



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL
SERVICES

Reference: National road safety

WEDNESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2004

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard>**

To search the parliamentary database, go to:
<http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au>

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

Wednesday, 11 February 2004

Members: Mr Neville (*Chair*), Mr Andren, Mr Gibbons, Mr Haase, Ms Ley, Mr McArthur, Mr Mossfield, Ms O'Byrne, Mr Schultz and Mr Secker

Members in attendance: Mr Andren, Mr Gibbons, Mr Haase, Ms Ley, Mr McArthur, Mr Mossfield, Mr Neville, Ms O'Byrne, Mr Schultz and Mr Secker

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Review the strategic objectives, priority areas and proposed measures in the National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010, and the National Road Safety Action Plans for 2001 and 2002 and for 2003 and 2004 and consider whether these remain appropriate.

Identify any additional measures or approaches that could or should be adopted by the Commonwealth, States and Territories, local government and non-government agencies and bodies (including industry) to reduce road trauma.

Identify factors that may be impeding progress in reducing road trauma, and suggest how these could be addressed.

WITNESSES

HARRIS, Ms Anne Elizabeth, Chief Behavioural Scientist, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria..... 1

**HOGAN, Mr Robert, Assistant Secretary, Transport Programs, South-East Regulation Group,
Department of Transport and Regional Services..... 17**

HURNALL, Mr James, Director, Technical Services, Australian Automobile Association 1

McINTOSH, Mr Lauchlan, Executive Director, Australian Automobile Association..... 1

METCALFE, Mr John, Director, Research and Policy, Australian Automobile Association..... 1

**O’NEILL, Mr Barry, Director, Investment Policy and Black Spots Transport Programs,
Department of Transport and Regional Services..... 17**

**ROBERTSON, Mr Peter Andrew, Assistant Secretary, Vehicle Safety Standards, Department of
Transport and Regional Services..... 17**

Committee met at 8.33 a.m.**HARRIS, Ms Anne Elizabeth, Chief Behavioural Scientist, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria****HURNALL, Mr James, Director, Technical Services, Australian Automobile Association****METCALFE, Mr John, Director, Research and Policy, Australian Automobile Association****McINTOSH, Mr Lauchlan, Executive Director, Australian Automobile Association**

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services in its inquiry into national road safety. I welcome to the desk representatives of the Australian Automobile Association and the Australian New Car Assessment Program. I also welcome people in the gallery to this hearing. We commenced work on this in 2003 and we plan to bring this inquiry, which reference the minister has given us, to fruition in the coming months.

Mr McIntosh—Apart from my colleagues here, I also have with me in the gallery some representatives of the AAA and of the motoring clubs in Australia who, as you know, represent over six million motorists and have a very serious interest in this issue of road safety. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. I think we learnt from the previous session of the committee, which was held in November, on this subject. My understanding is that you were keen for us to present to you what we thought the government might actually do rather than actually learn about what could be done. So we have tried to refocus our presentation today to make some specific suggestions on what could be done. I should say—

CHAIR—Before you start that presentation, I have not issued you with a caution. You realise that this committee generally does not require people to give evidence under oath, but I should caution you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as would attend to the House of Representatives itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that the giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and could be considered a contempt of the parliament. On that note, Mr McIntosh, you are quite correct. The committee said to the minister that we felt that the area had been done to death—no pun intended—and that we would look at the areas that we felt had not been covered and where the government might go on the various reports and research available. So you have encapsulated that very well. You might like to give us an opening statement.

Mr McIntosh—Thank you. We are certainly happy to do that and, as I said, to answer any questions. While this submission may actually focus on what we think the government could do, it is not that we are trying to lecture the government. There are a lot of things we do ourselves and will continue to do, but I thought today we would actually focus on the things that you asked us in that way. I am reminded, and I think it is important, that the National Road Safety Strategy, which aims to save 700 lives by the year 2010, makes it very clear that those 700 lives will be saved by four major activities. The first is improving the safety of the roads. About 332 of the 700 lives will be saved by safer roads. Safer vehicles will save 175 lives. Improved road user behaviour will save 158 and the use of new technology will save 35. So the really important area

is seen by the serious academic research that has been done as improving the safety of the roads is a key point.

We see the national road safety target as a useful strategy, but it is a 40 per cent strategy, not what we might say is a 100 per cent strategy. The European Community, for instance, has a 50 per cent reduction target. Some recent polling that we have done this year has shown that many people, when asked what they think about the government's target for 40 per cent, say, 'Well, what about the other 60 per cent? Who are these other people we are condemning to the grave and the hospitals?' I think we see this in a few areas. I will make some suggestions of what should be done and finish with a list of recommendations.

There are many small things that can be done on the roads. One of the problems we have is that we do not see the roads as a dangerous environment. We see the roads as dangerous when it is raining, when it is wet, when it is snowing, but we tend to omit them from our brain because we travel on them so often. In many cases, we think they are not a dangerous area. It is a bit like the workplace. Many people get used to the idea that the workplace is a safe area; but no longer do we accept that.

We can rate the roads for the risk of crashes that cause death and serious injury. It really is possible to have a very public risk rating of the roads. In a world where mistakes are inevitable—there is no doubt that we all make mistakes—we must make the roads more forgiving. We can do very simple things: improve line marking, construct medians, seal shoulders and remove roadside hazards such as trees or place barriers around them. Simple upgrades can have a very profound effect. Sealing road shoulders, for example, can bring about crash reductions of 20 to 40 per cent for a cost as little as \$2 per square metre. So very cheap things can be done and we see there are ways to do that.

One of the problems is that we do not have a national risk rating of the roads. We do not know which roads are less safe than others. We have a very good black spot program, but we do not have, if you like, a black link program that says, 'These roads are better than others.' The Europeans have developed a system called EuroRAP, which is now operating. We have been involved with them. We are actually introducing that here with assistance from state road authorities and we believe there is an opportunity for the Commonwealth to participate.

We need to demonstrate to the community the benefits of safer cars. As I said, cars are also an area where there can be significant changes, but unfortunately most people, a bit like the roads being dangerous, do not see the car as really a dangerous thing. It does not have to be. There are a lot of benefits in safer cars. We need to increase the market pull to get people to actually buy those newer and safer models. We must see seatbelt warning devices in every car. We must ensure that alcohol interlocks become more widely available. We need to see a dramatic improvement in the number of front, side and curtain airbags in every car, not just the top-of-the-line models. We need to look, with the assistance of other research groups and other testing groups, at the stability of all vehicles so that the community understands the issue of rollovers, particularly in the four-wheel drive areas.

We know that 33 per cent of occupants killed in crashes were not wearing a seatbelt. It is ridiculous that we have a situation that still allows cars on the market without serious seatbelt warning devices or without a device that actually says, for instance, 'This car can't be driven at

over five kilometres per hour while seatbelts are not in place.’ We know that that will take some time to get through to all fleets of cars. It is possible that it can be done now. We should be insisting on it.

There is no doubt we need to improve road user behaviour. We need to help all drivers improve their skills. We need to ensure that all learner drivers have at least 120 hours of real-world driving experience—not just a one-day course; not some, if you like, hopeful panacea that will make it better for them. We know from detailed research—and Anne Harris can talk to you about that later—that you need 120 hours of real-world driving experience. We do that for heavy equipment in industry. Why don’t we do it for the cars?

We need to ensure that vehicle advertising messages do not conflict with road safety messages. Work is going on in that area and the Commonwealth is actually assisting in that at the moment. We need to expand the graduated driver licensing programs that are operating in most states. In fact, graduated driver licensing has significant potential. We need to broaden the public debate on driver training, not only on new drivers but on all drivers. So lessons that are best learnt in real-world conditions under the supervision of experienced drivers are really important.

The use of new technology is an area where we see in the longer term a lot more opportunities. Whilst the numbers, perhaps in the first 40 per cent reduction from new technology, are relatively small, there is no doubt in the longer term that much of the new technology will be useful. We need to have better mobile phone coverage. I guess you have probably heard that from all sorts of other people, but mobile phone coverage throughout Australia will ensure prompt assistance in the event of a crash or breakdown. Death and serious trauma can be averted by more appropriate attention and earlier attention. The use of GPS, satellite location devices, to detect and locate crashes through telematic systems can enable fast emergency services. At the moment, we have problems with a range of areas and activities in getting the coverage and getting the broad communications bands available.

Another area, I guess, is the technology area of data collection. We need to collect nationally consistent crash and traffic data. We need to make sure that we demonstrate the new and emerging technologies to people. These new technologies will be different—the way that cars will drive, the way they will be controlled—and, because we all have a view about how driving can and cannot be done, we need to see those. We need more regular demonstrations of these new technologies and not leave it to overseas technologies.

In summary, they are the four major areas. I would like to make 10 points on what we think can be done. There is a role for everyone to play in road safety. We believe this committee could recommend that the federal government first and foremost show leadership. The government could lead road safety debates and road safety initiatives. The government needs to recognise that roads deaths, like workplace deaths, are preventable. It is a really hard thing to come to grips with. We have come to grips with it in the workplace, but it is really hard for people to accept that accidents do not just happen. They are preventable. When an accident happens, there is no reason that people should be killed or injured. They can be protected and we can put in place forgiving environments that allow them not to occur.

We need to characterise road safety as a whole of government issue. It affects not only the department of transport; it affects the departments of health, of industry, community services and education. We suggest that there should be a Prime Minister's road safety committee to lead the efforts to save lives. Look through the list of activities that the Prime Minister correctly champions in terms of awards or committees, such as the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council. Road safety is an area where 1,700 people every year are dying and 20,000 people are being seriously injured—and we do not have national leadership in this. It is understandable; but, if we are going to do something different, now is the time to do it.

