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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS,
TRANSPORT AND THE ARTS

Reference: Managing fatigue in transport

WEDNESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 1999

ARMIDALE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT AND THE
ARTS

Wednesday, 15 September 1999

Members: Mr Neville (*Chair*), Mr Gibbons, Mr Hardgrave, Mr Hollis, Mr Jull, Mr Lindsay, Mr McArthur, Mr Mossfield, Mr Murphy and Mr St Clair

Members in attendance: Mr Hollis, Mr Lindsay, Mr McArthur, Mr Neville and Mr St Clair

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

- . Causes of, and contributing factors to, fatigue.
- . Consequences of fatigue in air, sea, road and rail transport.
- . Initiatives in transport addressing the causes and effects of fatigue.
- . Ways to achieving greater responsibility by individuals, companies, and governments to reduce the problems related to fatigue in transport.

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Committee met at 9.42 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

ABINGTON, Mr Paul Trevor, Local Controller, State Emergency Service

BACIGALUPO, Ms Maree, Executive Officer, Armidale Health Service, New England Area Health Service

BARTHOLOMEW, Sergeant Stuart Henry, Duty Officer, New South Wales Police Service

COOPER, Mr Neil, Captain, New South Wales Fire Brigade

de VRIES, Mr Gerry, Fire Control Officer, Dumaresq Rural Fire Service

THRIFT, Mr Geoffrey Earl, Captain, Guyra Volunteer Rescue Squad

WATERS, Mr Philip Neale, Station Officer, New South Wales Ambulance Service

WILLIAMSON, Mr Graham Thomas, Captain, New South Wales Fire Brigade

CHAIR—Ladies and gentlemen, I declare open this round table discussion as part of the House of Representatives Standing Committee inquiry into the management of fatigue and transport. In doing so, right from the outset we should benchmark what we mean as fatigue. We are talking about the management of tiredness, weariness, drowsiness and fitness to drive, or in the case of someone employed, fitness to work. The House of Representatives Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts has been given a reference from the Minister for Transport, the Honourable John Anderson, to look into this matter.

I welcome everyone to this round table today here in Armidale. In opening the proceedings I would emphasise that, in addressing the terms of reference, the committee has not prejudged the issues. We are not here on a witch-hunt. Members want to hear the full range of views and consider initiatives which have been, or could be, developed into managing fatigue in transport in a better manner. Management of fatigue is a very important issue in the workplace and has ramifications for all of us.

Under the terms of reference, the committee has been asked to inquire into and report to the parliament on managing fatigue in transport by focusing on four areas. Those four areas are: the causes of and the contributing factors to fatigue; the consequences of fatigue in air, sea, road and rail transport; initiatives in transport addressing the causes and effects; and ways of achieving greater responsibility by individuals, companies and governments to reduce the problems related to fatigue and transport.

Armidale, Guyra and Uralla, and for that matter, Kempsey, where we are going, are on the front-line of efforts to combat fatigue. In this particular area, located almost midway between Sydney and Brisbane, driver fatigue is an important community matter for you. The participants in today's program represent various emergency services in Armidale, Guyra and

Uralla. Your people are regularly at the coalface of the reality of driver fatigue and your views will have a great bearing on the colour we attach to this particular area.

Last night we went out to a truck stop at Guyra to speak to people who were there having a meal and servicing their trucks in the middle of their round of duties, so to speak. Many of them were on the Brisbane-Sydney run or taking over trucks to go back to Sydney or Brisbane from other drivers. I would like to thank all of those who have generously given of their time to come here and assist the committee today. It promises to be interesting and informative. I do not want you to be inhibited. If you have to be critical, be critical; we do not want you to hang back.

One of the things we were just discussing before the committee opened its formal proceedings today was the fact that so many people feel intimidated by the fact that we are a House of Representatives committee or that somehow they are going to be targeted in their jobs. Let me tell you that if any of you were targeted in your jobs, this committee would take the dimmest view of that and would raise it as a matter of privilege in the federal parliament.

You appear before us today as professionals in your field, so please feel totally uninhibited and let us get a feel for what you understand are the consequences of fatigue in emergency services in this Armidale, Guyra and Uralla area. As I said, you have parliamentary privilege today, but to ensure that privilege is correct, you are supposed to direct your answers, and we direct our questions, through the chair. On that note, I welcome you all here. Would you all like to make opening statements, or would someone like to lead with a statement?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—Yes. In my area of policing I have been in the New England area now for a period of 10 years and, in particular, with the heavy vehicle industry, numerous accidents have occurred on this stretch of highway. Basically, the unexplained accidents, on many occasions we feel, may be due to driver fatigue.

I believe that one of the good areas is the use of the Safe-T-Cams which are appearing across New South Wales—though I am not particularly sure of the other states. I believe that that technology is in its infancy and the technology and the information that can be obtained through that type of technology may be of great assistance in this area. Firstly, for a driver—I am talking road transport—to be fatigued, he has to drive a vehicle, and the Safe-T-Cam can log that vehicle. That is why I believe that technology is only in its infancy.

One of the other areas is that drivers are constantly saying that they are on tight schedules. This goes back to owners. Owners do not care about the consequences in many respects to their drivers; all they are concerned with is getting the goods from point A to point B in the shortest period of time. Again, the drivers are placed in the situation that they either get the goods there or they do not have a job. Consequently, they look at any way that they can beat the systems. We all know of multiple logbooks, although that has certainly tightened up a fair bit. Multiple logbooks were quite prevalent years ago. The use of technology is the way we have to go. Perhaps I could speak on that later on.

CHAIR—Would anyone else like to make an opening statement? Perhaps you could describe your area and what aspect of fatigue you see.

Ms BACIGALUPO—I am the local manager of the health service here.

CHAIR—At the hospital or the region?

Ms BACIGALUPO—At the hospital, but we are part of the New England Area Health Service. From our perspective there are two issues. There is the issue of road trauma with heavy vehicles, and there is also a significant issue with an ageing population and not having access to public transport so that people are driving when they should not be driving or driving themselves because that is the only way they can access services as there is no subsidised public transport.

One of the other issues from our perspective is that there is a significant and developing occupational health and safety issue with staff having to drive significant kilometres across a very wide area. The New England Area Health Service—

CHAIR—Doing what?

Ms BACIGALUPO—As part of their role. As managers or primary health care workers, as part of a bureaucracy, their role is not in one specific town or area. They provide services to other surrounding towns or areas.

CHAIR—Would you give us an example.

Ms BACIGALUPO—For example, the community health staff here in Armidale would provide services to Inverell, Glen Innes, Tenterfield and surrounding areas.

CHAIR—What sorts of services?

Ms BACIGALUPO—Counselling services, health promotion services, group services, patient education services and clinical type services.

CHAIR—But those sorts of things are not ones where a person would necessarily have to go under some sort of pressure to be there, if you were doing a seminar for the day or something like that.

Ms BACIGALUPO—No, but you will drive for 2½ or three hours to get there, do six or seven hours work and then drive back again.

CHAIR—I see. That is a good point. Can I make the point here that we are not just talking about people in commercial activities, we are talking about all sorts of drivers. It is fatigue by the public as well, fatigue in all sorts of vehicles. And in aviation, for that matter, in this area.

Mr DE VRIES—I am the fire control officer for Dumaresq Rural Fire Service. Our role is predominantly looking after fire protection on the major highways going in and out and

around Armidale. The thing that is of concern to me, being from an organisation that is manned purely by voluntary unpaid people, is the amount of time that these people have to spend away from their normal employment and their families to attend the accidents that we go to on the highways. Plus we have to be very mindful of the fact that we could have people who have done a full day's work, so to speak, and then end up standing for four or five hours up on Devil's Pinch in the middle of the night, when it is snowing, attending to an accident scene.

With respect to fatigue in drivers, I do not think I or the service are qualified to pick those types of incidents because we have not been trained to do that. But when people go to an accident and you have time to stand around and look, after a while you get a bit of a feel for looking for different things that may have caused the accident. As Mr Bartholomew said before, the unexplained accidents are the ones where you really start wondering what the underlying causes were.

CHAIR—We might come back to that. I would particularly like to ask you some questions about that.

Mr BABINGTON—I am a local controller for Armidale and Dumaresq shire.

CHAIR—Which service?

Mr BABINGTON—The State Emergency Service. We are the primary response for this area. It does not get any easier. I do not know what the answer is. I do not think anyone can say what the answer is.

CHAIR—Are you talking with respect to—

Mr BABINGTON—Fatigue and things like that.

CHAIR—Are you talking with respect to yourself and your duties or are you talking about what you observe on the roadside?

Mr BABINGTON—What you observe. People blame fatigue, they blame speed. I think it is between the ears. People just seem to get a loose bolt when they are in a motor vehicle. If they want to pass a car or do something silly, they will do it.

CHAIR—Are they more likely to do that when they are fatigued or not fatigued?

Mr BABINGTON—More so when they are fatigued. That has a bearing on it. You only have to drive around yourself and see how many near misses you have, and see the other drivers and their reactions. Road rage has got a fair bit to do with it.

CHAIR—Road rage?

Mr BABINGTON—Yes.

CHAIR—How do you make that a dimension of fatigue?

Mr BABINGTON—People get very stirred up if something does not go right for them.

CHAIR—Even when they are fatigued?

Mr BABINGTON—Even when they are fatigued. I have been doing the job now for 25 years, cutting people out of motor vehicles. I do not like new cars—I think they are too comfortable. Cruise control has got a lot to do with it—driving along in an armchair atmosphere, 100 kilometre an hour speed limit, you are not driving the motor vehicle, it is driving itself, you get very lackadaisical, talking to your partner next door or to people over in the back, and, bingo!

CHAIR—Do you do the Jaws of Life here?

Mr BABINGTON—We have the primary response here.

CHAIR—It varies from state to state, doesn't it?

Mr BABINGTON—Yes.

CHAIR—In some areas the fire service does it.

Mr BABINGTON—Yes, the VRA does it.

CHAIR—Mr Waters.

Mr WATERS—I am from the New South Wales Ambulance Service. I am the officer in charge at Armidale. I have been with the ambulance service for 27 years. As Mr Bartholomew said, with the accidents around Armidale here there are the unexplained ones or some you can look at and say, 'Yes, fatigue probably caused this.' We probably spend a little bit more time with the occupants of vehicles than the other services, while we are transporting them to hospital, and often people will say to you that they have just finished work for the day and they are on their way to Brisbane, so they have worked for a day prior to their travel.

