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DRIVER TRAINING

Young and inexperienced drivers are over-represented in road fatalities. Federal Transport Minister John Anderson has advocated post-licence driver training, as does the National Motorists Association of Australia. The state governments resist this strategy. Providing lectures on theory, with a brief driving session, does not address the issue. Driving is best taught through the "learning by doing" process. The NMAA recommends that all drivers be required to satisfactorily complete a defensive driving course with an accredited training organisation before progressing beyond (red) P-plates. Such training is an ideal opportunity to reposition the driver's attitude toward driving safely. The level of training required should be at least equivalent to the successful training provided for motorbike riders.

UNLICENSED DRIVERS

Unlicensed drivers are over-represented in road fatalities. The state governments should focus on that. Tasmania has introduced camera technology for this function.

Source:

http://www.themercury.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5936,6552176%255E921,00.html

Unfortunately, one state government minister has spoken out against using cameras for any other purpose than revenue from speeding. The focus must revert to road safety. Of course, there are other means of actively detecting unlicensed drivers.

RETESTING DRIVERS

Older drivers are over-represented. State governments should retest car drivers before they are 85 years of age which is beyond the life expectancy of most people. People are not allowed to be company directors after turning 70, but they are allowed to drive cars and trucks without being retested. In NSW, medical checks are not required until age 80 for car drivers. A recent SMH article highlighted this issue. Source: <http://drive.fairfax.com.au/cgi->

bin/drive2002/wrapper.cgi?article=..%2Fdocs%2Fcontent-new%2Fnews%2Fgeneral%2F2003%2F09%2F29%2FFF7FMAE5LD.html&make=&family=&desc=&IsDealer=&search_query=&result_query=&site_section=news&cat=findarticles&subCat=&pType=searchresults&querytext=peter%20mckay

The NMAA supports regular retesting of drivers at, say, 10 year intervals after achieving a driving licence. Traffic laws change and drivers should pass a knowledge test also. The frequency of medical checks and retesting should be increased for older drivers.

CAR CHASES

Fatalities arising from police chases are over-represented. The state governments must provide safer methods of apprehending these vehicles and enforce effective protocols. The proportion of chases resulting in a fatality is unacceptable. Police are entitled to a safe workplace too.

DRIVEWAY DEATHS

Driveway deaths are of increasing concern. Background:

<http://www.chw.edu.au/about/news/items/old/items/driveways.htm> There is a plethora of speed ads on tv, yet there are no ads showing drivers and parents how to avoid driveway deaths. These low speed fatalities are readily avoidable. It is essential to increase public awareness of the risk. Parents and drivers are the target audiences as both can take more adequate precautions. State governments should take full responsibility for this advertising and not defer to (limited funding for) local councils that apply for grants.

DAYTIME HEADLAMPS

NSW's NRMA is advocating daytime headlamps to improve vehicle visibility (see attachment). The National Motorists Association of Australia endorses this concept. Daytime Running Lights (DRL) are compulsory on new vehicles in Europe, the United Kingdom and North America. Most Australian drivers consider that headlights are solely for the purpose of illuminating the road ahead. Very few realise that headlamps increase the visibility of the vehicle to other road users. The Inquiry should support this low cost option which dramatically increases vehicle visibility, particularly for dark coloured vehicles. Pedestrians are better protected when vehicles are more visible - some elderly pedestrians have very poor eyesight and hearing.

A theme for the introduction could be "switch on to safe driving" - when the driver switches headlights on to low beam this is a conscious decision to drive more safely. An ideal opportunity to introduce this would be in the period before the Christmas holidays.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL IMPAIRED DRIVING

The proportion of drug affected drivers involved in fatal accidents is reported to exceed 30%. It is essential to determine the level of each drug that affects driving ability so that standards can be applied. Appropriately funded research should accelerate this process. A practical system of random drug testing should be applied, similar to random breath testing for alcohol.

Background:

<http://www.drive.com.au/news/article.asp?article=http://drive.fairfax.com.au/content-new/news/general/2003/07/18/FFXNGPF39ID.html>

and

<http://www.drive.com.au/news/article.asp?article=http://drive.fairfax.com.au/content-new/news/general/2003/01/20/FFX51MS95BD.html>

Some states have an increasing proportion of drivers with alcohol impairment. Their own reports available on the website demonstrate this. Yet their road safety campaigns remain devoted to speed detection and the subsequent revenue.