The government can also make a serious change in the introduction of new technology into new cars. The government is a major purchaser and it should insist that all new cars have front, side and curtain airbags. In Europe, many cars have these and many of those devices are being withdrawn from cars before they are put into the Australian market. We see the government, both at the federal and state level, demonstrating leadership in buying environmentally friendly cars, such as the Toyota Prius, but we do not see anywhere anybody buying cars with side airbags as a standard. Why not? Well, we get all sorts of answers: it is too expensive and there is no value in it. That is not true. Why do we spend money on so-called environmentally friendly cars when we know that side airbags are available? If the government were to purchase them or to advise the manufacturers that within two years that would be their intention, I am sure the manufacturers would see that as a positive move to actually bring that equipment forward in their own programs. They need the volume to reduce the prices, and the government could assist in that.

We think there is a need to lead a debate on vision zero. Why do we kill and maim anyone on the road? We need to accept the concept that death and injury are not inevitable. The Swedish government has done that. It makes a huge difference to the way they think about spending money on the roads and cars. As I said before, while our National Road Safety Strategy talks about reducing the fatality rate by 40 per cent, the community is concerned about the other 60 per cent. It is not an easy one. Most people think that accidents happen and, bad luck, people die. We do not think that is the case. We need to change that debate.

Equally, we believe the Commonwealth cannot shy away from the need to make greater financial investments in road safety. We know—and I am sure the department can tell you—that there is a substantial backlog of economic yet unfunded road projects in Australia. There needs to be a fresh debate on new opportunities for funding road projects. It is not acceptable to say that we do not have the money. We do. We find money for a whole new raft of government programs, particularly, I noticed recently, in the area of defence, but we do not have that same vision for fixing the roads and saving death on the roads.

One way the government could do that would be to assist us with the Australian road assessment program. I mentioned earlier, if you like, the star rating of the roads. The states are interested in participating. We believe there is an urgent need to make it clear and transparent, if you like, where the large links of roads are that need to be upgraded. Too often we see these road funding activities being put into areas where there is a claimed political benefit. I have to say I do not believe that that is always the case, but because we do not see a national assessment of the road network it is very difficult to sometimes believe that we are building roads in the right places.

We suggest that much of the federal government's funding that is given to the states, to local governments, to manufacturers and other bodies to assist them should be tied to some type of safety performance. It is not difficult, I do not think, to fund some of the government initiative in vehicle research which is going directly to the companies to the wider application of seatbelt warning devices, alcohol interlocks or side airbags. It seems the government has that power and the ability to do that.

The government can make, through its own existing funds, a serious commitment to research and development. For every new car sold, a \$7.50 charge is made for the compliance plate. That \$7.50, or \$6 million a year, goes to general revenue. There is no funding from that for vehicle research. We believe all that money could go to a raft of specific research into vehicles and into the way to inform consumers about the better vehicles in the market. For instance, there could be participation by the federal government in the Australian New Car Assessment Program, where we do test and provide information to the market on vehicle safety related features. Half a million dollars to that program, if you like, as an outsourced research activity would allow us to do research on four-wheel drive stability, which is an issue of great interest to the community generally. It would tie in with work that the Australian New Car Assessment Program is doing with similar groups around the world.

There is no doubt that vehicle standards have become very difficult in terms of trying to always make the regulation work. In Europe, the market pressure from the Euro NCAP program has meant that we now see—and I think I have said this in our other submission—quite substantial improvements. We are now seeing four-star cars on the road where the standard would allow a car to be 1½ stars. I noticed recently in the latest *Wheels* magazine that Volvo are quoted as saying there is no doubt that the increased standard from Euro NCAP does a great job in raising the prominence of safety issues. We need that in the marketplace. We need to get that market pull to make people think and know there are some benefits.

The second last point would be not to trivialise the issue of driving training. It really is a very important area and one where we know our members are concerned and we know the government is concerned. We do not believe that a simple one-day program, which is being suggested at the moment, will do very much at all to actually improve the real safety or better the skills of drivers. As I said earlier, 120 hours of pre-licence training is absolutely vital. Five dollars on every new car, or another tax on every new car, to fund one day for every probational licence holder will not go very far and only ends up as another tax on motorists.

In the area of technologies, there is an opportunity, as I said earlier, for the government to actually bring forward new technology devices to encourage their introduction and to demonstrate them to the community. The Dutch, Japanese and United States governments have done this by showing these activities and encouraging the manufacturers to put them on show. So there are some options.

First and foremost, we need leadership. We really think that is important. The government has to say to all the community that it is no longer just a transport issue. It is a whole of government issue and it cuts across everything from our health budget to our welfare budget and to the transport budget. It cannot be put aside because we do not have the funds. There are ways to find the money, and we should do that. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR—Thanks, Mr McIntosh. Did you want to add something, Ms Harris, at this stage before we go into questions?

Ms Harris—I suppose particularly in response to some of the federal focus on young drivers and the potential of young driver training. RACV in Victoria and some of the other automobile clubs have done a lot of research in this area about what works and what does not. We are probably urging the government at a federal level, if there are going to be federal funds available or levies, to look at the broader issue of what works for young drivers and not focus merely on driver training. There are instances where some forms of driving training for young people are ineffective. In some cases, they actually do harm. They increase confidence, particularly in young males, and make them more at risk. So we would urge the government to take a more holistic approach focusing on young drivers. They are a very at-risk group, obviously. We need to do something about their over-representation in the road toll.

It is an issue that costs every state and it is an issue internationally. We would urge the government to look at issues like how we can encourage people to get more pre-licence experience, particularly for those young people that may not have family or situations where they can get a lot of experience. What can we do? What programs can we establish there? How can we encourage a more graduated licensing system and more effective licensing systems? In the area of training, most of the research indicates that we need to look at driver development and motivation, not skills. Skills are really not the area we need to focus on. So there is potential, I suppose. A couple of areas are showing some potential, not overwhelming potential, in the training area, so that could be worth piloting.

CHAIR—Is defensive driving still taught in some states or has that program virtually gone? You do not hear much about it in the media.

Ms Harris—Some schools do it.

CHAIR—But are there still units run by the RACV, RACQ or NRMA that are still mentoring and that sort of thing?

Ms Harris—There is a range of programs available. Some are focusing on young people. Some are not. Some are off-road, some are on-road. Some are called defensive, some are called advanced. If people want them, they can certainly find courses to do. The issue is whether they are actually leading to fewer crashes. That is what people believe they are doing.

CHAIR—Would it be fair to have the courts make someone do one of these courses as a condition of regaining their licence if they have been involved in an accident involving serious damage, injury or death?

Ms Harris—It certainly does happen now. Magistrates are directing people to do courses. I would argue that we need to be sure that the course is going to assist that individual. I would argue that most of the evidence suggests that courses at that level do not. You are talking about individuals that may not be ready to change their attitude and motivation. A one-day course is not going to achieve that.

CHAIR—The horse has already bolted, so to speak.

Ms Harris—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Have you itemised the causes of accidents, be they driver error, unsafe vehicles, bad roads or pedestrian error? Is there a list of the main causes of accidents?

Mr McIntosh—One of the difficulties is that the collection of data across the country is quite difficult. However, as I said in the opening statement, the National Road Safety Strategy makes it very clear that by improving the safety of the roads you save 332 lives. By making safer vehicles, you save 175 lives. By improving road user behaviour, you save 158 lives. So there is good research around and there is plenty of research on what the reasons for the crashes are. Quite often, of course, crashes occur from a range of things—from speed, alcohol or no seatbelt to a bad road or a hazard on the road. There is a raft of interlocking features that make up what causes an accident, just as in the workplace. It is very rare that you can say people were killed exactly because they were going fast. They were not killed because they were going fast; they were killed because they stopped suddenly, and people cannot stop suddenly and live.

But there are ways of reducing the impact of that through airbags and a more friendly road environment. Sometimes ordinary people make mistakes. While it is fair to say that one in three people were unbelted, two in three people were belted and died. So, you know, we have to be very careful about painting simplistic pictures, if you like, in saying that is what caused the road toll. It is a holistic attitude about a raft of things. That is why it is not just about speed and fatigue. They are contributors, but there is a much broader picture.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Would your organisation support the lowering of speed limits on urban and rural roads as a means of reducing road accidents?

Mr McIntosh—Where that will be effective, yes, we would. But it does not mean to say that we should have a blanket move to reduce all speed limits. I mean, in the end, we would have people back with red flags in front of cars saying that you should not drive. People want to move about quickly. From a productivity point of view, why shouldn't we have a facility that allows faster speeds? We talk about high-speed trains. We know that if you have an accident in a high-speed train, you are more likely to be killed than you would in a slower train. But we see that there are benefits in the speed. So we have to be careful, again, not to just make blanket cut-offs and say that all the states should be 10 kilometres an hour less or all the urban areas should be 10 kilometres an hour less. There is no doubt there are times when that is valuable, but we must be careful about blanket assumptions.

Mr MOSSFIELD—In your submission you made reference to four-wheel drive vehicles. Is there any suggestion that they are inherently unsafe?

Mr McIntosh—We know that the larger, higher four-wheel drive vehicles do have a higher centre of gravity and are more prone to rollover. There is no doubt about that. We actually have the numbers. I think 40 per cent of four-wheel drive single-vehicle crashes are a rollover. That compares to 16 per cent for large passenger cars. So in a single-vehicle crash, you are almost three times more likely to roll over in a four-wheel drive. So we do have those numbers. Injury outcome is more severe in a single-vehicle crash for four-wheel drives than for passenger vehicles. So there is a lot of data about and we can make that available to you.