The roads and the cars today, I believe, contribute to the fatigue side of crashes. When you have a look at where our accidents happen around here, you will have a bit of roadway where you have to concentrate for a while, then you will get out into a good straight stretch, and it is often along those stretches where they happen. Cars today are more comfortable, more a pleasure to drive than they were 20 years ago. When we are attending cases, you will come up behind a car with your siren going, and they will not even know you are there for 10 minutes because of the stereos in cars these days and the airconditioning. They can have their windows up and create an environment that is just like sitting in the lounge room at home. And if there is the occasion for you to have a bit of a sleep, you have got the perfect environment for it.

With our work, too, there is the fatigue on our side. Being a major station in the New England area, we are often called on to do ambulance work for Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Inverell, Guyra, Walcha. So we could have a fellow that has already worked a full shift here

and, if there is no one available in any of those other towns, he is off to do a transport there. Often, with the health service cutbacks that Armidale is experiencing at the moment, their job is through to Tamworth. So we could have a fellow who has worked six hours here and then goes to do a job for Inverell, so he has got another five or six hours on top of his shift.

CHAIR—What is the base hospital for this greater area?

Mr WATERS—Tamworth.

CHAIR—How many ambulance officers would you have at Armidale?

Mr WATERS—We have got 13 rostered to our station at the moment and, of that, we have got one on long-term workers compensation who will be back, hopefully, in the next month or two.

CHAIR—How many stay at Guyra and Uralla and places like that?

Mr WATERS—There are three at Guyra, but we have got one off on long-term sick leave. We do not have an ambulance station at Uralla. Walcha is our next closest at 45 minutes to the south-east, and our next one is Dorrigo to the east. So we have got an hour's response to people—

CHAIR—Do you umbrella those other centres?

Mr WATERS—We all work in together. If one wants assistance, the next station to it goes to assist them. If Walcha is out, we could have an hour and 15 minutes whistle run, as we call it, which means lights and sirens from here to halfway between Walcha and Wauchope. If Walcha and Wauchope are away for the day, we are the next available station. Port Macquarie would come and back us up.

CHAIR—Where is that past from?

Mr WATERS—We are controlled from Dubbo. It is our cohort centre now, and Newcastle would be Port Macquarie's cohort.

Mr THRIFT—Our area of operations is 40 kilometres south of Guyra to meet Armidale. We go 50 kilometres north to meet Glen Innes and 80 kilometres east to meet Dorrigo. We then go 45 kilometres west to meet Inverell.

We look at the these accidents and the types of vehicles involved in them as two distinct groups. We have professional drivers such as your truck drivers and your commercial travellers—the types of vehicles in which the occupants do long hours and are quite used to driving professional vehicles. Then we look at our general public vehicles. The thing that has become very prevalent to me is the difference in ratio of accidents between the general public and the professional drivers. Professional drivers, as against the general public, seem to more pronounced in our numbers of vehicle accidents. I put this down to the general public using the availability of Driver Reviver stations and those types of things for holiday periods. The number of accidents in holiday periods has dropped dramatically since the

introduction of Driver Reviver. The professional drivers do not appear to use this type of facility. I wonder what the reason is for that.

CHAIR—You have statistics that show that these Driver Revivers are ameliorating the rate of road accidents.

Mr THRIFT—We have. We went back through our records—

CHAIR—Could you let the secretariat have any figures on that.

Mr THRIFT—Yes. I apologise for not having these drawn up, but I have some rough copies here with me.

CHAIR—No problem.

Mr THRIFT—We have found during the Easter break especially that it has been a very dramatic period for us. We used to find, for instance, that none of our boys left town on Good Friday because we always had a major incident during Easter prior to Driver Reviver. Since Driver Reviver has been operating, we have not had a major incident.

CHAIR—How many Driver Reviver stations would you have, say, between Tamworth and Glen Innes?

Mr THRIFT—There is one in Tamworth, one in Uralla and one in Armidale.

Mr BABINGTON—Not any more. Not in Armidale.

Mr THRIFT—Armidale has dropped out unfortunately.

Mr BABINGTON—We have not dropped out; we are still fighting.

Mr THRIFT—We have one in Guyra, which is probably one of the earliest to start around this area, one in Glen Innes and there is also one in Tenterfield. They are well supported in this area. The general public really pull up and make use of it as general public transport. Unfortunately, professional drivers do not seem to use it. Whether it is the demand, as Stuart Bartholomew said, by the operators of these vehicles to keep them moving rather than let them use the fatigue facilities, I do not know. It is unfortunate.

CHAIR—What is the difference between the SES and the volunteer rescue squad?

Mr THRIFT—The volunteer rescue is probably the only true volunteer organisation in the state. We do not have any paid occupation; we do not get any financial assistance; we raise all our own finances.

CHAIR—How do your duties differ?

Mr THRIFT—Our duties do not differ at all. We are the primary rescue for any rescue operation, as are the Armidale SES. Our roles are basically identical. Our motto is—

CHAIR—So a town might have one or the other but generally not both, is that it?

Mr THRIFT—No, we have an SES unit in Guyra. Their mandate is flood storm and tempest; ours is purely rescue.

CHAIR—Will they do traffic control if there is a major accident or something like that?

Mr THRIFT—If they are requested to, yes.

CHAIR—Back to you, Mr Cooper. Would you like to make an opening comment?

Mr COOPER—I do not have a lot to offer to this meeting. Driver fatigue is definitely a problem. We have manned things like Driver Reviver and seen some absolutely ridiculous things happen there. We could say that most of these accidents that we go to are driver fatigue; I can just say that that is what the problem was. It was not because the wheel fell off the car; it was not because of any other reason. It was because the driver was not doing what the driver should have been doing. In the fire brigade we are taught that there is no such thing as an accident anyhow, and that is quite a true statement.

Really, it is the driver who is at fault; it is the driver who is not alert. He has been too far and, as you all know, I could nod off even on my way back to Uralla now and it is only 20 kilometres or I could drive from here to Sydney all in the same day. Sometimes you finish a journey and you say, 'Gee, I could have done that journey twice'; another time you will finish that same journey and say, 'I wish I had never ever have started it.' We all act differently. We all perform differently. The thing that amazes me most is that when you get to an MVA—there is a vehicle accident there; something has happened—it really wakes you up when you see the rest of the public perform. They refuse to stop or they are hard to stop. They do not know the accident is there. They are all accidents going somewhere to happen also. If you were to hold just a lollipop sign—and I admire those fellows who hold lollipop signs—they say, 'Jeez, look at that idiot holding the lollipop sign'. Those fellows really are talented blokes. If you were to just hold a lollipop sign you see what idiots are on the road and they are all fatigued. They just have not had their accident, but they are going to have it. It is just so obvious; the writing is on the wall. The cause I cannot tell you. I cannot say why we have driver fatigue in this area.

CHAIR—Having now reviewed your various roles, I think you probably have an edge that no-one else has. You are generally the first people on the scene, either police, fire, ambulance or volunteer rescue. At the hospital you are not far behind. You are just one step behind them. You see the instantaneous results of an accident before people pull themselves together and either go into shock on the one hand or go into silence to protect their legal position on the other. What do you perceive when you see an accident? What do you think? You see the fatigue but what is your gut feeling as to what is the contributing factor towards fatigue? What is the generic thing that drives that? Are they driving too far? For example, we have done work with Professor Wlodarski in Melbourne who says that the amount of carbon dioxide in the cabin of a car is a contributing factor to tiredness because as the oxygen level drops the carbon dioxide level comes up and you are less alert.

Could each of you tell us what you feel contributes to this fatigue? What are the things you see? What are some of the silly stories you have heard? We just want to get a feel. You are at the coalface, you see them first, you see them before the official investigators get out there and so on. I will start with you, Mr Cooper.

Mr COOPER—The first thing we think is, ‘He must have been driving fast,’ or ‘How did it happen?’. We just ask these questions because we do not get to talk to the person.

CHAIR—But quite often after an accident, and I have been the same, you feel a period of guilt. You tend to try to excuse yourself a bit. We all do it and say, ‘Well, really I should have had a decent night’s sleep last night,’ or ‘I should have got that tyre fixed.’ What are the reactions of people when you are first on the scene, in relation to fatigue?

Mr COOPER—We are not big on talking to the people. Our job is just to make sure they are all okay, see who is doing what and to recover them. The people who are big on talking to the people are probably the ambos. We talk as much as we can but only to get our job done. But we are only there to support the ambos and thank Christ they are there.

CHAIR—When you are cutting some guy out and you are trying to make sure that the thing does not explode—

Mr COOPER—We ask him questions about how many people are in the car and if they are all here—‘Oh yes, I’ve got a little girl in the back,’ or something like that. We just ask those questions. We do not say, ‘Oh, you’re bad. You shouldn’t have driven this far.’ We have nothing to do with that. We are there to just comfort.

CHAIR—I am not suggesting that. What do you see and what do you assess?

Mr COOPER—We wonder, ‘How the hell did this happen?’ That is the question we ask. We do not say any more. We just say, ‘How did this happen?’ Then we start to formulate what did happen. If there is one vehicle there and they say, ‘A truck came around the corner and did this and something else,’ we listen to that story. But we only ask, ‘How did it happen?’

Mr HOLLIS—I take on board what someone said about the cars being more comfortable. I think you summed it up very well when you said it is like being in a living room, where you are isolated or when you are watching television and, if you want to have a nod, you do and the same in the car. Having said all that, all the statistics show that the number of accidents and the number of deaths on the roads each year have been declining. Contrast what happened, say, 20 years ago or even 10 years ago. There is an increased number of vehicles on the road, but the number of deaths on the road each year has been declining. So, somewhere, someone is doing it right. As to the cause of accidents, what we are finding out is you just cannot say it is any one thing. It is a whole lot of contributing factors. It may be that roads are getting better. I was very interested when someone said that where the road is really bad, there are less accidents because you have to concentrate. When you get on the straight stretch, that is where the accidents happen. Maybe that is a case where the government could save money and not build these new super highways. You have to concentrate when you are on a bad road and you do not have that many accidents there.

Maybe it is seatbelts, maybe it is stricter drink-driving rules or a combination of all these things. I know the horrific accidents that you people see, yet that number is declining. So, someone, somewhere, is doing something right.

