improve people's riding. This improves their braking technique and such but it doesn't improve their technique on the road when the issue is defensive riding and keeping the bike in the right position, where it's lined up for the second corner. Not just getting through the first one but it's in a better position with the second corner and it's out of the way of cars that are not quite in the right place. It's very important and I think that's a training issue, basically, and no one's tackled it at the moment.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is that something that could be taken on board through the DECA course?

**Mr EASTLEY** - It should be. The problem with the DECA course at the moment is that truck instructors and driving instructors, as well as motorcycle instructors - I don't think there's enough focus on the issues that solely affect motorcyclists. The instructor that worked with us is excellent and he understands the problem. He can show people what they mean by late apex cornering. But it's something they don't learn on the track day because you don't want the two techniques mixed up. They stick with the ordinary technique.

You will notice, Rosemary, after you announced this inquiry, the first thing the road safety fellow did was say 'we don't believe in driving training'. It's always been the case. They regard it as making people cocky. That's not true. That person hasn't understood the difference between advanced racing driver training, or whatever you like to call it, and defensive driving. Defensive driving teaches you the right space between vehicles. It teaches you, when you are waiting at an intersection, to leave your wheels straight ahead and not turn to the right because the next car will poke you out in the wrong lane. That's the sort of thing -

**CHAIR** - You are not doing skid pan stuff and doing all of that. It's learning how not to skid, we were told earlier.

**Mr EASTLEY** - No, that's not necessary. That helps and it might be a part of it. At the end of the day, if you are getting the basics from the defensive driving you're not getting cocky about it. You are being more careful because you are more aware of the problems that can occur. The Road Safety Advisory Council have always taken that view that 'we don't believe in extra training', but I can tell you right now that every one of us needs some extra training. There's always something we can learn.

I had four log truck drivers working for me. They were good drivers. We did a defensive driving course way back when it was part of the training program and every one of those drivers said how good it was, what they had learnt and what had been emphasised. I made sure my kids and every family member went through the same sort of course and it's done the world of good. It's wrong to say 'we don't believe in extra training'. I think if you had a proper defensive driving course, everybody who was found guilty of an offence -

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**CHAIR** - Do it before they get their licence back?

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, exactly. They can pay for the course rather than pay a fine. That would be far better.

**CHAIR** - It would be of more benefit.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Perhaps it's the way that it's presented - 'advanced driving course' rather than 'defensive driving course'. Maybe there needs to be a change in the language?

**Mr EASTLEY** - I am not too sure, Tania. The Road Safety people did facilitate the advanced riding. They took them along to Symmons Plains and paid for their course. Not enough people took it up. It didn't teach them the right thing anyway. It didn't teach them about late apex riding and stuff like that. It did improve their skills but it didn't improve their positioning on the road, and that's the important thing that's been missing.

The other important point, I put a sheet in there from the national transport service, TransHelp, regarding road suicide. It's a ticklish issue. No one likes to talk about it but it's 30 per cent of the road toll.

**CHAIR** - We just had the truck transport people in before you so we have discussed it.

**Mr EASTLEY** - I was hit by a suicide driver many years ago. It was difficult to deal with, but it also involves the owner. I was an owner-driver so I copped both. You are told immediately that the truck is the property of the coroner until it's finished. There is always a 12-month gap. The truck is locked up. The bank doesn't want to know; you still have to pay for the truck. So you have to hire another truck and try to keep your job going while paying for two. While that is going on, your insurance company is telling you that they're not going to pay for deliberate acts.

**CHAIR** - They can't repair while it's still in the compound?

**Mr EASTLEY** - We have improved that just recently with the help of Peter Gutwein. We had a meeting with the Coroner. For 19 years they had been locking up trucks without realising that nobody could get their truck back. The rule now is that Transport and Police have a fortnight to do their investigations then you can apply to get your truck back. Nobody knew that for 19 years and everybody was in the same position we were. It nearly bankrupted us. If we had lost the truck we would have lost our house. It's a dreadful thing people had to go through.

**CHAIR** - Through no fault of your own?

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, there was no doubt about it.

I was never angry about it. That young lady was just somebody having growing-up problems. But what was happening doesn't help the driver or owner of the truck. It has been my belief, keeping an eye on the thing over the years, that, okay, some of the mental health people are saying that 30 per cent of the accidents are suicide and that comes down to 300 a year in Australia, out of 1150 or 1200 accidents. That letter there, please read it from Dianne Carroll. She is the expert on road suicides in Australia, dealing with four or five pieces a week,

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based in Victoria. She doesn't handle many in Tasmania. She has an OAM for her work, was on *Four Corners* at one stage, and I feel very grateful to her for what she has done for the industry. We have come close a couple of times to getting the Road Safety people to talk to the mental health people but they have always backed out.

This is a decision that the state psychologist has to make as to how to go about making people aware of what is happening on the road. Jo would understand that when an accident report comes through on the news, you are not allowed to use the word 'suicide'. At the end of the report, underneath goes Beyond Blue or whatever. Their own strategy is just undermining itself. It is ridiculous.