Mr GIBBONS—I am interested in the way technology can be applied. You outlined some of the instances, such as shut-off devices for vehicles that do not have a seatbelt connected or breathalysers that enable vehicles not to be used because of high readings et cetera. What has been the attitude of the manufacturers to introduce that technology? Do they appear to be cooperative in doing that? What happens with the second-hand vehicle sales market? I have no figures, but I suspect there are more vehicles changing hands that are second-hand, either through dealers or privately, than people who buy new vehicles. How do you get over the problem of second-hand vehicles that do not have this sort of thing?

Mr McIntosh—I will take the last question first. You are absolutely right. There is a very large second-hand market in Australia. We have quite an old vehicle fleet. However, most of the miles that are driven are driven by newer cars. So while we may have an old fleet, the vehicle usage is generally at the more modern end. A lot of the first change of cars, of course, comes from people buying from fleets. People go to the government auction and buy a nice new station wagon or something that is one or two years old because the government has only done 40,000 kilometres in it. So there is an opportunity for the government in its fleet purchasing to encourage that and then pass it on in the second-hand market. To go and refit all the current cars with airbags is just not an option, but to bring forward newer and safer things is fine. The car manufacturers are very interested in putting in the new technology. It is expensive and, to a certain extent, the market does not demand it. People believe their cars are safe.

The New Car Assessment Program, which I chair, is now funded by all the state governments, all the motoring clubs, the New Zealand government and the New Zealand motoring club. In Australia, we test the cars and publish the results to encourage people to make an informed choice. As a result of that, some manufacturers are now publishing those results and saying that their car is a four-star or five-star car, to encourage people to buy them. If the Commonwealth were to say, 'We will only buy four-star cars', that would encourage the manufacturers to bring forward those devices. There are market pressures which make it difficult for them. Some manufacturers—Renault, for example—have gone all out in Europe to have all their cars as five star. They have made a very conscious decision about that. The European NCAP program is perhaps a larger program than here. We use some of their results here. The view in Europe is that they will only test the lowest specification car sold in Europe. So if in Greece or somewhere the manufacturer decides to take the airbags out, Euro NCAP will test the car without the airbags and they get a poor result. So they do not do that any more. But here we are seeing cars despecified for the Australian market in order to get under certain thresholds. So, if you want to get a \$20,000 car, you will have the side and curtain airbags taken out to get to the \$20,000. That does not happen in Europe.

Mr GIBBONS—The technology to apply would be very beneficial, but it is also part of the problem. For example, you probably remember back in the late 1960s and 1970s, when the manufacturers started to introduce five-litre V8 engine vehicles. There was a lot of concern about what would happen when these vehicles became available in the second-hand market. Indeed, you can buy Falcons and Holdens and things of the 1970s and 1980s very, very cheaply. It is getting worse, especially with the Japanese manufacturers making cars with very low power to weight ratios and very small capacity engines. In some cases, they are 2.5 litres but they are either turbo charged or, in some cases, supercharged and capable of generating about 300 brake horsepower. That is in a very, very light car. I think the technology is working both ways. Do you see the ability to purchase a vehicle like, say, the Subaru, which has that capacity, ought to

be limited to people who have had considerable road experience? How do you stop young people who have the means being able to walk out and buy a vehicle of that type off the shelf as soon as they get their licence? At the moment, there is nothing to prevent them from doing that.

Mr McIntosh—Sure. I think in Victoria there is a limit, but it is very difficult to police and manage. However, you are right. But at Monash University at the moment, there is a project being undertaken called the safe car project. The vehicle has in it a device that tells the driver what the speed limit is in the particular area and flashes a light. In Europe, these are being tested as well. It will not be long before the new technology will come in which will say, 'This is the speed limit and this is all the car can do.' That is no matter how much horsepower you have; you might not be able to go from zero to something in the fraction of a second. The quicker we introduce that technology, the better we will solve that problem.

There is no doubt that the car is an entertainment; people enjoy it. We all like a different coloured car or a car that accelerates quicker than something else, but we have to do it within certain boundaries. Technology will help us with those boundaries just as the speed cameras will do. People do not like the speed cameras, but they do set the boundaries. As a result, we see some changes in behaviour. There will always be people at the boundaries—outliers, if you like. I am reminded of a graph or schematic I have seen that shows a large circle with two small circles. It shows, if you like, the road fatalities. The two small circles are the foolish people and the criminal people, who deliberately go out to abuse the circle. The bigger circle is the ordinary people, all of us. The issue we are trying to address is why we should die when we are driving sensibly and responsibly and have an accident. We have to find other ways to deal with the criminal driver and other ways to deal with the foolish driver, who are the people you are talking about. But they are the smaller part of the total fatalities.

Mr GIBBONS—I have a final question on motorcycles, which is an area I am particularly interested in. We have the same technology problem there. In most states, a young person gets a motorcycle learner's permit or a first licence. They are limited to riding machines of 250 c.c. or less. Back when those laws were put in place, motorcycles were 650 c.c. et cetera. Again, with technology, you can buy a Japanese 250 c.c. motorcycle that is capable of generating about 50 or 60 brake horsepower and travelling at 160 or 180 kilometres an hour. Again, it is very, very lightweight and quite lethal. Would you see some other mechanism in terms of limiting the size or capacity of motorcycles for new riders? How would you achieve that?

Mr McIntosh—I guess the graduated licence program would be able to do that. Again, they are difficult to police. How do you do that? I think we have to put those people into the foolish category and try to deal with them separately from the way we try to deal with ordinary motorists. We should not penalise all motorcyclists or all motorists because some people are very foolish.

CHAIR—Thanks. Because not all of us were on time this morning, let me just pause for a moment to introduce my colleagues who have just arrived, and we welcome back to the committee after a very trying health period Mr Alby Schultz, the member for Hume in New South Wales. I have to warn you that we may have a division. There is no certainty of this. However, if we have to go, you will understand what is happening.

Ms O'BYRNE—I apologise for coming in a bit late. If you have covered any of these things, please just let me know so that we do not take up too much of the committee time. You suggested that the Commonwealth should join ANCAP and fund it. What is the primary reason for that?

Mr McIntosh—Basically, ANCAP is a relatively inexpensive program of testing new vehicles and making comparisons of their performance in terms of crashworthiness. The cars are rated. By publishing the information, the market pressure encourages consumers to buy the more crashworthy or safer cars. We have seen that happen quite effectively, but more work needs to be done. The funds are limited. The Commonwealth government in Australia is the only national government in the world in a developed country that does not participate in such a program.

Ms O'BYRNE—And you think half a million would be the minimum that you could actually get away with to participate?

Mr McIntosh—Well, that is right. At the moment, the New South Wales government contributes half a million dollars. The motoring clubs contribute \$300,000. It is a serious contribution but it is not a lot of money. At the moment, we use a lot of European results because we do not have sufficient funds. I mean, \$0.5 million would be fine. It uses the market rather than regulation to pull forward the new technologies.

Ms O'BYRNE—I want to have a bit of a chat about Australian design rules. I anticipate you probably did cover this in your submission. Following up on a question from Mr Mossfield, are there Australian design rules covering bullbars for four-wheel drives? I understand you are going to provide us with a brief on four-wheel drives, their safety or otherwise?

Mr McIntosh—Mr Hurnall will answer that.

Mr Hurnall—Thank you.

Ms O'BYRNE—I saw that hand pass.

Mr Hurnall—I should actually hand pass this to the DOTARS people, who will come up next.

Ms O'BYRNE—It will be a question for the people from DOTARS. It is also a question for you.

Mr Hurnall—Okay. My understanding is that there is a front link pack standard in the Australian design rules. Vehicles are tested and certified to that without a bullbar being fitted. A bullbar is normally an after-market feature on a vehicle. It becomes a state responsibility about how they manage that and ensure the vehicle continues to comply with the design rules.

Ms O'BYRNE—Are you the person I direct my design rules questions to?

Mr Hurnall—I can assist.

Ms O'BYRNE—These are questions that I will also put to the Commonwealth. I am just interested in your views on them. The Australian design rules have received a little bit of criticism through this process. It has come up a couple of times. Why do you think Australian design rules take so long to adopt? Do you think it is part of the existing strategy? Do you think there is a flaw within that? You look very uncomfortable, and I apologise for that.

Mr Hurnall—Once again, it appears to be the process. There are two things. There is the research development part of it, to develop a standard to be introduced. You then have to do the regulatory process, which DOTARS will no doubt give you more detail on. My understanding is that they have to take into account a number of things, including whether it is of positive cost-benefit and whether there are alternative market pressures making it happen instead. An example is the seatbelt warning systems. Whilst the MUARC report showed a positive cost-benefit, the indications are that because of market pressures, manufacturers are actually fitting seatbelt warning systems to some of the newer cars. We believe that is due primarily to NCAP, because we attach additional points to that. Therefore, the question becomes: do you introduce an ADR requiring a seatbelt warning system when it is happening through market pressures already?

Mr McIntosh—The ADRs were very effective when they were first introduced. There is no doubt we were leading the world in where we sat with many vehicle standards. That was a very important activity. However, the rest of the world has moved on and, to a certain extent, regulations, like all regulations, tend to become more laborious because more people are involved. Everybody has to be consulted, everybody wants to have their say and nothing much happens.