Mr THRIFT—In reply to Mr Hollis, if you look at the standard in motor cars these days in comparison with what it was even five years ago, the requirement for the safety in motor cars is so much better. The increased police presence on the road is reducing the high speed. We are reducing these things which normally add to the accidents. The safety of the car itself is reducing the major injuries. There are all these contributing factors. The comfort in cars, I think, really means that people are so much more relaxed in the car that they really are not in control.

CHAIR—We are not trying to analyse all the contributing factors to accidents. What we are trying to analyse is how does the fatigue aspect of this—let us take one step back from that. We certainly know about alcohol. If you like, there are four pillars to this sort of road safety thing. We have control of speed, which the police do very well. We have the control of alcohol, which is also pretty well managed. We have better vehicle design, including seatbelts and airbags and anti-crumple frames and the like. The one that has not been probed—and it is less measurable than the other ones—is fatigue. We have talked to the experts about this carbon dioxide problem. We have talked to Professor Dawson in Adelaide about the hours employed people work in a day, how many days they work in a week, whether they work in the daylight or in the night and how many days they might work over a fortnight. He can plot that on a computer program and show you where a driver's fatigue levels cut in. So that part is measurable.

What we have got to try to find out is: what are the factors contributing to this fatigue thing—the fatigue thing itself? Not necessarily what are the contributing factors to road accidents, but in what way does fatigue contribute to them? That is our task. So let us narrow it to that just a little bit more rather than use the wider approach, just focus in. I have felt that you people, seeing the accident first, talking to the participants in the accident first, must get a feel that there are common threads running through these accidents where fatigue is concerned. So could we pull it back to that sort of aspect?

Mr COOPER—When we come to a MVA and the person who has had the accident, it is a whole new world and the person is as awake as he or she will ever be. So we do not see people fatigued. They may not have slept for 36 hours—it does not matter—but they are wide-awake when we see them. We do not see them just before the accident when they were fatigued. It is a different world to look at.

Ms BACIGALUPO—I think in the rural area it is the tyranny of distance, the distances that people are actually having to drive to fulfil the requirements of their jobs, or social commitments, or whatever. It is not about getting in a car and driving around the corner; it may be getting in a car and driving 100 kilometres to your place of employment. We have staff members here—it is their choice—who actually work in Tamworth so they are doing 230 or 240 kilometres a day just in travel to do their work.

Mr HOLLIS—Is it the tyranny of distance, or lifestyle choice?

Ms BACIGALUPO—It is probably both, or it may be where the job is. We may have registered nurses who are living on properties 60, 70, 80 kilometres from town. That is not a lifestyle choice; that is a fact of life choice. That is a fact of life about rural communities and having to make a living and going where the jobs are.

CHAIR—When you see accident victims at the hospital—you are a nursing sister and you are counselling someone because there is no counsellor there, perhaps, and you are trying to settle them down—do you get a feeling for what part fatigue plays in accidents? Do you get a gut feeling?

Ms BACIGALUPO—In some ways, I think, it is what Stewart Bartholomew said, that, particularly with the professional drivers, there is that pressure for them to get from A to B.

CHAIR—You pick a lot of that up, do you, with truckies?

Ms BACIGALUPO—Yes.

CHAIR—What about you, Mr de Vries?

Mr DE VRIES—It is a very complex subject and since being notified of the opportunity to come here, I have thrashed the thing around. I do not envy you people your task at all because by no means is it simple to try to work out what causes it. To my way of thinking, there are pressures on people nowadays with their jobs; cars are more comfortable; roads are better and, maybe, the whole thing is getting to the stage—the same as happens in our service—where the better our personal equipment becomes, the better we think we are protected from things. We think we become bulletproof and we try to do things and stretch things beyond where we should really be going. We think we have got all this marvellous equipment, these lovely comfortable cars that go faster, et cetera, so we start stretching where we would normally think that we would go in a reasonable time and a reasonable day after working.

CHAIR—I suppose we all do it. On Thursday afternoon before Easter or Christmas Eve, we all start jumping in cars about 3.30 p.m., 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock to get to grandma's, or to get there first. People have probably had a week of Christmas parties and buying presents for the kids and they are run off their feet. Then at the peak of their stress and tiredness, they jump in cars and drive 300 or 400 kilometres. Should there be education campaigns that say it is better to drive the next morning, or something like that?

Mr DE VRIES—Possibly. Another factor is the economics of the world at the moment. A lot of people with families are not earning as much as they were and when they are going away on holidays they would rather take the chance and keep driving than pull up for the night and have to pay for the motel. There are so many factors involved in why people go that extra little bit when they know that they are starting to get drowsy. I guess that is the answer you are trying to find and it is not going to be simple to do that.

Mr St CLAIR—It has often been said up here that you get people who leave Sydney, for example, and five hours later they are dead on your section of road here. Is that a true

statement? Are the majority of accidents that happen the long distance ones, both cars and trucks, or is it local traffic?

Ms BACIGALUPO—I think it is probably more like fifty-fifty. I think from the health services and the staff perspective it is not what contributes to the accident that has the greatest impact; it is who is affected by the accident, both in the long term and short term. If here is a two-car accident and one lot of occupants is from South Australia, for example, and the other one is from central Queensland, that accident has a huge impact on families and other significant people involved in that accident or death or long-term injury.

CHAIR—Coming back to Mr St Clair's question: are we strategic enough in our fatigue management on highways? You talk about this stretch here, and there is another one north of Brisbane—in my electorate actually—between Bundaberg and Gladstone which is considered a fatigue point. The road is no different from what it is here or anywhere else but there seem to be a hell of a lot of accidents around the Miriam Vale area. Is that just a strategic distance from Brisbane where people start to feel the first effects of extreme fatigue? Have we positioned our truck stops, our service stations and our Driver Revivers to take account of those areas?

One thing you all said surprised me a bit. My concept of Driver Revivers was not to have them in the towns; it was to have them between two towns. The point is that you come into a town and you have cafes—McDonald's, the Pizza Hut and all sorts of things where you can get a feed and a drink or whatever. But if you have driven through that town and you are on another 120-kilometre stretch, isn't the right place for the Driver Reviver 40, 50 or 100 kilometres—

Mr COOPER—I do not think that people will come out of a 100 zone and stop; they will stop in a 60 zone.

Ms BACIGALUPO—Yes. Not every town has a McDonald's or a service station open.

Mr THRIFT—In Guyra we have the situation where we run a Driver Reviver and we have a 24-hour service station only one kilometre up the road from us.

CHAIR—I would be annoyed if I were the service station, quite frankly.

Mr THRIFT—We are the opposite; we are supported by them. They will supply our milk and anything we need in a hurry free because they are a community minded group.

CHAIR—You are destroying all my concepts.

Mr THRIFT—As I stated earlier, the people who pull up at the Driver Reviver are the private drivers. The professional drivers pull up at the truck stop because that is where they have their meal break and where they have a stop but they will not stop at a Driver Reviver stop.

I think you come back to Mr St Clair's question of the type of drivers. If you look at the professional drivers driving heavy trucks, they are driving 60-tonne or 70-tonne along the

road at the same speed as the private people are driving their motor cars. They are working hard in those vehicles. When they get to this area after five hours or six hours of travelling, they are starting to become fatigued because they are concentrating much more than people in motor cars.

The people in motor cars are having accidents because they are sitting back in their armchairs under cruise control and not concentrating. They have accidents in this same area. Yes, they are starting to get tired and fatigued in this area. You are getting that five-hour or six-hour trip from the major cities. We have accidents which involve locals, but every town has those. Sydney has those accidents where people are only five minutes from home—that is not a fatigue problem. I think a lot of our major professional drivers' problems are coming from fatigue because they are travelling in these vehicles at such high speeds. Admittedly, they are within their rights to drive at 100 kilometres an hour—

Mr McARTHUR—This is basically why we are here. All the evidence given to us was that it is seven hours from Sydney to here, another five hours to Brisbane. When we talked to the truckies last night they confirmed these two travelling times. I gather if you look at the statistics on this bit of highway you do have these unexplained number of accidents which could basically be put down to fatigue. That is why we came here to hear your point of view on the classic syndrome of fatigue related accidents right here. We want to know whether you are confirming that or saying that they are just unexplained.

Mr THRIFT—In relation to that, one accident comes very strongly to mind at the moment. It was a semitrailer fatality—the driver was killed. It was in an area which is not a difficult section of road, it is pretty straight with just a few minor bends. That truck was out of control for some distance on the road, as the police forensic people found. You could track the marks where he was on the wrong side of the road, then back to the right side. The driver was fatigued.

Mr McARTHUR—Quite obviously he was fatigued, he had lost control?

Mr THRIFT—He had lost control of that vehicle. Whether the problem was from the driver or the owner of the vehicle, I am not sure, but obviously the driver was fatigued. How you stop that I do not know.

Mr McARTHUR—We just want to know what your local experience is. Are you making observations to the committee that, in this stretch of road, driver fatigue is a problem that all of you see, day in, day out?

Mr THRIFT—I think it is, and that the majority of our accidents can be related to fatigue. It is no longer, 'The wheel fell off the motor car,' as Mr Cooper said, because cars are so well controlled now in terms of safety and control of the vehicles. It comes back to the person in control of the vehicle, whether it be a semitrailer or a motor car.

Mr McARTHUR—In this situation of being seven hours out of Sydney and five hours out of Brisbane, can you almost pick the stretch of road where you will have some of these accidents? You have made the comment about Good Friday and Easter, that you could predict that you would have a major smash up five years ago. Can you predict the same

thing with the truckies, that inevitably on this 200 kilometres of road you will have a smash in the next three months?

Mr THRIFT—I think the statistics will prove that we are going to have them, and the section of the road they are going to occur in.

Mr McARTHUR—Are you telling us, as professionals on the job, that in the next three months you predict having a bad smash, fatigue related, on this stretch of highway?

Mr DE VRIES—I would say that, yes, I will guarantee we will have one up in the area we call Devil's Pinch. There are no two ways about it, we are going to have another truck accident there within the next three months. It is guaranteed. They are there all the time.

Mr McARTHUR—And that will be fatigue related, or road related, or a bit of both?

Mr DE VRIES—How do you differentiate? If the driver is coming from the north and comes over the top of the Pinch and he is not totally awake, he runs off the road—we have trucks lying on the side of the road all the time. Why, we do not know. Is it because the driver was not alert at the time he suddenly came to this specific area of road? He only has to misjudge by a small amount and he is off the road into the ditch. So I would say, yes, that probably is fatigue related up there. And it is guaranteed we are going to have more.