Example: Graph 9b - RBT percentage of positive readings has climbed since 1999, (last page) at http://www.tacsafety.com.au/upload/RSS_Sep03.pdf

and pca fatalities since 1997 at

<http://www.tacsafety.com.au/jsp/content/NavigationController.do?areaID=12&tierID=1&navID=A9348A54&navLink=null&pageID=164>

ENGINEERING ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Most road fatalities occur on arterial and feeder roads. Improvements in road design are possible on arterial and feeder roads. Expressway statistics are low and one reason is that they are typically well designed roads. The American Automobile Association has promoted better engineering at arterial road intersections which has reduced fatalities. It has shown that simple changes such as a separate lane for left hand turns make significant improvements in road safety (in Australia, it would be a separate lane for right hand turns). Source: <http://www.aafts.org/pdf/NovDec99.pdf>

Better engineering of traffic light signal times almost halved red light violations simply by increasing the amber period by a few tenths of a second. Source:

<http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/newswire/midwest/2003/06/10/29673.htm>

The negative effects of poorly designed traffic calming devices should be reviewed. Appropriate standards are required and restrictions should be placed on their use. Hundreds of road deaths overseas have been attributed to speed humps delaying emergency services, for example. Source: <http://www.drive.com.au/news/article.asp?article=http://drive.fairfax.com.au/content-new/news/general/2003/09/30/FFXFO0TT6LD.html>

SETTING SPEED LIMITS

Many people misinterpret the "speed of impact" with speed being the "cause" of the accident.

The foundation stone for any speed limit policy is the requirement that speed limits must be set appropriately. The NMAA is forwarding a more detailed separate submission to the National Road Safety Inquiry on this issue.

The stagnation of all three road fatality ratios since 1997 per ATSB data (fatalities per 10,000 vehicle registrations, fatalities per 100,000 population, and fatalities per 100 million vehicle kilometres travelled), is the determining factor in support of our demand for a change of direction (see ATSB data in the attachment).

The promise from academia that focusing on speed would reduce the road toll has failed to deliver results. Current methodology of deliberately setting low speed limits has failed to reduce road fatalities.

Our recommendation is to implement the 85th percentile method of setting speed limits. On the evidence, we believe it will assist greatly in reducing road fatalities and injuries in Australia.

Quote: "Statistics show that roadways with speed limits set at the 85th percentile speed have fewer accidents ..."

FATIGUE

The NMAA is exploring the increasing prevalence of fatigue and inattention as causal factors and their correlation with lower speed limits and their enforcement density.

CAMERAS

Speed cameras have become a blight. There are more cameras than blackspots in NSW for example. The state government focus should not be solely on speed i.e. revenue. We need far better management of road safety if there is to be a sustained reduction of road fatality ratios below the 1997 level. As Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson recently stated, the emphasis on speed "may blind us to other causes". He did not mention the word revenue. State politicians continue to think and act in terms of revenue, for example: "Being unable to reissue defective infringement notices is still causing revenue losses".

Source:

http://www.theadvertiser.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5936,7375497,%255E2682,00.html.

As many road safety advocates have said, "Greed Kills". There is no one single measure of safe driving - road safety cannot be measured in kilometres per hour.

RESEARCH

State and Territory governments in Australia do not come even close to analysing crash causation factors properly, and as a result little or no data exist for non-serious injury crashes. It is no wonder the ATSB reports do not analyse causal factors.

For example, the NSW government habitually ticks the "speed" box resulting in the preposterous claim by the RTA that, in 2002, "46% of fatal crashes were caused by speed". Some states, such as South Australia, provide far better reports than others. Even New Zealand has better reports. Source:

<http://www.ltsa.govt.nz/research/annual-statistics-2001/rep-accid-casualties.html>

We need to **really** determine the causal factors of fatal crashes in Australia by conducting a proper large scale research study very much along the lines of the United Kingdom Transport Research Laboratory report TRL 323. A form similar to the STATS19 form used in TRL 323 with some minor revisions would be suitable. The study should be conducted across Australia rather than confined to one or two states. Exactly the same crash report form should be used by police in all states.