Technology moves much faster than that, and that is where the NCAP program comes in. With the seatbelt warning device, for instance, in Europe, the European NCAP said, 'We will add another two points or so for the seatbelt warning device.' One of the leading European manufacturers found their car was only getting a four-star rating without the seatbelt warning device. Adding the seatbelt warning device turned it into a five-star rating. There was no regulation, no nothing—the market pressure suddenly lifted it. Basically in Europe now, all the cars have seatbelt warning devices because of the pressure from the market.

The other comment I made briefly—you may not have been here—is that BMW, in a paper in Japan earlier last year, made the point that if cars were to meet the European design rules, they would get 1.3 stars. The reality is that most cars now have a four-star rating because of the publication of the data and the transparency. There have been some suggestions that it would be useful—and I think I have called for it in the past—for all manufacturers to publish their crash testing data. I think we are now in the situation where we are almost past that. I think the manufacturers themselves realise that the NCAP programs do that anyway and they are independent and it is more obvious.

Ms O'BYRNE—If we actually have an international standard or harmonisation of vehicle standards, can that achieved in Australia without compromising safety, in your view?

Mr Hurnall—We are actually progressing towards that, but my belief is the actual international harmonisation has added time delay into the process. Essentially, instead of looking at what is an Australian issue and addressing that, we are involved in regulation development at an international level. Australia is a very small voice in that whole process. So it could be taken

up with what is happening in Europe or North America instead. We are carrying on the coat tails of what is happening rather than picking up what is an Australian vehicle issue and progressing it.

Ms O'BYRNE—Ms Harris, what do you think about a national system of licence and training?

Ms Harris—National licensing may be worth pursuing. It is hard to achieve, I think, given the experience with the national road rules. But national licensing for young drivers or at least a national standard or best practice of what is an optimal graduated licensing system, bearing in mind—

Ms O'BYRNE—And would you support a national graduated licensing system, obviously, from those comments?

Ms Harris—In principle. It would depend what was in it. Most states in Australia do have graduated licensing of some form. It is just whether we can take that a step further. What we are seeing from the US and other states is that with graduated licensing and restrictions on new drivers, such as night curfews or passenger restrictions and other things, they graduate up to full exposure when they have more experience. That is a good way of going. Translating that success in the US to an Australian context is, I suppose, one of the challenges, as is determining the benefits, given that in most of the states 16-year-olds drive and in Victoria 17- and 18-year-olds drive. It is just a question of where the benefits would be. We think there would be benefits, but the size of them is what needs to be determined.

Ms O'BYRNE—But there is the common view that you learn to drive after you have passed your test, and you do.

Ms Harris—That is right. That is probably the issue of inexperience. Once we do set licensing, it is the benchmark and the barrier that people need to achieve, and where we set that—

Ms O'BYRNE—Should people be assessed in different driving conditions? You can pass your licence and never have driven in the dark or in the rain?

Ms Harris—Yes. That is an issue in terms of experience in a range of conditions.

CHAIR—That would be difficult during the drought, of course.

Ms Harris—Depends where you live.

Ms O'BYRNE—It was just a general question. Perhaps they should be also tested on a gravel road, then.

Ms Harris—It is worth looking at the UK, who have just introduced changes to their new driver licensing testing. I think that is now is a 50- or 55-minute test, which is pretty lengthy compared to a lot of Australian jurisdictions. So it is what can be done with predictive tests that will raise the barrier in terms of how our young people prepare for the test. Do they need to get

20 hours experience, 50 hours or 120 hours in a range of conditions? Ideally, we want them to be fairly safe by the time we give them that P plate.

CHAIR—We must move on.

Mr SCHULTZ—I note in your report at paragraph 4.3.1 on page 22, which is headed ‘Drink driving’, very responsible comments are made with regard to alcohol and rehab programs et cetera. I am, however, very, very surprised once again to find that not one mention has come out of your organisation, like every other organisation that addresses road safety, on the use of illicit drugs and driving—drug driving I am talking about—and the lack of drug testing. We test people for alcohol but we do not test them for drugs. We do not do that in an environment where all along our national highways and, in particular, the Hume Highway we have federal government sponsored rest areas. In every toilet and in every change room there are needle syringe disposal units. Why hasn’t a responsible organisation like you addressed the issue of drug driving and addressed the issue of taxpayers’ money being inappropriately used to supply disposal units for drug drivers on our major highways?

Ms Harris—I can comment on that. In terms of drug driving or drug impaired driving as a problem, I think it is acknowledged that it is a problem. The solution is what is hard to find. In terms of comparing it to alcohol, a simple roadside test is harder to develop for drugs because there is a range of different drugs that people can take. People can abuse non-illicit drugs, so it is difficult. It is acknowledged that it is a problem. In Victoria in December the state parliament passed legislation to use saliva tests at the roadside, which is probably another area of interest for the committee to look at. It is trial legislation. It will come into effect in July this year.

CHAIR—In all states?

Ms Harris—Just Victoria have introduced that. It is one of the first jurisdictions to actually use random saliva testing at the roadside. It is seen as very innovative, quite exploratory but with a view to trying to say, ‘We need to treat this seriously and we need to tackle this issue.’ It will particularly focus on cannabis impaired drivers and drivers with what they call methamphetamines, which are stimulants that maybe long distance drivers would use. That has been looked at. We did not comment on it in great detail in our submission. We accept the problem. The solution is just difficult in terms of the human physiology and technology, but it is being worked on. So we certainly acknowledge that it is a problem. It might be worth looking at the Victorian trial.

Mr SCHULTZ—Thank you. The reason I ask the question is that as a state member of parliament, I spent 56 hours on the Hume Highway when road transports were killing significant numbers of people. When I tried to raise the issue of drug driving as a problem, the bureaucrats at the federal and state levels used the excuse that their needle syringe exchange programs were designed to allow people with diabetes safe access to a disposal unit. I found that frustrating, so I picked up half a dozen needle syringes from one site in Jugiong and I had them analysed. You would be surprised to know that four of them contained heroin remnants. I just cannot remember the barbiturate that was in the other two.

However, each of them had those sorts of drugs in them. That is why I have asked the question today. I find it repugnant to the extreme that federal money which I as a taxpayer pay to the

federal government is being allowed to build into the design of those rest areas facilities to allow the safe disposal of needle syringes. It is not safe disposal because they throw them on the ground anyway. More importantly, they allow drugged drivers to get out on the highway after they have injected and put other people's lives at risk in the state they are in. That is the reason I ask the question. I see it as a very serious issue, and I am absolutely amazed that responsible automobile associations have not raised that issue.

Mr McIntosh—I will make a brief comment. I take your point. Our view—and I do not want to be seen to be passing the buck—would be that that is exactly why road safety is more than just a transport issue and why the federal government has an opportunity to set some benchmarks nationally, be it for driver training or drug testing. It does not only apply, of course, to car drivers. I see recently airline crew, for instance, are refusing to accept the testing.

Many of you probably know that I came from the mining industry. We did drug testing 20 years ago and that was quite acceptable. But it is a very difficult issue in the community. It needs to be debated, we need to have those views and we need to make those tests. As Anne makes the point, it is difficult to test for. I do not see any reason why we as organisations would not be actively participating in the debate of how we get through this issue because it is a very important one. I thank you for raising it.

Mr SCHULTZ—I take the point that you make, and I will close with just one brief question. I understand the complexities of introducing legislation and applying a testing regime on illicit drugs for drivers on highways. However, I cannot understand why somebody has not made a definitive decision to attack the issue of supplying disposal units for those people. I will finish by asking what your views are on the problems we have in New South Wales where different speed limits are being introduced for different reasons. As an example, we have a 40 kilometre an hour zone around schools in our towns and cities right throughout New South Wales. We have just introduced a 50 kilometre an hour zone in some of our towns in New South Wales. Other towns have 60 kilometre an hour zones in the urban areas. We then have 100 kilometre an hour stretches of road outside our major highways, and then we have 110 kilometre an hour zones. Motorists must be wondering what they are going to be subjected next because in New South Wales alone we have five different speed limits.

Mr McIntosh—I have to say I think the club members would agree with you that too much regulation and too much confusing regulation does not help. That is why we need to have a more public rating of the roads, as I suggested, so people can understand why that is so. At the moment, people do not know why it is 40 here, 50 there, 60 there and 80 there. As a result, they get annoyed and their behaviour changes. We would see a need in the long term for national public transparency about what the states of the roads are and why people should be doing these speeds. Maybe there could be a situation where we say, 'This road is only 40 at the moment but it will be 60 when we finish the work.' Give people something to look forward to rather than always be putting it in the negative.

Mr SCHULTZ—Thank you very much.

CHAIR—We are running out of time, so we will have a couple of quick questions from Mr Haase and Ms Ley.

Mr HAASE—I want to know how you formulate your policy when it seems that your data gathering and the statistics you have mentioned here today tend to paint a very clouded picture. The stat that I have focused on is the one that says a third of those killed in motor vehicles are not wearing a seatbelt. That to me indicates that the major problem is irresponsible driving. One is conscious of not wearing a seatbelt. If one is therefore involved in an accident, that statistic would indicate to me that people who refuse to wear seatbelts are more prone to have accidents rather than another interpretation. I just do not know how you do address the question of the lack of responsibility of drivers.

From a personal perspective, my belief is that you cannot prevent some people from having accidents. Maybe just as we have very strict regulation for the use of dangerous firearms we need to address this marketing effort that on the one hand says, 'This car can kill. Therefore, you ought to own one,' and on the other hand says, 'We need to prevent road deaths.' You have a very onerous task. I do not believe that governments throwing simply more money at trying to prevent people from killing themselves on our roads is necessarily going to solve the problem. I would like you to address in particular the irresponsibility and the question of these opposing forces of preventing road deaths and marketing fast cars.