Mr McARTHUR—What do you other blokes say?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—I might make a few comments. My first comments were based on heavy vehicles. I still stick with the point that, to me, heavy vehicle fatigue is created through pressure on the driver from their employers. Often our heavy vehicle drivers are only required to put in their logbooks the driving portion, which is the part that we, in enforcing the laws, look at. However, many of those drivers have to load their truck prior to commencing their driving period, so it could be a situation where someone drives to Brisbane, has an overnight rest, then unloads, loads and commences his run. By the time that he commences his run he has already done three or four hours work.

I see the motor car as being in a different situation in relation to fatigue. I believe that many of the fatigue related accidents with motor cars are created because the people are doing something that is different to what they normally do with motor vehicles, in particular people who are metropolitan based, who simply drive on metropolitan roads day in and day out. When they go on holidays they have to drive considerable distances and their aim is to get to that point in as short a time as possible so that they can enjoy their holidays. When people come from Sydney they are going maybe to the Gold Coast or to Brisbane or north to Maroochydore or something like that. Once they arrive in our area they feel that they have broken the back of the drive and they tend to let their concentration drop. They know the biggest part of the journey is behind them and, consequently, they start doing things that they normally might not do.

Another area I am concerned about is that I believe people who drive caravans should, by law, have to have a specific licence. People who drive heavy vehicles, articulated vehicles, are required by law to have a licence for which they are required to do a test to

show the authorities that they are capable of handling those types of vehicles. A caravan and car, in my view, is simply an articulated vehicle. They are being driven by people who have no experience in the driving of that type of rig. What happens, again in my view, is that people, particularly elderly people, are all the time conscious of what they are towing behind their vehicle. They are worrying all the time when they get on the road and they tend not to drive at the same speed as people who are not in their latter years. Consequently, they tend to drive slower, which puts the people behind them under the stress of getting around them and so people will do things that they normally would not do.

One of the things that I believe something has to be done about in this country—and I know it is happening at the present time—is the situation of having state traffic laws, which is ridiculous. There have to be national traffic laws right across Australia. The whole of our country is Australia and what is done in Queensland should be the same as in New South Wales or in Western Australia.

CHAIR—It largely is now, isn't it?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—It is, that is what I am saying—it is going through—but it has to be the same in what you people are looking at. Currently, it is no good with, say, our Roads and Traffic Authority looking at fatigue in New South Wales and the same thing not being done in Queensland. Going back to the Safe-T-Cams, they need to be nationally linked, albeit we are not looking at a vehicle driving between Queensland and Western Australia. But they have to be linked between adjoining states. My understanding is that currently they are only working on a state basis.

CHAIR—Safe-T-Cam is where the numberplate of the vehicle and the time is recorded.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—Yes.

CHAIR—And then it is recorded further down the track?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—Yes.

Mr McARTHUR—We heard about that program last night from the truckies. Could you give us a bit of a description of it and whether you think it is effective in controlling the speed of the professional drivers?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—As I said, I believe that the technology of what is available with the Safe-T-Cam is in its infancy. Mr St Clair has two within his electorate. There is one at Dundee, which is about 25 kilometres north of Glen Innes, and there is another one at Bendemeer, which is basically halfway between here and Tamworth.

It is controlled by central computer in Sydney. Basically, it is on or off. It is an infra-red camera which is designed to hone in on the numberplate area of the vehicles which take up the picture frame. They can make the picture frame bigger or smaller. It has the capability of picking up every vehicle that goes through it. The computer reads the numberplate. It can then do a transport registration check on the vehicle. The capability then is to know that it

has travelled through each of the zones. By that, they can work out the estimated speed that the vehicle is doing.

CHAIR—Who is that information available to?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—To the Roads and Traffic Authority. It is in its infancy but the technology is there. We have been informed by the RTA only just recently that, in relation to the theft of any heavy vehicle, there is a number in Sydney that we can telephone and they will put what they call a hit on a certain heavy vehicle numberplate. If that stolen heavy vehicle travels through one of the safety teams, the computer will recognise it and, consequently, the alarm bells ring and we are notified.

Mr HOLLIS—What if they change the numberplate?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—That is a problem. This technology is in its infancy. It can, down the track, read motor vehicles which means that any stolen vehicle in Australia can be put into it so that the computer is doing the looking work all the time. It can then read the time that heavy vehicles or minor vehicles have been on the road.

Mr McARTHUR—Can it control the speed of the professional truck driver because they are fearful of it as they are of cameras?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—The only way that you will hurt a truckie is to hit him in the pocket or take his licence off him. The truck driver owners do not care about their drivers. They are canon fodder. All they want them to do is drive their trucks in as quick a time as possible to get the goods to market because, if the goods are not at market at a certain time, there is no sale for them.

CHAIR—The evidence we received from three of the world's best experts was that it was not so much a matter of regulation but that we have to get drivers and companies to do more about managing fatigue. Some people can drive 12 hours and be perfectly fresh; others need to stop for two hours somewhere. If you make it too regulatory, and you do not allow for that human factor, you might solve problems in one area and create others in another. What do you say to that proposition?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—In many respects, I do agree. How do we determine that somebody is fatigued after eight hours whereas another person might go for 12 hours? I see that in exactly the same vein as our alcohol legislation. Legislation has deemed that 0.05 is the limit. There are many people that I know, myself included, that are not affected at 0.05. Other people are clearly affected. I was a full-time breathalyser operator for four years in Newcastle. I conducted analysis on hundreds of thousands of people. Over that space of time, you see, talking about alcohol related things, where some people are not affected at a certain level whereas others are, but the legislation has put that on.

CHAIR—The international standard seems to be 0.08, doesn't it? We tend to be a bit tougher here than most countries.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—I have my own private thoughts on that. I will not mention the word ‘revenue’. Going back to your question, Mr Chairman, I believe that the vast majority of truck drivers are highly professional people.

I have been a police officer for over 30 years. I have worked in the western areas of the state around Boggabri and Narrabri and on the Newell Highway, which is a renowned area for heavy vehicle accidents. In this area, we get our fair share too. On most occasions, I have found that trucking industry drivers are probably some of the most helpful people you get on the roads. They will do anything for you in an emergency situation. I believe a big part of the problem that we are looking at is the employer. Employers should do the right thing by their drivers by not putting pressure on them.

I think one of the good things in this area that is coming in is the proposal for a large trucking terminus, or whatever you want to call it, at Guyra, where drivers can go. There are motel-type units where they can rest. During the time they are resting, the vehicles are being serviced. So that is going to be of assistance to the employers—while their drivers are resting, the vehicles are being serviced. Consequently, as soon as they are back on the road, the vehicle is away again, and that is what they want. As I see it, employers have to make the first move.

CHAIR—Mr Babington, what is your view on this management of fatigue? Do you see any dimension that we could cover in managing the fatigue thing? I do not mean just identifying it, but how do we manage and minimise it?

Mr BABINGTON—If we could work it out, it would be good, wouldn’t it? I honestly do not know; I do not think anyone does.

CHAIR—That is our job. Mr Waters, what do you say?

Mr WATERS—I will just make a few observations from what I have seen. Probably some of the most horrific accidents we come across, we can definitely say are due to fatigue. One accident at Uralla about four years ago comes to mind. The gentleman in the car, who was in the right, actually said to me that he saw the person’s eyes shut just before they hit. He later died as we released him from the car. We probably spend more time with people than any of the other emergency services. We are not there to judge anyone. If they want to make a comment such as, ‘I was too tired, I shouldn’t have driven,’ then they can say it, but we do not ask questions.

CHAIR—Do many people say that?

Mr WATERS—I have never heard anyone say that, possibly because they do not want to make a statement that could go against them later on. Truck drivers have said to me that they saw the car come to the wrong side of the road, and the driver was definitely asleep when they hit. I think what is causing a lot of our fatigue these days is the pressure people are living under compared with 30 years ago. Everyone is under a schedule to do something. It does not matter what your work is—it has got to be done now and it has got to be done today. Thirty years ago, if it did not get done today, tomorrow was another day, we could do it then.

We are generating a society now that seems to be placing more importance on recreation, rather than—as it was years ago—probably spending more time on staying and doing things at home. So people are under stress at work with their normal day to day work, and they want to enjoy their recreation time. They brought daylight saving in, and I think 90 per cent of people thought there were 25 hours in a day then. People get in a car, and they will head off from Sydney saying, 'It is 4 o'clock, and we have knocked off work. We're going to be in Brisbane by 2 o'clock in the morning. Then we are going to get two full days at the each, or wherever we want to go, and then we are going to get in the car and drive back home to go to work at 9 o'clock on Monday morning.'

Possibly some of the causes of fatigue on this stretch of road is, if you come from Sydney to Tamworth, you have been on the road for about 4½ to five hours. There is time to have a meal. You have a meal, and about an hour later you always feel more tired than before you had the meal. An hour's drive from Tamworth gets you nearly to Uralla. I do the Armidale to Tamworth run regularly—every day virtually. I know when you are coming back from Tamworth, you will come along all that windy road from Bendemeer, and you will get to Kentucky, which is about 20 kilometres south of Uralla. You drive out of a patch of timber, you are on to a dead straight stretch of road, and you automatically relax and think, 'I am nearly home.' Yet, when you are coming back to Armidale, you have driven only two-thirds of the trip.

Mr St CLAIR—You mentioned heavy transport drivers suggesting that some people have been asleep as they have driven into trucks. Do you see suicide as part of that?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—I totally agree with that.

Mr St CLAIR—Does this occur in heavy vehicles accidents only?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—It occurs in many vehicle accidents—the unexplained motor vehicle accidents where fatigue has been looked at. Of all the emergency services, the police service clearly has the investigative role in motor vehicle accidents. We have the investigative mode when there has been any person injured to determine any breaches of the law but, clearly, when there has been a fatality, we have that investigative mode to place evidence before the coroner to determine certain aspects.

It is a subject that many police officers have spoken to me about. Throughout my service, I have also investigated a few accidents and that has passed through my mind. How you can prove it, I do not know. There have clearly been some times that vehicles have driven either under a semi or into an object and, when you look back a short time previous to the accident, something has occurred to that person. I believe there have been incidents where fatalities have been suicides.

Mr St CLAIR—I say that because I have had that experience myself in my heavy vehicle coming out of Brisbane when cars have actually driven straight at me. You are blinking lights and doing all sorts of things, and maybe it makes a difference but, without question, they come off their side of the road, come on to your side of the road and come straight at you. I just wondered whether that is fatigue or whether you could put it down to suicide—I do not know.