This statement on behalf of the National Motorists Association of Australia is authorised by NMAA Vice President Harry Wood at sigti1@bigpond.com

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Confirmation of road fatality statistics:

The Australian road fatalities graph per 1,000 registered vehicles was published originally in 1998 as Monograph 23 by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

Source: <http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/pdf/mgraph23.pdf>

It was updated with more recent data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its Transport Special Article – A history of road fatalities in Australia (Year Book Australia, 2001).

The plateauing or stagnation of the road fatalities graph over the last five years is provided by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. Source: <http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/stats/pdf/mrf112002.pdf>. The first graph shows the previous five years for Australia. Page 6 shows the graph for the previous five years in each state.

It is preferable to use a ratio such as deaths per 10,000 vehicle registrations for fair comparison over time and between states.

The following table of Australian Transport Safety Bureau statistics show that all three road fatality ratios have stagnated since 1997. Deaths per 10,000 registrations, deaths per 100,000 of population and deaths per 100 million kilometres travelled have stagnated since 1997.

This is a national disgrace.

The road crash fatality rates for the last few decades have been copied from the publication ATSB Road Crash Data and Rates Australian States and Territories 1925 to 2001 available at http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/stats/pdf/crash_rates.pdf

Table 1 Road fatalities, exposure data and road fatality rates, Australia, 1925 to 2001

Year	Road fatalities	Registered vehicles ('000)	Fatalities per 10 000 registered vehicles	Population ('000)	Fatalities per 100 000 population	Vehicle kilometres travelled ('000 000)
1970	3798	4771.6	8.0	12507.3	30.4	-
1971	3590	5039.2	7.1	12937.2	27.7	81051
1972	3422	5317.1	6.4	13177.0	26.0	-
1973	3679	5613.1	6.6	13386.4	27.5	-
1974	3572	5952.7	6.0	13599.1	26.3	-
1975	3694	6276.4	5.9	13771.4	26.8	-
1976	3583	6580.9	5.4	13915.5	25.7	100919
1977	3578	6818.0	5.2	14074.1	25.4	-
1978	3705	7114.5	5.2	14359.3	25.8	-
1979	3508	7358.3	4.8	14515.7	24.2	111469
1980	3272	7573.6	4.3	14695.4	22.3	-
1981	3321	7917.6	4.2	14923.3	22.3	-
1982	3252	8346.0	3.9	15184.2	21.4	126866
1983	2755	8589.8	3.2	15393.5	17.9	-
1984	2822	8832.8	3.2	15579.4	18.1	-
1985	2941	9118.3	3.2	15788.3	18.6	140427
1986	2888	9290.5	3.1	16018.4	18.0	-
1987	2772	9373.7	3.0	16263.3	17.0	-
1988	2887	9544.4	3.0	16538.2	17.5	153915
1989	2801	9806.1	2.9	16833.1	16.6	-
1990	2331	10080.6	2.3	17065.1	13.7	-
1991	2113	9934.1	2.1	17284.0	12.2	150389
1992	1974	10246.9	1.9	17489.1	11.3	-
1993	1953	10431.5	1.9	17656.4	11.1	-
1994	1928	10699.2	1.8	17838.4	10.8	-
1995	2017	10935.4	1.8	18049.0	11.2	166514
1996	1970	11401.1	1.7	18310.7	10.8	-
1997	1768	11664.4	1.5	18524.2	9.5	-
1998	1755	12066.9	1.5	18751.0	9.4	173317
1999	1763	12268.6	1.4	18966.8	9.3	177635
2000	1822	12407.4	1.5	19157.1	9.5	180782
2001	1736	12476.8	1.4	19386.7	9.0	-

Notes to table

Northern Territory fatalities are excluded from the Australian fatalities count and fatality rates for 1925 to 1967. Queensland licence data is excluded from the national figures from 1954 to 1983 and in 1997 due to data being unavailable. Northern Territory licence data is excluded from the national figures from 1963 to 1967 due to data being unavailable. Western Australian licence data is excluded from the national figures from 1997 to 1999 due to data being unavailable.