Mr McIntosh—Irresponsibility used to be a feature in the workplace. People said accidents just happen and that, if the worker took more care, they would not cut their hands off in the guillotine. Today we do not make guillotines that shut without a guard. The guard works automatically. Why do we sell cars that can move faster than, say, five or 10 kilometres an hour when the seatbelts are not buckled up? That technology exists but we do not insist on it. The Commonwealth does not insist on it when it is buying new cars. It is not a huge cost. That can be done. That will not affect the irresponsible young man today who drives his ute from the farm to the town and who, because he drives around the farm with the ute unbelted, hoons down to the town and kills himself. That will not stop him today, but in 10 years it will because the ute he drives will have that feature on it. So we believe the way to address it is to look at the infrastructure, if you like—the vehicle itself and the road itself—and see where we can make sure that, when he or she does make a mistake, there is less chance of them causing serious injury.

People will make mistakes. There is no doubt there are foolish and irresponsible people out there, but there are also ordinary people who make the same mistakes and they kill themselves. Two of the three people who are killed are wearing their seatbelts. Why was that? It was because they hit something that was in the way, or the road allowed them to run off. So you are right. We can address it just as we have in the workplace, but it takes a massive shift in our own thinking. That is where we see the Commonwealth can be a leader in promoting that leadership.

CHAIR—We are going to have a division in probably about seven or eight minutes. I propose to keep asking you questions until the end of that time. We will then dismiss you unceremoniously because we will have to move quickly. We will then take DOTARS straight after that.

Mr HAASE—I do have to go. I am due in the other chamber in a moment. Very quickly, it is legal for us to have 80 tonnes at least travelling in opposite directions at speeds up to 100 kilometre an hour separated by 100 millimetres of white line. If we are talking safety, should we not suggest there not be undivided roads?

Mr McIntosh—I think that is right. In Sweden, the government has mandated that at a certain traffic volume there will be a median strip down the centre of the road. We can do that here. We can set those standards, and that is the standard we then should aim for. There are times when there are low traffic volumes and it is probably far too expensive to do so, but it is possible. When you consider that we have trains passing at great speed but they are fixed on tracks, we do very well to have small cars and large trucks passing each other and not running into each other. But we can put wire rope barriers down the centre of the roads. It costs money, but it should be done.

Mr HAASE—You have said a lot about what we ought to do. You have said nothing about the attitude, perhaps, of your members across Australia in relation to more of their tax dollars being spent on road safety or extracting more dollars from them to afford more road safety. Have you ever done any research on that?

Mr McIntosh—Yes, we have. I will answer the last question first. People do not believe they should spend any more or increase their tax dollars. About 38c a litre goes to the Commonwealth now, of which 6c goes back on roads—10c a litre or so goes to the states from the GST from petrol, and there is an argument whether that is coming back as well. But there is plenty of scope within that 38c a litre for a lot more to be done and there are also a lot of other innovative ways we could raise the funds. Motorists are very concerned—and our recent survey, which we are publishing shortly—shows exactly that. People think that the federal government is spending 12c a litre so you must be doing something right. However, the fact is you are only spending 6c a litre. When we tell them that, they get very angry.

Mr SECKER—I think that happens worldwide.

CHAIR—We have talked about what governments might or might not do in that regard. With the current position of the Australian dollar, I noticed in the advertisements that the cars at \$19,990 or \$14,900 are still at \$19,990 or \$14,900 when notionally the cost of those cars should have dropped about 20 per cent. Wouldn't this be a good time, when there is a bit of fat there, for the car manufacturers to do something about it?

Mr McIntosh—I agree.

CHAIR—On that note, I will have to wind up the AAA as the bells are ringing for a division. Thank you for your attendance.

Mr McIntosh—Thank you for your time.

Proceedings suspended from 9.34 a.m. to 9.48 a.m.

HOGAN, Mr Robert, Assistant Secretary, Transport Programs, South-East Regulation Group, Department of Transport and Regional Services

O'NEILL, Mr Barry, Director, Investment Policy and Black Spots Transport Programs, Department of Transport and Regional Services

ROBERTSON, Mr Peter Andrew, Assistant Secretary, Vehicle Safety Standards, Department of Transport and Regional Services

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of DOTARS. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence on oath, I have to caution you that these are proceedings of the parliament and require the same respect as would attend to the House of Representatives itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that the giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and could be considered a contempt of the parliament. Having said that, you are most welcome. Are you going to lead, Mr Hogan?

Mr Hogan—I think I will defer very quickly to my colleagues.

CHAIR—But you will lead for the group?

Mr Hogan—It depends. On vehicle issues, it is Mr Robertson.

CHAIR—Are you making an opening statement?

Mr Hogan—No.

CHAIR—You are not. So each of you want to go straight into your fields. Is that the idea?

Mr Hogan—Yes.

CHAIR—So who will lead off?

Mr Hogan—I think Mr Robertson will, on vehicle issues.

Mr Robertson—We will do vehicles first and then black spots.

CHAIR—If you each make a five or seven-minute presentation, that is going to take a lot of our time. Could we restrict your statements to about three or four minutes so we get into questions? I do not want to run out of time for interaction with the committee.

Mr Robertson—Certainly, Mr Chairman. With that interaction, I might just lead off and see if I can rush through a quick four-minute statement. By way of introductory comment, I was going to provide the committee with some background on the Australian design rules and some of the issues because they have come up in various presentations. No doubt there will be some questions. Perhaps I can pre-empt some of them and in fact cover some of the items that have already been raised if I just go through them quickly. It is a bit of an issue because it does come

through strongly that a lot of those processes and the scope of them are not well understood. So I will see if I can provide some light there.

First, I will comment on our role. What we actually do in the department on vehicle safety standards is governed by an act of parliament, the Motor Vehicle Standards Act. It has some clear objectives in the development of standards. They want uniform national standards covering safety emissions, anti-theft and the saving of energy. The Australian design rules are actually the standard set under the act. I need to point out that they are in a state of progressive review. We have been doing this for the past five years and we still have some way to go. We have a policy intention to harmonise with regulations developed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. I just need to make a point here early. These are international regulations; they are not European regulations. When we talk about harmonisation, we are not harmonising with Europe; we are harmonising internationally. They are quite complex. The ADRs cover issues such as lighting, emissions, braking, anti-theft, occupant protection, structures and a whole range of miscellaneous items. As Mr McIntosh alluded to, yes, they are becoming very complex indeed. The lighting regulations alone are about 640 pages of small print and not the world's best sellers.

An important point on jurisdictional responsibilities is that the Australian design rules and the Motor Vehicles Standards Act cover vehicles up to the point of first supply to the market. After that, it is a state regulation issue, or what we refer to as in-service regulation. With regard to the terms of reference you are addressing, one comment is that it takes eight or nine years to get an ADR up. That is incorrect, as I will explain, in terms of process. But certainly given the age of the vehicle fleet, when an ADR is introduced, for the effect to filter through the system, certainly if you have a 10-year average age vehicle fleet, you are looking at timeframes to get saturation of the market in that order.

We have had heard some comment on the process for developing new and amended ADRs. I will go through it quickly. I need to point out that there is significant research activity that underpins the development of regulation and it is very much a global process. For example, Australia has a relatively small economy, so we tend to put our research effort into those areas where we get the biggest bang for the buck in terms of occupant protection. So we tend to focus on the occupant protection areas. We are very active in crash test research. Vehicle compatibility is a big issue for us because obviously the fleet is polarising between high-mass and low-mass vehicles. We have a number of higher-mass four-wheel drive vehicles in the market. We are very active in side impact research. In fact, we could probably claim a world leadership role in that we chair what is called the Internationally Harmonised Research Activities Side Impact Working Group. The outcome of that work will in fact be an international side impact regulation which takes side impact protection to a new level.

In terms of process, we have had a small comment on that. What governs the setting of an ADR is a series of principles agreed by the Council of Australian Governments. These were set in 1995. It is probably true to say, yes, they have introduced a new discipline. The ADRs are a regulation like any other regulation. What they actually do is provide a set of processes to follow to determine whether a regulation or standard is the appropriate course of action. They apply to ministerial councils. They are consistent with the objectives of national competition policy and their aims are to minimise regulation, complexity and inconsistencies between jurisdictions and the cost to business.

As Mr Hurnall commented, it is more than simply just saying, 'Is there a cost-benefit equation that works?' The process is quite rigorous and it needs you to go through and assess whether there is a need for regulation. What is the problem and the evidence of market failure? What are the non-regulatory options? Where is the evidence to back it up? It is a rigorous assessment of the costs and benefits. There is the adoption of international standards and an adherence to international agreements, in particular, the WTO agreement on technical barriers to trade. It is a fairly important criterion. They should not be restrictive in international trade and they should be performance based rather than prescriptive.

I will return to those two points quickly. In terms of timing, the process normally would take about six months. That allows three months for public consultation, one month with agency heads and two months voting by ministers. It normally works between state and Commonwealth ministers. A majority would carry the rule. Of course, a lot of work has to happen before that, and often during that public consultation phase issues come up which can slow it down that you just have not foreseen. There might be local manufacturers affected. There might be other interest groups that come out with different points that need to be considered. Sometimes have you to go through other iterations.

I will just talk a tiny bit about the international trade issue because we do have a WTO agreement. We are a signatory to an international agreement which we refer to simply as the 1958 agreement. It has a very long name, but that does not help much. We became a signatory in April 2000. What that agreement seeks to do is not only to establish uniform regulations internationally but to provide for a reciprocal recognition on approval certifications. By being a signatory, if we in Australia are able to issue an approval to a manufacturer, having tested a vehicle to a particular regulation, other signatories who have also applied that regulation must recognise it and vice versa. So there is an interlocking set of mechanisms which gets quite complex and it is often not appreciated or understood. This allows us to fulfil our WTO requirement to use international standards and to play a full part in their preparation.