Ms BACIGALUPO—In studies that have been done, particularly in mental health, there is more evidence to suggest that some of the accidents are suicide or, where people have not died, attempted suicide.

Mr HOLLIS—Have you got copies of any studies or could you provide a reference?

Ms BACIGALUPO—I can provide some references.

CHAIR—I would like to make a suggestion at this stage. We have already got one of the Uralla group here. After morning tea, we will integrate the Guyra group. I would like to keep this dynamic going while we have it.

Mr HOLLIS—When we were talking about accidents, we were given the example of drivers starting off from Sydney, jumping into their cars after work. I take it that the majority of the accidents that we are talking about are accidents that happen at night. What is the proportion of those?

Mr WATERS—I believe that most fatigue accidents with the general public are likely to happen in the afternoon, in the daylight, probably from 2 o'clock to 4 o'clock.

CHAIR—Why is that?

Mr HOLLIS—That disputes the argument that you, or someone, said before that people have worked all day in Sydney, or somewhere, and have jumped into their cars aiming to be in Brisbane by 2 o'clock in the morning.

Mr WATERS—I am talking about cars per head on the road. Naturally night-time is a time when you want to sleep, so you are going to feel more tired, but I found the time between 2 o'clock and 4 o'clock in the afternoon is probably the time when daytime motorists, who are going to have that little snooze while they are driving along, are on the road.

Mr HOLLIS—What do you put that down to? Do you put that down to post-lunch sleepiness?

Mr WATERS—Lunchtime is usually between 12 o'clock and 2 o'clock—between that time, you have something to eat and, when you have had something to eat, you always feel like a little bit of a snooze.

CHAIR—International evidence is that drivers, certainly in relation to professional drivers, are more likely to be fatigued in the evening hours, but the second most dangerous period is that mid-afternoon period.

Mr THRIFT—Mr Chairman, in relation to that, I have just done a quick count of our MVA call-outs from the figures I have in front of me, and between the hours of 1600 to 6 o'clock in the morning, we had 51 call-outs; between 12 midday and 1600 we had only 14; between 6 a.m. and 12 midday we had 31. The majority of our accidents occur between sundown and sun-up.

CHAIR—What is the second highest time?

Mr THRIFT—The second highest is morning to midday. These are figures that have been taken from our call-out sheet. I agree that you have to separate the types of accidents you are looking at—that is, whether you are looking at general public or professional type drivers. Professional type drivers are the ones who have the major fatigue problems. How do you control that? I am an electrical contractor by trade. My industry is governed by WorkCover and safety standards for my workers. Is there the same WorkCover control for heavy vehicle drivers? They are in a workplace situation. Should we have WorkCover looking at the heavy motor vehicle industry as a problem?

CHAIR—We will suspend proceedings for a short time. Before we break for morning tea, I would like to welcome Mr Graham Williamson from the Guyra Station Command of the New South Wales Fire Brigade. Thank you for coming.

After the break, one thing I would like to address is this business of log books and controls. For example, last night we heard evidence that you can get round the log book, if you really want to. In fact, the companies are as big offenders as the drivers. I would also like to investigate your reaction—especially those in the police service—to Queensland's FMP program. We heard evidence from Queensland that they are not getting cooperation from the New South Wales authorities on this. I would just like to talk to those things.

I stress again that we are trying to get a feel from you of what measures—regulatory, physical or recreational—might be appropriate in regional areas to ameliorate this problem. I am sure it can make a difference. Professor Wlodarski says that there is anecdotal evidence that between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of accidents can be tracked to fatigue. So it is a big area. It was Mr Hollis who said that in all states the number of accidents had fallen. In fact in Queensland over the last 20 years, it has dropped from about 510 down to about 260; it has nearly halved. If we could take another slice off that problem by dealing with fatigue, then it would be even better; it would be a big thing. All the other states are roughly in proportion. You are the people at the coalface, so I would like to hear from you the things that you think might ameliorate fatigue.

Proceedings suspended from 10.54 a.m. to 11.22 a.m.

CHAIR—Captain Williamson, in what capacity do you appear before the committee?

Mr WILLIAMSON—I am station commander in Guyra for the New South Wales Fire Brigade. It is a retained station so I am self-employed as well. Being in the fire brigade I have had quite a bit of experience over the years with traffic accidents. I have been in the rescue squad. I am also a tow truck operator and have been doing that for about 30 years. You do see quite a bit over the years, and there have been quite a few changes over the years, as you have seen.

CHAIR—I think our colleague, the member for Riverina, is a tow truck operator, isn't she? The others were given the opportunity in the first session to make an opening statement for three or four minutes on their view of fatigue on the roads and what they see. I was asking them to give me their gut reaction to what part fatigue plays, both in the automobile

and the professional trucking operation. If you would like to give us a few minutes, we will then go back to questions.

Mr WILLIAMSON—Probably a lot of it has been covered.

CHAIR—No, do not be inhibited, just say it as you see it.

Mr WILLIAMSON—It is a general thing. As I say, over the years we have had a lot of accidents. There are certainly not as many as there used to be, possibly because the roads are getting better. There are certain patches of the New England highway that I was spending a lot of time on years ago—particularly the bottom of the Pinch and that sort of place—where you could nearly guarantee every week that there would be another accident. Those sort of things have certainly improved.

I would say fatigue is probably one of the most important things in accidents that I have seen over the years. I have seen people actually drive right through an accident scene with lights on. Geoff was probably there that night. We had lights on, stop signs, people everywhere and cars all over the place. They drove right through, came to a screeching halt about 500 yards the other side, and realised what they had been through. You cannot tell me they were not half asleep. This happens more than once.

I have seen them come around the corner. There have been so many signs up saying there is an accident ahead and people there and everything and they have virtually come down and created another accident which we have probably seen in a lot of places throughout the country. You can't tell me they are alert if they are doing that sort of thing. If you are wide-eyed and bright, and you see a sign, then you know what is happening.

I think fatigue is a big problem. What you do about it could be resting places. Rest may be the answer to the situation. Rest may be one of the reasons a lot of accidents have dropped off, particularly in country areas during holiday periods, because of the Driver Revivers. The people who pull into those places and have a rest and cup of coffee have had somewhere to stop, get out of the car and walk around, so they are right. I think that is one rest place that must be saving lives.

CHAIR—Truck drivers were saying to us last night that when we pick those places out, whether they are a commercial truck stop or a pull over area specifically for trucks or a Driver Reviver, the important thing is to make them look attractive and to try to put them where there is some timber and shade, so you do not just pull up to relieve your fatigue and find that, when you turn the engine off in your rig, you are sitting in a hot box. It defeats a lot of the purpose of pulling up. What is your view on the types of truck stops? We had a look at the plans for that new one at Guyra last night.

Mr WILLIAMSON—I reckon it would have to be a tremendous thing, particularly in areas of long distance travel. You have Brisbane to Sydney as a main travelling route for all trucks. They have to leave Brisbane and be at Sydney. There are Brisbane and Melbourne and all the different routes that they have to follow. If they can make an attractive place where they can stop and change drivers, have a rest and head back, it could overcome a lot of the problems, for professional drivers in particular, if it was attractive enough. You could

get the owners to be behind it so that they have their repair shops and stuff there to do their servicing.

CHAIR—Does the RTA do roadside park areas here?

Mr WILLIAMSON—Yes, all the time.

CHAIR—Do they do them as a bit of parkland? If it is a ghost gum area will they have roadways strategically through the ghost gums?

Mr WILLIAMSON—No. The RTA do them anywhere.

CHAIR—Is it a strip of bitumen, or do they plant trees and put toilets there?

Mr WILLIAMSON—No, they just put them up anywhere at all where there is a bit of a pull off.

CHAIR—Is there a need for a toilet in those places?

Mr COOPER—Yes. Basically, those pull off areas—

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—Could I ask a question while you are addressing this?

CHAIR—Yes.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—There is a security problem in personal safety. I believe heavy vehicle drivers are prepared to pull off anywhere and are not concerned with safety. Particularly with elderly people, I think that there is a very strong security aspect of where they are going to pull off the side of a road. We all grew up in an era where, when our parents took us on holidays, everybody just pulled off on the side of the road and camped. That invariably does not happen these days. I think one of the main reasons is that people do not generally feel secure parked on the side of the road.

The stop areas that the RTA provide along the highways generally are for cars. There are the occasional ones that are for heavy vehicles because they do need a considerable area in which to pull off. A lot of those pull-off areas, particularly up in this area, are where there has been a realignment of the old highway and they basically just use that little bit of the old highway as an area where trucks can get off.

One of the things that truckies look at is the location of that stop area. Unless it is on an ideal area for them, meaning that it is on a slight downward slope, they are very reluctant to pull into it. If they have to take off going up an incline, generally, I do not think they would stop there. Just north of Guyra—between Guyra and Glen Innes at a small village, Glencoe—there is a major RTA enforcement area. On occasions, RTA officers go up there and man that point to pull in heavy vehicles and put them on the truckaliser. They do not have a weighbridge there but they use the portable ones. That area is certainly not an ideal area for trucks to pull off to have a rest. It is just a widened bitumen surface of the highway. There are no trees but there is a toilet facility there. But, generally, I tend to agree with your

comments that the ideal area for anybody to pull off would be something that has a pleasant outlook with it rather than a stark outlook. I also agree with what you said about the truckies. They want shade because those trucks are hot. That motor is hot and as soon as they pull up the heat is being pushed back underneath the vehicle. As soon as they stop, they are sitting on top of the motors.

CHAIR—While I have got you in the chair, so to speak, there is a fatigue management program in Queensland which is less regulatory. As I said before the break, all the drivers tell us that the log books are easily manipulated. It is not always the drivers who do it themselves. It is done either directly by management or under pressure from management. Queensland has been getting a lot of praise for this fatigue management program but we have had evidence that when they come to the border New South Wales authorities do not want to recognise it. Is there any truth in that?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—Prior to you making that comment I had no knowledge of what that program was but during our break I have been informed what it is. I have no personal knowledge that the program has not been accepted by police officers in New South Wales.

CHAIR—I think Nolans in Queensland use it quite extensively .