There is an opportunity, if the road safety people were to concentrate ads on the fact that road suicides, or accidents even, impact on other people rather than just the people doing the act. I have seen that happen several times. Years ago, there was an accident at Bangalore where a little boy was killed. A truck fell over and the grandmother of that little kid was on TV in tears. After that accident, the accidents dropped off for three or four years. It just hit people.

Another one, after Jeremy Ball's accident, the same thing: it hit the news straight away, everybody knew that it was suicide and there was a reduction. But then it builds up again. Having gone to some of these suicide prevention meetings, what struck me was that most people don't want to hurt anybody else, they are only interested in their own problems.

**CHAIR** - They think the truck driver won't be hurt because it is such a big vehicle. They don't think of the mental stress.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes. I still get flashbacks, I can see her face looking at me. I can see a loose door flying across the windscreen and trying to steer with no steering column, all that sort of thing. Just mentioning it now will bring it back for weeks to come.

There is an opportunity not just to improve the accident rate but to improve mental health of truck drivers, who really are a target. They feel like a target. I had to go back to work right after this. For years you feel like a target.

**CHAIR** - You never no which car is going to come, do you?

**Mr EASTLEY** - I had to go back in a cabover truck with your feet six inches behind the - that was stressful. We had no choice; just had to go work. But I always felt safer on a motorbike than I did in a truck after that accident.

I think if you could organise a meeting with mental health people and with the state's psychologist or maybe contact Dianne Carroll and put a point of view so we can develop a different strategy so that people are more aware of family members or workmates who are in strife. Get in early as early intervention is the cure. We all know that suicide is in a terrible situation. The fact is that there are 300 more suicides a year than are accounted for, simply because they're written down as accidents and not as suicides. I understand that a lot of people don't want to upset the families of the people who did that act, or there's ramifications for insurance, but none of that should take precedence over trying to stop these things happening.

I think it's long overdue basically. I get upset about it, but it doesn't do any good.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - Malcolm, the new language for something that happens on the road is a 'crash'. They don't say 'accidents' any more. Do you think there needs to be a review of the language?

**Mr EASTLEY** - You're probably right. I don't call my 'crash' a 'crash', I call it -

**Ms RATTRAY** - I don't either, I usually call them an accident, but it's not what they're referred to anymore. I've called them accidents and been pulled up -

**CHAIR** - They're all crashes.

**Ms PALMER** - Because they may not be an accident.

**Mr EASTLEY** - What's impressed me most and what's really motivated me is that I went to a suicide prevention meeting. A young lady from quite near us, stood up. She'd lost her partner to suicide; didn't see it coming. She had that to deal with. She was left with two little kids. Eventually, she became suicidal and she didn't wake up. Suddenly she woke up that she was looking at the front of a truck. She had the guts to stand up to try to help other people. It's something we need to look at. We need to be able to get in a position where people who are suicidal recognise what they're doing.

Suicide groups do a wonderful job. They are talking to people who don't complete the act. The actual suicide rate is not going down. They're not reaching the people who are going through with it. They're reaching the people who know they need to have a chat to somebody. We've got to take that next step to try to make everybody aware if people need a hand. All they require is somebody to put their hand out and say, 'are you okay?' or whatever the thing is. It's just not happening.

I had a problem with our youngest son. He was bullied at work in Queensland. I can understand the people working alongside him wouldn't talk to him. They were worried about their own jobs, but that didn't do him any good. We need to get to a position where everybody is aware of everybody else's problems and does something about it.

At the moment, road suicide is being ignored. The Road Safety people are just embarrassed to even think about it and won't talk about it. I've spoken to many mental health groups. Some of them don't want to recognise it because it makes their figures look bad, but 300 people a year are committing suicide that they're not accounting for.

**CHAIR** - That's terrible. I think you've covered it so well. We don't have any questions left to ask.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It would be really handy to have that documentation.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Please contact Dianne Carroll if you have any questions.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I think Jo and I have both written down that name.

**CHAIR** - We'll make copies and have it incorporated. We really appreciate you putting in your submission and coming along to talk with us as well. You have covered it so well, that I don't think there's anything left to ask you.

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**Mr EASTLEY** - I have a lot of other things I could mention but I've tried to keep it simple for you. Concentrate on those three things.

**CHAIR** - It is really good.

Just one more thing. Mobile phones. In other states, they're using covert cameras, taking photos of people with mobile phones on their laps, and seatbelts. Do you think that's a good thing? Do you think we're policing enough things? Are there enough obvious police vehicles on the roads now?

**Mr EASTLEY** - I think it's improving.

**CHAIR** - A lot of the officers have been taken off their normal jobs because they're so busy with COVID.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Driving a truck through Launceston, I've seen all sorts of things; people eating breakfast out of a bowl.

**CHAIR** - Putting on their makeup in the car.

**Mr EASTLEY** - With phones, there probably should be an interlock; when your ignition goes on, your phone goes off. That's a bit of technology that's probably needed. It's not just the fact that you're on the phone; you're thinking about something else all the time, you're not focused.

**CHAIR** - It's true. Even when it's hands-free, your mind is somewhere else.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Yes, exactly. It's the focus of your brain. They tell me women can do two things at once, but I can't.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. We really appreciate you coming in.

**Mr EASTLEY** - Thank you.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**