On the trade facilitation point, I probably just need to make a comment because harmonisation often gets trotted out as being an impediment to the development of standards or meeting Australian needs. That is not really the case. I have yet to see an example where that has happened. It is certainly an issue to which we have to give weight. If we are introducing unique regulations, our obligation is in fact to take it to the international forum and try to establish it, if we can, as an international regulation. It is pretty obvious the clear logic there.

It is probably more important for us than many other countries because we are such a small part of the world vehicle community. Our local manufacturing capacity is only now probably less than one-third of the total domestic vehicle penetration of new vehicles into the market. The economics of modifying vehicles for different markets make it quite an issue for us in terms of the sort of vehicles that we can get here. It is not the cost of putting in a gadget or changing something; it is the cost of changing the production process. A good example, perhaps, is the Mercedes smart car. The company considered it uneconomical to bring the vehicle to this market simply because a dashboard light requiring a variable dimmer switch was a unique regulation. To remove that, the company found it not viable to bring the vehicle here. There was a similar issue with the Toyota Prius. Until we were able to harmonise the regulations to accommodate the technology in the vehicle, the vehicle was not able to come here. So there are those issues. It is swings and roundabouts.

I probably need to mention quickly that we have mutual recognition arrangements with other countries, such as the EU and Thailand. We are a participant in the trans-Tasman mutual recognition arrangement with New Zealand. We are also an active participant in APEC. The APEC free trade objectives are being pursued through the common acceptance of UNSC regulations.

Very quickly I will go back to performance based standards, which is a requirement of both the COAG principles and the agreement on technical barriers to trade. I raise it because I have had a lot of comments about it, such as, for example, why don't we just mandate side airbags on all cars. The simple answer is that that, like many of the other regulations, such as braking lighting, they are performance based regulations. The object of the regulation, which is an international regulation, is to provide protection to the occupant as tested using instrumented dummies. The manufacturer can put whatever they want in the car to achieve that objective so that it is not design restrictive. It can include airbags and other technology that you might have.

Those sort of innovations do take time to filter through the market. I know it is often tempting to say we should regulate to get the latest and best features in all cars. The trouble is there is a price issue there. We are always interested in bringing down the age of the vehicle fleet. So there is always going to be that bit of tension. I should make a quick comment about side airbags because it gets a lot of run. It is interesting that people do not tend to talk about other things like ABS and IRS and active safety features. Side airbags tends to get it. The assumption is that just because a car has a side airbag it will automatically outperform a car that does not, and that is incorrect. The manufacturer designs an occupant protection package. There are plenty of examples we have seen, ANCAP and in our own testing where vehicles without side airbags perform extremely well indeed and, in some cases, better than vehicles with side airbags. I am not making this comment to say we should not have side airbags.

CHAIR—Let me pull you up. You say 'perform'. Are you talking about engineering performance or safety performance?

Mr Robertson—Safety performance as measured on the dummy. Care should be exercised in adopting simplistic assumptions; that is the point I make. We will often hear comments, as I said, that we should have them. It is even possible an accident could be made more severe with a side impact because you are putting something between the vehicle and you, depending on what sort of accident you have. There is an old adage in crash testing: what car is safe depends on what sort of crash you intend to have. It is not quite as straightforward as often you might think.

We are finding, though, that passenger side airbags are coming into the market. The debate just a few years ago was about whether to regulate for frontal impact airbags. If you look at the market now, very rarely will you find a vehicle on the market that did not have at least a driver's airbag and a passenger one either as standard features or as options. There are other simplistic comments. I have often had people say, 'Why don't we have airbags in every seating position of a car?' You ask, 'The rear seating position as well?' 'Oh, most certainly.' They do not often stop to think that it is children and infants that sit in the rear seats of cars. It may not be desirable to have airbags in cars where there are children sitting.

I will go into a few things to wrap up in terms of priorities for us in ADR development. The ADR review is a big exercise. There is something like almost 80 active ADRs. They all need to

be reviewed according to the COAG principles. That does take time and it is our priority to complete that. Other issues that are on the boil are that we are about to release a regulation impact statement on seatbelt reminders. That is a fairly voluminous document and it goes into the issue in some detail. Under-run protection is a big issue for us. Heavy vehicle cabin strength is a very big issue for us. Daytime running lamps are also on the priority list following cabin vehicle strength.

In terms of other future directions that are being taken up internationally, one of the points to make is, yes, they are complex. There are a lot of things out there that drive the development of vehicle regulation, such as pedestrian protection, new technologies and hydrogen fuel cells. There is an environmental issue there, but there is also a safety issue when you are dealing with the carriage of hydrogen. Other issues are hybrid vehicles, distributed lighting systems—that is, new lighting technology—steer by wire ITS, which is an enormous emerging issue for vehicle standards. There are also things like compatibility and data recorders. There could be any number of them, but the work is out there and it is happening. It is a very complex area.

I did have some other comments I could possibly make on ANCAP and despecing and the like, but perhaps I will leave them to questions and move on.

CHAIR—Who will speak next?

Mr O'Neill—We commenced our evidence at the last hearings on 28 November, so I will very briefly run through what we spoke about. We outlined the history of the program. We ran through the funding per state. We talked about the eligibility criteria. We talked about the split between urban and rural funding, which is 50 per cent in the major states. We started to talk about eligible costs. The emphasis of the black spot program is on high return projects. Therefore, the government's contribution to any particular project is limited to \$750,000 *prima facie*. But the average cost of a project under the program is around \$110,000, so we are well short of hitting that ceiling in the vast majority of cases. To summarise, black spot funding is targeted to projects that are estimated to maximise the safety benefits. Over 80 per cent of projects funded are at locations with a history of crashes.

I will quickly run through the black spot approval process. A crash location is nominated to the state consultative panel by either an individual, local government or the state road authority. The overwhelming majority are nominated by state and local road authorities. The state road authority undertakes a technical assessment of the proposal, looking at the crash history, the treatment design and doing an economic assessment of the project. The road authority collates the proposals and generally ranks them in order of benefit-cost. That collating of the proposals is considered by the state consultative panel, which usually meets once per year.

The panel comments on the proposals and forwards a list of high priority proposals to the federal minister for consideration. The black spot unit in the department prepares a submission to the minister, seeking his approval of the projects and the funding. The minister makes his decision on the projects and the amount of funding. One of the key criteria for a black spot program is the benefit-cost ratio. Generally speaking, those proposals ranked with the highest BCR will be approved for funding up to the limit of the budget for the particular state. Benefit-cost analysis allows the cost of fixing the site to be compared with the benefits—the savings—to

be gained from undertaking the project. It can be used to rank projects in order of desirability, and generally most state panels follow that procedure.

If a site has been identified for treatment on the basis of a history of crashes, crashes of the site can then be analysed in terms of the pattern of accident types and any consistency of other factors. There is a table of a crash reduction potential for typical treatments known as the treatment crash reduction matrix, which is provided in the program's notes and administration. It enables a balance between what is going to be achieved for the particular treatment and the cost to be calculated, which is essentially the benefit-cost ratio. That matrix was developed by Dr David Andreassen, who is a leading expert in crash type methodology, for crash costing within Australia. He has done that on the basis of an examination of existing sites and treated sites. The matrix can be used for guidance as to the influence of a particular treatment to reduce crashes, but it is a guide; it is not a compulsory methodology.

There is no fixed list of treatments under the program. Any traffic engineering measure that will cost effectively address the safety concern at a site can be considered. Funding may include any safety related construction, alteration or remedial treatment. However, the program does not fund speed cameras, red light cameras, the maintenance of existing traffic management devices, vehicle design improvements or public education activities. The list of the different treatments that have been funded under the program since 1996 is quite long. Some examples are the installation of traffic lights, roundabouts, audible edge lines, road signs, guard rail fencing, shoulder sealing, the removal of dangerous fixed objects and so on. By far the most commonly funded treatment in the black spot program is the installation of roundabouts and new or modified traffic signals, both of which have been used in over 16 per cent of projects. Of course, some locations require several treatments, and there is no problem with mixing various treatments in the one site.

We did briefly run through the benefits that have been achieved under the program. In short, the ANAO did a performance audit report of the program and found it had clear, measurable objectives. The evaluation of the program was built in. It was transparent and accountable. The BTRE has done two evaluations of the program. In summary, it found that the program was highly effective, returning an average of \$14 in benefits for every dollar invested. In its first three years, the program is estimated to have prevented 32 fatal crashes and more than 1,500 serious crashes. Further benefits will continue to accrue over the life of the treatments that have been installed.

CHAIR—Mr Hogan, do you want to say anything?

Mr Hogan—No. I have nothing to add to that.

CHAIR—I will start with black spots. It is one of my passions, I must admit. Mr McIntosh alluded in his presentation to the necessity for safety audits. But my observation is that the way that the safety audits are being done is actually detrimental to the program. The cost of the number of engineers and studies and things that have to go on for a site sometimes even outweighs the cost of the treatment for the site. In some instances, councils walk away from potentially dangerous sites because they think that they will put up \$50,000 or \$60,000 for a safety audit, they do the safety audit and they find they do not get a high enough BCR, so they miss out. They might as well as have put \$50,000 or \$60,000 into the intersection or hill or

whatever it might be. I would like to hear your comments on how we might streamline the safety audits. That is the first question.