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—The only comment I might make as an officer of the New South Wales Police Service is we can only do what the law and the legislators allow us to do. I agree with the prospect of what is being done. Again, I go back to what I said before that anything that has to be done has to be done nationally. It is no use introducing a system in one state when that same situation does not operate in the next state. What you are talking about is a clear example of where it has failed. That particular industry—that particular trucking business—may be attempting to do the right thing. However, I believe, as you have said, it is not accepted in this state. That is why I go back to saying that it has to be national.

CHAIR—The logical sequence of what we are doing is that we will do this until the end of the year; we will write a report which will be tabled in the parliament early next year; the minister should respond within three months or perhaps he will take the matter to the council of state transport ministers. It is our hope that if we can identify some initiatives, at this stage they do not have necessarily to be uniform in every state for it to be successful. We will put up the initiatives through the federal parliament to the federal minister and, in turn, to the ministerial council. They need to be taken up by each state minister because, for the control of the highways, although the federal government funds the national highways, there are no federal highway police. It is all state and territory police. At the end of the day, the implementation of the things we recommend is going to come down to the state ministers. It is now over to my colleagues.

Mr St CLAIR—I was going to take up Stuart's point on the fatigue management program that is going in Queensland. What sometimes happens is that the police officers get blamed for not being part of these programs. Of course, it is not the police officers of New South Wales, but the government of New South Wales that has to come on board with any fatigue management programs. The instructions can come back through to the police service.

I think that needs to be said because I know some drivers have suggested that it is the police officers who are not willing to participate in fatigue management. It is not up to the police service in New South Wales; it is up to the government to approve that pilot program and make sure that they, in turn, send the memos through to the police force.

I was going to say that the difficulty is of a national service with a national series of regulations. It was always difficult driving between states and having to know the different time regulations that operate. Having a national system would overcome a tremendous amount of difficulties that are faced by the transport industry. Fatigue management, of course, is one of those. As I mentioned to the secretariat, the RTA has produced a video on Safe-T-Cam. I have seen the video and it is a tremendous opportunity for this committee to have a look to see what is being done. I think it is innovative and is an opportunity, but will it mesh in with what is happening in other states? I think that is something that has yet to be worked out.

Mr LINDSAY—Earlier evidence suggested that, with heavy transport, drivers would front the companies and the companies would say, ‘We want you to do this, this and this. Here is the time frame’, and it would not matter how unreasonable it might be, the drivers would always say, ‘Yes, sir, where do you want me to drive? I will go.’ In your experience, is there some way that the owners of the companies can be held responsible for forcing upon their drivers unreasonable driving programs? How could we deal with that?

Mr WATERS—I have heard this talk before about truck areas having to have shade when they pull up. I think you have just said why trucks will not pull up. It is because they do not have time to pull up. You can put in all the fancy sorts of things you want for them, but if he does not get to Sydney by eight o’clock in the morning there will be someone there knocking on the door who wants a job who will do it the next day and have it there by eight o’clock in the morning.

If you have a look at truck stops along the road, the trucks that are pulled up there are usually the well known and big organisations like the Nolans and Lindsay Brothers. You will see them pulled up. It is the owner/operators that have to keep going or the subcontractor who has deadlines to meet. Until such time as we can get those sorts of people, who do not want to keep their rigs up to the standard that they should be on the road, off the road—

One incident was, again, on the Pinch. I do not know how long ago it was—it might have been seven or eight years ago—but there was a truck accident there and it was an unregistered, uninsured truck. The driver is now a quadriplegic. He had done a quick trip from Brisbane to Sydney, and his boss rang him up and told him he had to be back in Brisbane by midnight that night. I said, ‘What if you can’t do it?’ He said, ‘Well, if I can’t do it, he will have someone else there to get in the truck in the morning.’

Mr HOLLIS—There was recently a case in Victoria where the coroner actually pinned the blame on the operator, not on the driver but the person who forced him to do that. Until we start to take that more seriously—

Mr WATERS—That is what we have got to do. The problem is that while you have got people looking for work and truck drivers that want to work, if one person can’t do the job

in the time that the owner wants him to do it in there is someone else there that will have a go at it, and he might not make his first trip.

Mr HOLLIS—We did an inquiry once on buses and all the bus operators came before us and assured us that no driver or no bus was forced to break any speed limit in the state, or we just got the timetable and went through it and had the owners before us. We said, ‘Look, how can you do this? Here is the distance from here to here and you have advertised this travelling time. The driver can’t do it without breaking the law. He cannot do that journey and observe all the speed limits.’ That surely would be the same with all of these drivers. If they are saying, ‘It is going to take you so long to drive from Brisbane to Sydney’—and there is the point you were making about the loading time and all of that—‘and then you come back,’ they cannot do that observing all the laws. That becomes as much an industrial matter as a legal matter. We have just got to enforce those.

Mr WATERS—The driver of an overnight transporter once told me the time he was given to get from Brisbane to Sydney. I went home and worked it out and I could not drive it in a car at that time. And he used to do that three nights a week.

Mr HOLLIS—We would dearly love people like that driver to come before us and say that.

CHAIR—We would love to pin one or two of these companies.

Mr HOLLIS—That is going to be our difficulty. We hear all this hearsay evidence and people will talk to us quietly off the scene. I had a driver come in to see me in my office last Saturday when he knew I was on this committee and he told me all sorts of things. When I said to him, ‘Mate, will you come before the committee?’ he said, ‘Oh no, no.’ Then I said to him, ‘Will you write it down?’ He said, ‘I’m not too good at writing.’ So I dictated it and I said, ‘You take this away and read it and then come back to me.’ But he will either not come back or will ring me up and say, ‘Col, I have thought that over and no, mate, no.’ That is going to be our real difficulty in being able to make worthwhile suggestions, if people will not tell us these things and trust us—and everyone is covered by parliamentary privilege. I know that does not count for much when you have lost your job and maybe another reason is given.

Mr McARTHUR—What about the rates of remuneration? Do you see a problem there in how they are paid—by the trip or by the hour? Could you give us a comment on what feedback you get talking to the truckies?

Mr WATERS—Truck drivers that I have spoken to that are up around my age, around the forties, so they have been on the road 20 years, will usually now only drive for companies who will pay them by the kilometre not by the trip.

Mr McARTHUR—Would you be prepared to make a comment on whether payment by kilometres or by trip is a better way to go? The argument on the trip basis is that they are always trying to get the extra trip in to get a few more bob.

Mr WATERS—Most of the truckies that I know drive for the bigger companies so that they can do the number of trips per week that they feel comfortable with and make as much money as they were doing before when they had to work every night. So you would assume that the pay per kilometre more than compensates for the number of trips they had to do.

Mr McARTHUR—So is that a way we should be looking at, that that is a more respectable and reasonable way of paying truckies rather than putting them under this enormous pressure to make the extra trip and do it in a tight schedule?

Mr WATERS—I believe it is, but how do you enforce it on the small truck operator who wants to do underhand things and will always find someone looking for a job who will do those extra couple of trips or will work for him? Until such time as you have people who say, 'No, we are not going to drive for you,' you won't get those people off the road or eliminate that element on the roads.

Mr McARTHUR—What if the insurance premiums were very high for proven cases of excess kilometres?

Mr WATERS—They do not insure their trucks. There would be more than one truck running up and down the highway not insured.

Mr McARTHUR—There is a limit to how many trucks you can have uninsured. We found in the shipping industry that when the pressure really came on some of these vessels with the insurance arrangements, that certainly sorted out the secondhand operators. Surely, a similar principle should apply in the trucking industry.

Mr WATERS—You would hope so.

Mr LINDSAY—If we are all wrestling with how we try and handle the companies that are making unreasonable demands, that people are altering logbooks and whatever, and if we thought in another direction—and I do not know whether any of us would have any expertise in this—could we have something similar to random breath tests, which have been very effective in the community, and have a random fatigue test? Would that work?

Mr THRIFT—I think you would have to have that test before the driver was pulled up, because once he is pulled up he is awake again.

Mr LINDSAY—No, there is a test available.

Ms BACIGALUPO—There are tests available. They are looking at doing tests like sleep apnoea tests on truck drivers in particular to see if they are prone to things like sleep apnoea, because they think there is some evidence to suggest that people who fall asleep actually suffer from sleep apnoea. There were some suggestions 12 or 18 months ago that to get a truck licence you had to have a sleep apnoea test done.

CHAIR—The academics and the professionals who talked about that said that would be the wrong way to go. They believe that there certainly should be tests to identify it, whether you are already licensed or not. Australia has invented a mask arrangement that those people

can wear at night which guarantees they get proper sleep. Most people can wear it and it has been tested in a number of laboratories. But this comes back to this point of whether we regulate or manage. Because fatigue is in itself harder to measure than alcohol and speed, we would probably get a better result if we could get management practices in place rather than saying, 'If you have got apnoea you can never drive a semitrailer.'

Ms BACIGALUPO—We are looking at attitudinal changes and cultural changes and we are looking at heightening people's awareness. It is the same as we have done with speed, alcohol, smoking prevention and a lot of public health type issues: identifying that they are public health issues and starting with the kids. Kids in schools are telling their parents that they should not be drinking and driving, they are telling their parents what the speed limit is, they are telling their parents that they should not smoke. We have to make a decision that we are not going to solve this problem overnight but that we have a long-term strategy to address it. We have made significant inroads to reducing road trauma, and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that. So I think if we look at it from a generational point of view we might be able to achieve something. We are not going to change it overnight.

Mr LINDSAY—Again trawling for solutions, would all of you support or otherwise the new technology that is becoming available that allows cameras to watch the driver's eyes and electronically determine if the driver is becoming fatigued—this is technology at the ANU—and have that mandatorily fitted in all heavy vehicles? If the camera system determines that the driver is becoming fatigued it just automatically stops the vehicle. Do you think that would be too draconian a requirement?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—Not necessarily, but I look upon that in a similar vein to speed limiters. Speed limiters can be bypassed and have been bypassed. It would be the same with that technology that you are speaking about—it could be bypassed.

Self-management is good. However, I feel that self-management is done by the companies who are doing the right thing. They are not the problems. The problems are the cowboys and the mavericks—some of the owner drivers or the ones who own the prime mover that they simply back into a trailer and take off with. How do you self-manage an owner operator? It is fine with a large company who want to do the right thing by both their company and also their employees.

I think that the failing is in the area of the owner operator area, which brings it back down to: do we need some form of legislative area where drivers are forced to stop? The only way that I can see this working is either through some form of technology or RTA 24-hour a day manned heavy vehicle stop points. There is one on the expressway just north of Sydney that most of you would be aware of. It is probably the largest one that we have in the state but even it is not operated 24 hours a day. Sometimes it is closed down. The thing with the trucking industry is that, if the RTA inspectors are working one of their sites, the trucks that are moving on the road are the trucks that are legal because, within five minutes of the RTA setting up at any of their sites within a radius of 200 kilometres of that site, every truck knows that it is set up.