The second one is that I have suggested to the minister that perhaps in each state \$1 million of the black spot funding be put aside to, say, 30 tranches of \$35,000 each, where all that would be necessary would be the certificate from the state road authority engineer and a local engineer, be it private or local government. It would be to do something like taking out a culvert that might have a dangerous dip in it, putting bitumen over the top of a hill with a dividing line for a couple of hundred metres and things like that. I would like your comment on those two things: (a) how we get the safety audit to a point where it does not become ridiculous and (b) having in the mix of the various things that are eligible for black spot funding some simple mechanism for those projects under about \$35,000 or \$40,000.

Mr O'Neill—I think we touched upon some of these issues when we were last here. On the road safety audit issue, the program is designed to treat sites with a known accident history. If we have a streamlined system, we appreciate that some small councils have difficulty funding a road safety audit, the risk is that funds will be diverted from sites that have a serious accident problem to sites where that is not fully established. There are ways we think that the safety audit process can be streamlined. I believe there is an Austroads standard on how these are carried out, which can be applied by the council engineer with some training as part of his normal job, so it is not necessary to hire a consultant necessarily at considerable expense. If the engineer can get accredited to carry out the audits according to the standard, that would be sufficient for our purposes. However, the program feels that there has to be some objective assessment of the site's worthiness for the funding available, given that it is a very competitive program and that there are a lot of sites with serious accident histories that need to be addressed.

CHAIR—The mix at present is 80 per cent for known crash history and 20 per cent for safety audit provision. Why couldn't you have 75 per cent, say, for known crash history, 15 per cent for safety audits and 10 per cent for two engineers' certificates, or something like that?

Mr O'Neill—That is certainly a possibility and the minister might consider that. The 80-20 per cent is not a hard and fast rule. It allows—

CHAIR—Although most committees stick to that.

Mr O'Neill—Some states have difficulty, I admit, in finding the road safety audit projects, so sometimes more money goes to the specific sites than the road safety audit projects. But I return to the main aim of the program, which is to fund the highest need projects. I think there needs to be some sort of objective assessment of need.

CHAIR—I want to ask another question on this black spots program. A lot of provincial cities have big, wide intersections that are not of themselves intrinsically dangerous. However, because on a particular date a hoon has gone through it and slapped into a car with three people in it and killed two, it meets the BCR requirements. My observation is that a lot of councils use that excuse for putting in a \$200,000 or \$300,000 roundabout on a corner that may not of itself be dangerous; it is dead flat and has great lines of sight. That troubles me. I would like your comment on this. I think too much of the scheme is creamed off on traffic lights and roundabouts. I think at times it saves lazy or opportunistic councils using that as a mechanism

for getting traffic lights or a roundabout rather than addressing an intrinsic safety problem. What is your comment on that?

Mr O'Neill—The program and criteria do require a history of crashes. Certainly one serious crash could meet that criterion. We do also rely on the state road authorities to assess the proposals. They are supposed to look at the type of crash and relate the type of crash to the treatment involved. I think accidents involving opposing traffic streams are mainly addressed by traffic lights and roundabouts, roundabouts being for more lightly trafficked areas and traffic lights in high traffic areas. If that is the type of accident that is occurring, then we would see that a roundabout or a traffic light is an appropriate treatment. We rely on the state road authorities to relate the treatment to the type of accidents that are occurring. We would hope that that is done in a consistent manner.

Ms LEY—I have a couple of questions and one concerns black spots. I do not expect you to have intimate knowledge, obviously, of our national highway system. However, during the holidays, in the area I look after there was a very serious multiple fatality in a four-wheel drive south of Tarcutta. All the media reports describe this section of road as a notorious black spot, but apparently it is not, according to your characterisation, a black spot. I have countless people come to me and say, 'There are a lots of accidents there.' I looked at the accident record and it was quite significant. It is a piece of single lane carriageway between two sections of dual lane carriageway. Obviously we do not know the exact cause of the accident although there is a lot of speculation. Why is that not a black spot?

Mr O'Neill—Because that particular site is on the national highway, the Australian Land Transport Development Act actually precludes the spending of black spot funding on the national highway. The Commonwealth also funds the national highway through another program and it does not want to see double dipping between programs for the same lengths of road.

Ms LEY—So do we call something on the national highway something else? Can't we call it a black spot?

Mr O'Neill—Well, a black spot is a community term rather than a technical term.

Ms LEY—I understand that, but how can we identify it as an area of risk if we cannot call it a black spot?

CHAIR—There is a federal program—

Mr Hogan—There is a component of the national highway program, the safety and urgent minor works subprogram, which is provided to deal with, if you like, things including black spots on the national highway. So it really becomes a state responsibility to put that forward in a case for funding.

Ms LEY—Do you think the safety and urgent minor works budget would be sufficient to correct something on a national highway, given that it is not a great deal of money and it tends to do small things like making the shoulder of a local road a bit wider?

Mr Hogan—That is the sort of thing that money from that subprogram does get spent on.

Mr O'Neill—But it will depend on the outcome of this investigation, what is seen as the cause of the accident. Black spot funding tends to be quite small funding for quite specific treatments. The accident investigation might conclude that there is not that sort of treatment that will resolve that issue. It might be something that is beyond the scope of the black spot program to remedy.

Ms LEY—Do we need the states to put forward this section of road to the federal government?

CHAIR—No. You can do that as a federal member.

Ms LEY—To qualify for this, I am getting lost in the red tape and I just need to know how to actually achieve an outcome.

CHAIR—In fairness to the department, I can say that I have had two of these in my electorate. I put them up. In fact, I get quicker treatment than I do through black spots itself on the national highway. They have been very good, in fact. The federal department contact Main Roads and say, 'Yes.'

Ms LEY—In Queensland.

CHAIR—Yes, the RTA. I say, 'We have identified this.' The treatment has been very fast. I have been most impressed with that. I had two instances in my electorate, and I have to say that the action was outstanding.

Ms LEY—It probably comes back to your point that it depends on the treatment required and the amount of dollars. We are talking about something quite substantial being needed, like going from single to dual lane.

Mr O'Neill—There is very limited funding available under both the black spot program and the SUMW program, which in some ways does the same sort of things on the national highway.

Ms LEY—The other quick question I have concerns younger drivers. I think I saw in your appendix here that a younger driver is 11 times more likely to die on the road. If we look at what comprises the 40 per cent accident rate that is needed under this strategy that we are meeting about, we have improved road user behaviour, which obviously covers all drivers, of only nine per cent of that 40 per cent. I do not know that there is enough being done to target the education of younger drivers. Can you give me a quick outline of what you are doing to do that within the strategy?

Mr Hogan—That is really a question for another area of the department; namely, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which appeared for the first day of these hearings. We are not in a position to answer it.

Ms LEY—Sure. I will not ask any more questions.

Mr SCHULTZ—I do not have enough time to ask some of the questions I want to ask. In prefacing my remarks, I support my parliamentary colleague Sussan Ley on the issue that she

has raised. One of the concerns I have had as a state and federal member over 16 years has been the reluctance of governments of all political persuasions to, as far as the Hume Highway is concerned, follow a set pattern of duplicating dual carriageway from either the northern end or the southern end. We have situations where we have leap frogging occurring. We do a section of road because publicity has indicated that it is a very bad section of road. On either side of that dual carriageway, we have single lane carriageways. People come out of dual carriageways after driving long distances from Melbourne and Sydney thinking they are still on dual carriageway and have all sorts of problems.

I know that the recent accident that Sussan is talking about, on the information that I have got, was not related to the state of the road. It could have well been related to various problems, such as tiredness and fatigue et cetera. But in 2001, Sussan and I made some comment about that particular section of road and raised the issues of single carriageways along the Hume Highway. An example of what I am talking about is from Bookham to Coolac. Where the Bookham dual carriageway finishes to Coolac, you have single carriageways. The Sheahan Bridge at Gundagai, which needs to be duplicated, is a single bridge. So you come out of dual carriageway into a single bridge and then go back into dual carriageways. From the Sturt Highway intersection, you go to Tarcutta, with single carriageways after coming off dual carriageways. From Tarcutta to Albury you have double highways on one side of the road and single on the other. So you have all these complex variations in the road itself. I think it is a serious issue with regard to road safety. Who sets the priorities on which national highway or section of a national highway attracts federal funding for upgrading duplication to dual carriageways? Who sets the priorities?

Mr Hogan—I think we would agree with you that in an ideal world all of the Hume Highway would be dual carriageway. When it comes to setting the priorities, ultimately that rests with the minister.

Ms LEY—I do not think it does. I think the New South Wales RTA, in the case we are talking about, has to do a cost-benefit analysis.

Mr SCHULTZ—I want to follow that up. How are the priorities set and based on what information?

Mr Hogan—They are based on assessments from the Road Traffic Authority in New South Wales. All that information is fed through to the minister, but ultimately the minister makes the decisions on which sections of road are going to be funded.

Mr SCHULTZ—What you are saying—

CHAIR—Is there a BCR process?

Mr Hogan—There is a BCR process.

Mr SCHULTZ—So what you are saying is that the result of the leap frogging stems from the ministers of the crown of the government of the day making the decision as to where funding goes. That is basically what you are saying?

Mr Hogan—No. What I am saying is that in circumstances where resources for the funding of a Hume upgrade are necessarily limited, which sections actually get duplication is a matter ultimately for agreement by the minister.

Ms LEY—I want to clarify this because it is important. Doesn't the Roads and Traffic Authority have to do preparatory work, much of which is quite costly, before it actually gets before the minister? How much of that has been done in order for the minister to make the decision on the Hume Highway?

Mr O'Neill—We are currently funding a study looking into the remaining section of the southern Hume, basically between Albury and the Sturt Highway turnoff, which is looking into a range of issues, including whether the duplication of further sections is warranted. That report is expected to come out in the next two months, I think.

CHAIR—To clarify the process, Ms Ley has asked the question. The state road authority has to make an assessment because we do not have those facilities within the federal department upon which the federal department advises the minister to do X or Y.

Mr SCHULTZ—That is what I am getting at.

CHAIR—Does the state road authority initiate that or does the federal ministry or the federal department go to the state road authority and say, 'We would like you to look at so and so'? Is there a self-initiation on the part of the state road authority or has it got to be prompted from a federal agency first?

Mr O'Neill—Generally speaking, the road authority is the custodian of the highway and makes a submission. But there many instances where the Commonwealth has asked for work to be done or has initiated the work.

CHAIR—So the minister, a department or, for that matter, a federal member can ask that a study be initiated?

Mr O'Neill—Yes.

Mr SCHULTZ—Is that one of the reasons why the RTA get all of the contractors from the federal department? Is that why the RTA get federal funding to carry out the work on our federal highways because they are responsible for and give information on the sections of, say, the Hume Highway and why it needs to be upgraded?

Mr O'Neill—Yes. The RTA is still the responsible road authority, and they carry out the planning and provide us with the information to make decisions on future funding.

Mr SCHULTZ—Finally, do we have any mechanism within the federal act that allows us to contract out work currently undertaken by the RTA to private contractors? Why do we have to give it always to the RTA? That is the point I am making. They are the most inefficient road builders you could imagine.

Mr Hogan—The New South Wales government is actually the owner of the road.

Mr SCHULTZ—Because they are the owner of the road, we are locked into a situation where we cannot under any circumstances subcontract or contract out, as a federal government supplying the money, for construction to occur on a federal road?

Mr Hogan—No. In ownership terms, there is no such thing as a federal road.

Mr SCHULTZ—Well, the national road.

Mr O'Neill—In practical terms, most of the studies are undertaken by private contractors, although the contracts are let by the RTA. All construction work is carried out by the private sector although, again, contracts are let by the RTA.

CHAIR—Correct me if I am wrong, I understand that the federal minister can override, for projects under \$1 million, and say that the local authority in that area can do it?

Mr O'Neill—The way the legislation works is that it is a precondition of the federal funding that works be let to public tender. However, for small-scale works, largely maintenance, there is a ceiling of \$2 million under which that does not apply. There are also provisions for the state to seek exemptions on specified grounds for going to tender.

CHAIR—So the federal minister still has to go to the state road authority to get an exemption for a local authority to do it?

Mr O'Neill—For less than \$2 million for maintenance, there is no requirement to come to the federal minister. But if they want a construction project to be exempt from the requirement to go to tender, they need to seek an exemption.

Mr SCHULTZ—Would that process also be the process used in terms of the delays and the lack of decision making on the Murrumbateman bypass?

Mr O'Neill—I am not 100 per cent on top of the information in relation to the Murrumbateman bypass, but I understand that a study has been done and a route has been selected. However, it has been accepted by the RTA and the Commonwealth government that construction is not required on traffic grounds for quite some time.

Mr SCHULTZ—Despite there being significant ongoing accidents and deaths occurring on that particular section of road. I find that interesting. Thank you.

Mr ANDREN—I have a quick question on black spots. Given the \$14 benefit from every \$1 spent that you quoted and given the quite forensic process of getting applications together, it begs the question—it may be a budgetary question—why only \$36 million per year is available. One would think that it is the most efficacious way of assessing road spending needs on the black spot program. Would you agree?

Mr O'Neill—In actual fact, it is now \$45 million a year under the program. The government has decided that it would provide \$180 million over four years for the program. We expect the states to have their own programs and maintain their own spending on road safety projects. We

do not claim to take over the field. There is nothing to stop state governments and local governments doing their own road safety projects.

Mr ANDREN—Would you agree the audit process for black spot is perhaps the best model we have for properly targeting scarce resources to road construction and repair and accident reduction?

Mr O'Neill—We think it is a very effective system. We note that quite a few of the states that run their own black spot programs use a system that is very similar.

Mr ANDREN—Given the sorts of figures we have heard recently about the likely increase in truck movements over the next decade and the urgency of getting rail up to speed, I have been told recently by a person very experienced in the industry that it is likely the increased use of trucks in the upcoming period will force operators to re-employ high-risk drivers who have been weeded out in recent years, the so-called cowboy element. Are you aware of these concerns? What steps are being taken, perhaps, to obviate that risk and continue to improve driver performance?

Mr Hogan—Again, this is a matter largely out of our area. Given that there has been a history of driver shortages recently, that might well be a quite well-founded anecdote.

CHAIR—Do you have a research division within DOTARS that looks at those things?

Mr Hogan—We have a research division, yes.

CHAIR—Could you come back to Mr Andren and the committee on that point if you cannot answer it now. I think it is a very pertinent point he makes. It goes to the very core of this problem of road transport doubling in the next 10 years and trebling in the next 20. I think we should address it. If you cannot answer it today, could you come back to us on it?

Mr Hogan—Yes. I would add that, when we are looking at the safety of trucks and truck drivers on the road, there is a national body, the National Transport Commission, which develops road transport regulation primarily aimed at the heavy vehicle sector. It is agreed and implemented by all states and territories and the Commonwealth where relevant. They have a very significant safety focus, including through fatigue regulation, in the so-called chain of responsibility regulation in compliance and enforcement and in the development of a national heavy vehicle road safety strategy.

CHAIR—We will address the question to yourselves. I will ask the secretary to address similar questions to that body. Okay?

Mr Hogan—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Mr Robertson made a comment about the additional safety requirements in vehicles using hydrogen as a fuel. I would like you to explain yourself. With my interest in hydrogen as a fuel of mobility for the future, I do not want the facts clouded with those throwaway lines that it is more dangerous. Most of the evidence suggests that it is less dangerous

and causes less heat and physical damage to materials and passengers than in fact ordinary gasoline powered vehicles. Was there a particular reason for you making the statement?

Mr Robertson—It was a bit of a throwaway comment. One of the issues that just came out of that—everyone focuses on the environmental side of it—is that developing a standard to accommodate the storage of hydrogen is equally as valid an issue. The point I was just making is that you get an environmental issue that drives the development of the regulation but there is also a safety consideration in there as well that needs to be looked at. That is the only point I wanted to make.

Mr HAASE—Our future readers should note that in the Hindenberg incident most people died of everything other than hydrogen. In fact, I think a number of people died because they had diesel burns. No-one died as a result of hydrogen. That was my only point.

Mr SECKER—If you are using a ratio of about 80 per cent for accidents or accident history to work out which are the black spot areas that get the funding, in that 80 per cent, do you dismiss things like inattention, hoons doing 140 kilometres an hour or drunk drivers? What I am trying to say is that it is not the fault of the road. Someone could have had a heart attack while driving. That could happen anywhere. Do you dismiss that sort of percentage or those sorts of causations in your calculations?

Mr O'Neill—Not explicitly. However, we look for a crash history. We expect that the one-offs that are going to be related to that would not necessarily distort the picture. If there was a consistent pattern of a certain type of accident happening, that would come through as the crash history rather than be distorted by the one-offs that might be unrelated to the road. So that is why we look at the crash history of a site.

Mr SECKER—The second question refers to audio warning lines. I call them rumble strips on the side of the roads. I think they are actually very good. Personally, without any scientific background or knowledge, what sort of work are you doing to show the effectiveness on a cost-benefit ratio of what you are spending on them?

Mr O'Neill—They are just one of the treatments. I do not have that specific answer to your question in front of me, but we can get some information to you on that, if you like.

Mr SECKER—I would interested to know what sort of approach you are using to find out how effective they are. We were told when they were put in that it is going to save so many lives on basic history in the past and so on. So I just wondered whether you are actually looking into it and saying, 'This has saved lives and this is what has done and what it has cost'. It is like what you have done with black spot funding. You have a \$14 saving for each \$1 investment. I am wondering if you are doing the same thing with the rumble strips?

Mr O'Neill—We have let a contract to look into the effectiveness of the treatments we have in our matrix. We have the report out at the moment for comment from the states, so we will ask them what they think the effectiveness of the treatment is.

Mr SECKER—I have a question about one specific part of them. We have just had them installed from Tailem Bend to Coonalpyn on the main Dukes Highway on both sides, basically,

although they did not quite make it to Coonalpyn on one side because they must have run out of money or something. But I noticed very early on that some of them were worn away very quickly. If you look at the road, you have the edge of the road and then you have those sort of markers. You then have the rumble strips on the inside. I have noticed myself driving along that road that it does not take much to veer off your track, like about a foot, and you are on the rumble strips. If they were placed still on the bitumen but on the other side of those markers, would you actually have less wear on them because people would wander over less that far? You would have to wander off the trace two feet instead of one foot.

Mr O'Neill—We could find out for you what the standards are on how they space them. But from my knowledge of the program, their intended effect is to give some recovery room. So if a driver is drowsy or loses attention, they hear the rumble and they have a couple of feet of pavement still to recover rather than go straight off onto the shoulder.

Mr SECKER—It does not take much to get on to them, and I think they are wearing more quickly as a result.

Mr O'Neill—We will find out what the standard distance is for you.

CHAIR—I will come back to a couple of points on the shoulders. Again, Mr McIntosh or one of his team mentioned it. The bells are ringing for a division. We will have to wind up at this point.

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

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

CHAIR—I thank all those who have attended from DOTARS and AAA.

Committee adjourned at 10.42 a.m.