Mr HOLLIS—By satellite technology.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—If they are driving a problem, that problem does not get pulled up.

CHAIR—What if you had a random test, as Maree said? Most of us took this test at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Adelaide. It is a bit like a mouse only it is in the form of a golf ball and sits in a multi-directional socket. By moving it backwards, forwards, left, right, and to the corners you can look into the screen. You have to follow a particular item around. This has been devised in such a way as to duplicate what your reaction on the road would be. You have to try and keep the cursor on top of this thing that is moving. They can very quickly tell whether you are fatigued or not. For example, should we have in the booze buses a multiple testing facility where if you were found out on one of things it would not entail some draconian punishment? The officer would issue you with a 'do not drive for six hours' notice, or something like that. You would have a statement that a vehicle is to be parked and you are not to drive for six hours. What would you say to something like that?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—I could not see a problem with it. The only difficulty is that it requires legislation because currently at many of our RBT sites people are obviously exhibiting signs of fatigue. Generally our officers, particularly on long weekends and the holiday periods when they are working RBT sites, are encouraged to speak to drivers about how long they have been on the road and for what distance.

Currently, all we can do is suggest to that driver that it possibly is a good idea to have a bit of a rest. You have your wife and kids in the car and there is a black spot area through here. It needs legislation. One of the difficulties with RBT is that it can only be operated in 60-kilometre area limits, other than mobile RBT. With stationary RBT, you cannot pull up vehicles in 100-kilometre or 80-kilometre areas, for obvious reasons.

CHAIR—But these buses do not go out onto the highway.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—No, other than 60-kilometre areas within that. Consequently, on our section of highway here, in the last six weeks our two roundabouts at either end of the bypass at Armidale have been changed to 60-kilometre areas. They were 80-kilometre areas. Prior to that we could not pull up not only any heavy vehicle but also any car at a stationary random breath testing area because we could not set up an area.

Mr St CLAIR—The RTA can pull up vehicles though outside a 60-kilometre zone?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—Yes. They can pull up any vehicle in excess of four tonnes at any time. They have the power to pull up any vehicle, but basically they just work with the heavy vehicles.

Mr St CLAIR—But they don't have a constraint on the number of kilometres.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—No.

CHAIR—We just changed the tone of the discussion to the fact that you people are very close to the scene of the accidents that take place on this stretch of the highway. What do you ascertain to be the community attitude to some of the more horrific accidents that you

have attended? Is there any change of attitude by the public at large? Do some of these big truck accidents or private vehicle accidents change the consciousness levels? We talked about the smoking campaign and the 0.05 campaign. Are people just continuing to drive along saying it will not happen to them, or is there a change of view out there that these things should be stopped by the government or by somebody?

Ms BACIGALUPO—In this area, we have a significant young population with the universities and schools. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that young males see themselves as fairly invincible to motor vehicle accidents. A lot of the accidents we do see involve young males. There have been some fairly horrific accidents involving students at the university. It has an effect for a while, but six months down the track they still get in their cars and drive at high speed when drunk and think, 'It will not happen to me.'

CHAIR—I would also like to know your experience. You are all emergency services people in one form or another. I would like to know what the effects of fatigue are on you, and not just in your regular job, either in transport or at accident sites. How are your rosters and emergency call-outs managed? Are you managing fatigue in your departments of emergency services? After all, you people cannot afford to make mistakes either behind the wheel or with a piece of medical equipment in your hands. I would like to have a quick run through on that. I would also like to know what priority you would give to managing fatigue if you had a choice of some of the things we could do as a committee.

Mr McARTHUR—I want just a reaction to this whole problem of this stretch of highway.

CHAIR—I would like to know: how are you managing fatigue in your own occupation, how would you manage fatigue on this stretch of the highway if you could have your way and how would you manage fatigue in driving in general? Those are my three questions.

Mr HOLLIS—Bear in mind that you are talking to a group of people whose very profession means that most of our life we are pretty fatigued also, especially when we are down in Canberra.

Mr COOPER—As you can see I work in a hardware shop. When I get a call to an MVA down the road, I am going to a brand new job. That brand new job means that I am not fatigued. I am as fresh as a daisy. It does not matter that I have had at work. I am still fresh because it is a new job. It is not the job I was doing all day. I do not have a fatigue problem going to a fatigue related accident. As far as seeing whether or not there was fatigue involved in the accident, I do not know. It is pretty obvious most times and the police will say, 'That was obviously fatigue. This and this has happened and, yes, that was it.'

I would make a few other points to do with fatigue. It seems to me that we are picking out the truck driver because it is an industry that is easy to catch hold of, to regulate, and we can just go to the boss of the company and say, 'Listen, this and this.' We should not be picking out the truck driver. We should be picking out the car driver. That is where the cowboy is. The truck drivers sort out these cowboys. They say, 'Watch out for that fellow.'

They will not even talk to him on the radio. He is a cowboy. They do not want him. The truck drivers are good fellows.

The other problem we have is when we are going to go on a journey. We are all told to plan the journey. So what happens? I am going to go to Sydney tomorrow. So what I do is ring ahead to Muswellbrook and book a motel. I have set myself a target. I have to get to Muswellbrook because that is where my booking is. I have to be there. It is no good topping off at Scone. I have to be in Muswellbrook. I am pushing myself further from where I really would like to have been.

The demerit point system brought in by the police or the RTA, or whoever did it, was probably a good thing because it is making the driver concentrate—and not the fact that they are getting into his wallet. He is concentrating: ‘I had better drive within that speed.’ He is awake. He is driving. He is frightened that he is going to be penalised more because of the demerit system.

You mentioned the Driver Reviver out in the middle of the scrub somewhere—not on. When you go to a road accident, as we do, and try to stop traffic, that is when you have accidents. Why are there so many serious and fatal road accidents at roadworks? Because they are stopping the traffic. They are stopping the driver from doing what he would expect to do. You would expect to have a clear run from here to Tamworth, but somewhere in the middle some fool is doing some roadworks. They put up a stop sign up; there is a car stopped in the middle of the road; someone runs up the back of the car, and we have a problem. We cannot stop cars outside of the 60 speed sign.

You mentioned that the Driver Reviver should also be out of town. In Uralla, the Driver Reviver is, say, 100 metres inside the 60 kilometre zone. It is next to a motel and about 30 metres away from a service station. When a car comes into town, the driver sees the Driver Reviver and thinks ‘Better stop’. He puts on the brake but he does not slow down in time. What does happen, though, is that he stops by the time he has reached the service station. He pulls in there because we made him stop. We helped him because he saw a Driver Reviver. It happens so often. As for the servo, you say he should hate the Driver Reviver, but he should love it because he is getting a tank of fuel out of it and everything else, plus the driver is paying for coffee instead of getting it for nothing.

The other point brought up was on the two ways that truck drivers are paid. In Armidale there are two big companies. One works on wages and the other works on trips. The drivers go backwards and forwards from one company to the other—not in the same week. They choose to be employed by one company because they can make more money, and then they go back to the other company to make more money, and then they go to the other company to make more money and so on. That is the system. I cannot really say why we are having driver fatigue, apart from those few points.

Ms BACIGALUPO—On the first issue of managing fatigue within my work force, it is a very complex issue, particularly within the emergency department. Working in rural areas there are a number of things that have to be realised. There are human resource issues involved. Skilled emergency staff are very difficult to attract. Skilled doctors to work in emergency departments are as rare as hen’s teeth. Our emergency department is surviving on

locum fly-in fly-out doctors that cost a fortune. You do not have any continuity of care there. You have very little control over the service provided by the locums because you have an obligation to provide that service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Because there are so few of those staff, providing ongoing education is difficult, as you have to have the staff to relieve them and night staff are not available.

In a rural area, we have the problem of an ageing work force. The average age of registered nurses within the New England Health Services is probably 49 years of age. There are very few people coming in to take their places. The work that they are doing is more complex and more constant. They are tired just from the work that they are doing and the pressures.

CHAIR—So when they go out to outreach centres, it is compounding that?

Ms BACIGALUPO—Yes. They often do not live in Armidale. They live out in rural areas on farms and properties. They are supporting that other family income. They are probably doing a job at home as well. They are not only working 40 hours a week with us but probably another 30 to 40 hours a week on the farm as well or in the family business that they are running in town.

There is pressure for us to perform. There is more and more pressure put on us as a health service to provide every conceivable service to everybody. That means people need to be much more multiskilled. There are not the support resources here that perhaps there are in city areas. We do not have hot and cold running counselling services that can do debriefing or those sorts of things. It is done around the tea table or around the pub after the drama has happened.

The other issue is with our patients and clients. They perhaps are having to travel when they are older for services that they need to access. That may be surgery or just a consultation with a specialist in town and is stressful within itself. They may have been given bad news, so they have to go back to Glen Innes or Inverell under stress. They are not concentrating and they are tired.

CHAIR—How would you manage it.

Ms BACIGALUPO—Within the work force or fatigue as such?

CHAIR—Fatigue as such.

Ms BACIGALUPO—I think, as I said earlier, we have to take a step back and look at the big picture and education and heighten people's awareness that it actually exists and is a problem.

CHAIR—By education, do you mean public and through the schools?

Ms BACIGALUPO—Yes.

Mr de VRIES—As for fatigue within our organisation, even though the majority of our people are unpaid volunteers, I totally agree with Mr Cooper that, once the phone goes and we get turned out to a thing, they are wide awake. The adrenaline is pumping and they are out there doing. Fatigue may become a problem in a long-term job. Round about six hours people start losing their edge. We have programs in place whereby we start changing the crews over and allowing people to go and have a rest. It is not such a great problem within the work force for us.

As far as managing fatigue goes, I agree we need some form of education. There also needs to be some presence out there whereby the truck drivers and the people in cars know that there could be something such as a penalty at the end of the day. I am a great believer in having marked police cars and marked RTA vehicles out there. I think that slows people down a hell of a lot more than some bloke parked behind a tree in an unmarked car with a camera taking photos. As Stuart said, the RTA can pull truck drivers up any time, day or night. The police to have the same power to pull car drivers up any time day or night and make a decision as to whether or not that person should continue the journey.

With regard to long-term management and education, given what it costs us every year for attending these accidents and the costs of these people going to hospital, the medical treatment and all of that, I find it quite amazing that the governments of today do not see the fact that, even though the railways run at a loss, it must surely be a better solution to get these people off the road and back onto the railway lines than to have this massive cost of accidents and the impact on all these families. And the impact is on families, as we said before. Accidents certainly have an impact for the people who are involved. But for the people driving down the road who see these accidents, five or six kilometres down the road it is forgotten about—they just keep going. We have had people coming past us taking photos of accidents. Witnessing an accident like that does not have a long-term effect on the drivers, I feel.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—In my area I clearly am a manager—I control Armidale, Guyra and Uralla police stations, all the operational areas. I expect of my supervisors that they are ever mindful of the issues of fatigue and stress upon my officers. Often, serious incidents mean one thing: that the police are going to be there for some considerable time. Whilst we are not the first on the scene, invariably we are the last to leave, and basically that is when our work really starts, particularly with fatal incidents when we then have to brief the coroner which can go on for a few months.

We have a clear legislative drug and alcohol policy with police officers on duty. It is an offence for any police officer on duty to have in excess of 0.02 grams of alcohol in their blood or to be affected by drugs. We have a random targeted policy in that area. Where any supervisor has a suspicion that an officer may be affected by either alcohol or drugs, the legislation is there so we can handle it. Fatigue is a little bit different, but we clearly do consider that.

All of the emergency incidents that we attend are followed by a debriefing. Basically, the debriefing is held to establish how we—meaning all of us emergency services—went at that incident. Can we improve in any way on what we did and, more so, how has this incident affected our staff? We have a clear policy in the police service that we hold debriefings for

any serious incident that has gone over an extended period. We have employed psychologists within the police service. Naturally, they are all based in Sydney.

CHAIR—Rather than going into the psychology of it, say a guy has done an eight-hour day, he has been called out to accidents all night, he is due to front up the next morning and he has been on his feet for 18 or 20 hours, and you are the sergeant and he rings in and says, 'I'm tired.' What do you say to him?

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—It is covered in our award that they do not have to attend work. We often are called upon, the same as the ambulance service, to travel sometimes great distances in escorting prisoners, mental patients et cetera. In the more isolated areas of the state, it is quite a common practice that a sole ambulance officer will be called to an incident—it might be a cardiac arrest. He or she also calls on the local copper, because the copper is going to be the one that drives the ambulance while the officer is in the rear of the ambulance. That is why I believe that the ambulance service is in the process of ensuring that there are no more single-unit stations throughout the state.

If I am required to have an officer travel any great distance I look at the person who has been at work for the least amount of time. Or, if I call somebody in, I ensure that I call in a person who is fresh to go on that. Clearly, in my position, I have obligations under OH&S and Workcover. My decisions can be scrutinised at some later stage, and I am answerable that the decision I have made has been the correct one. That is always in the back of my mind.

CHAIR—Could we hear now how you would manage fatigue in transport, in particular in this New England area, but more generally.

Sgt BARTHOLOMEW—One word: legislation. I do not believe that management will work in the heavy vehicle industry with the companies where there is no problem. I totally agree with what Neil said. The biggest problem, I feel, is not in the heavy vehicle industry but in the general public. How can you manage that unless there is legislation there that compels people to do something? Obviously the police service would be the ones that possibly would be enforcing it. Unless we have legislation all we can do is request people to do things. When people are going on holidays they have tight schedules; they are not going to care about us, and that is why I say legislation.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr BABINGTON—I have got to back up Neil's, Stewart's and Gerry's version. At the scene you get a lot of irate people, and you cannot let them through. They will spit the dummy. They have only got tunnel vision: 'I want to be in Brisbane at such-and-such.' I do not know how we are going to get around that.

Talking about fatigue, with my troops, they are rotated pretty regularly depending on what they did the night before. When that alarm goes, you have an adrenaline rush. You cannot put anyone to sleep or bed at that time, so you let them go for a while and sort them out gradually. They will get sleep when they need it but as far as standing someone down

from doing a certain job, you cannot do it. You have the adrenaline rush and that is the end of it. I have nothing further to say apart from that.

Mr WATERS—In the ambulance service we do not have a fatigue policy as such. But I was informed last week that apparently they are looking at it. With our staff here we have one night shift officer, which is midnight to eight, so whoever has worked through the day has to be on call. We have four officers on call and it could happen that they have worked all day, then they could be out three or four times through the night. There is no policy on rest for them, however our award does say they should have 10 hours off between shifts. In that 10 hours off you have to cover on-call. So if they have had a night where they have been out three or four times through the night and they feel tired, it is managed at a station level: 'If you have been out three times tonight, slip down the back and have a bit of a sleep, the rest of us will go and do the work. If anything comes in, then you are the last one out.' Under the award, if they have been out all night they still have to front up next morning for work.

Fatigue in the work place is, I think, the same with all emergency services. The job comes in. The first thing you think of is, 'I wonder what we are going to find.' Then you are thinking about what you are going to do when you get there; then when you get there you have the work to do, so your mind is active all the time. Then when you have finished at the hospital there is usually an hour or an hour and a half's work after that to clean everything up to get ready for the next one. As far as transport fatigue, I think it has already been covered.

Education is something you are obviously going to have to start at school level, with children. These graphic advertisements on TV do not work. People will look at it and say, 'That's terrible, isn't it?' and the next time it comes on they say, 'Oh, that's on again.'

With horrific motor vehicle accidents, you will be working there and, as someone said, they will come and take photos of it and someone else will have a look in and say, 'Oh dear, isn't that bad?' Half an hour down the road they have forgotten about it. They will see it on the news that night and say, 'Oh, that's right, we saw that today.'

As to education of the kids—mine are older now, but when they were little I would get in the car and always reverse the car out of the shed before I put my seatbelt on. The first thing they would say to me was, 'Put your seatbelt on, Dad.' Kids are the ones who are going to bring it through to parents.

It might be possible, as Sergeant Bartholomew said, with legislation of some sort to try to eliminate the fatigue part from the people who will not take any notice. With the heavy transport industry it is necessary to somehow get the cowboys off the road. It does not matter what you say to them or how you ask them, they still will not do it. When they are caught their licences are suspended and they are off the road.

Mr THRIFT—In our particular role as a volunteer rescue service, we are like a lot of the other services. You get the call out, your adrenaline pumps and you are really wide awake regardless of how many hours you have worked in your private industry beforehand. You get to the job and do it and everybody is busy.

I find our fatigue sets in after our actual rescue role is completed and we are doing traffic control. I find that our operators cannot operate on traffic control efficiently for more than 15 minutes at any one time. At that stage we start rotating for coffee breaks and what have you because you have to really concentrate at that stage on what you are doing. It takes a lot of concentration. Anybody who sees the RTA bikes on the road with the traffic control half asleep you can really understand why because it just takes so much concentration to do it. It is one area we have problems with.

Personally, after attending accidents the next day you feel really washed out. The fatigue has got to you because you have been up half the night but you still have to try and be efficient in your job and you do not perform really well the next day.

As for controlling fatigue in our transport industry, Sergeant Bartholomew spoke about the radar cam. I think it has a far greater potential for use beyond what it is being used for now—control of the time of vehicles on the road, be it heavy industry or private vehicles. It does have great potential and investment in the finance required would certainly produce results, and that is where our control of fatigue is going to come from.

CHAIR—Mr Williamson.

Mr WILLIAMSON—Of course, most of it has been covered. We really do not have the fatigue problem of the retained emergency services. When something is reported, the adrenaline flows and that sort of thing. If there is any fatigue it will be next day, back at your own work and that is one you have to manage yourself.

As far as fatigue management is concerned, education is certainly one of the things I would be looking at—definitely education now, with children. Legislation certainly would help because you need something to really spark these people up. I am still a great believer in some sort of stops. If it was done right the stops would be for heavy transport as well as the average car. If there were certain types of complexes set up throughout the country and they were known, drivers would have a tendency to pull up there and have a break. Definitely we have seen success with the Driver Reviver program. It is basically a volunteer type of thing, something on the side of the road in town. It definitely must have worked over the years because you see a lot of people pulling up. I think that probably you could have something on a larger scale which the heavy transport industry could utilise. Once again, it would come down to education on their part as to how they utilised it and how long it would take. But it still would have merit.

Ms BACIGALIPO—Just listening to all these people it is very interesting that a lot of these programs, and the success of a lot of these programs, are reliant on volunteer organisations—the VRS, the SES. A lot of those people are volunteers. So we are relying on people who have commitments in life, and paid commitments, to also provide a significant and sometimes life saving service in their own time.

CHAIR—This is always going to be a problem in country areas. Where does the community contribution stop and the exploitation of government begin? I come from a country area too. I do not know if we can solve that problem today but I take your point very well.

Ms BACIGALUPO—I think it should be noted.

CHAIR—It should be noted, yes.

Mr de VRIES—If I could add to that, Mr Chairman. Having been involved with an organisation that is predominantly volunteers—the Rural Fire Service—I have spoken to people from overseas countries and they are envious of what we provide, such as the SES, the VRS and lifesaving services, et cetera. It is a uniquely Australian thing and I would not like to see that destroyed by any government to put paid people into do that work.

CHAIR—I do not think that that is what is being said.

Ms BACIGALUPO—That is not what I am suggesting. I am just suggesting that it needs to be acknowledged.

CHAIR—There are some lines in the sand. That is perhaps another debate for another day.

On behalf of the committee, this has been a very interesting, fascinating report. It puts another layer over what we have seen in this area: we have talked to truck drivers and we have inspected the station; we have inspected the plans for the new truck station at Guyra; we have come to an area that is almost half-way between Sydney and Brisbane; we are on one of the two major highway systems of Australia; and we are talking to people like you who are at the coalface of having to deliver the services where fatigue or other intrusions interfere with road safety and put lives in peril.

We now have to go back to Canberra and sort through this vast array of evidence and then overlay that with what we pick up from international experts and what we have received in written submissions. Hopefully, early next year you will be able to get a copy of this report and see the contribution you have made. Each of you will get a copy of today's draft *Hansard* to see what was said.

On behalf of the committee and, indeed, the parliament I would like to thank you for the time you have given us today—especially those of you who are volunteers, because this is just another fatigue overlay on a day's work. We wish you well and thank you for contributing to this inquiry.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Lindsay**):

That this committee authorises the broadcasting of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 12.29 p.m.