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STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL
SERVICES

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

Friday, 28 November 2003

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

Members in attendance: Mr Haas, Ms Ley, Mr Neville and Mr Secker

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Identify factors that may be impeding progress in reducing road trauma, and suggest how these could be addressed.

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Committee met at 8.40 a.m.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing, a one-day forum of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services inquiring into national road safety. The inquiry arises from a request to the committee by the Hon. John Anderson, MP, Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Just to give you an idea of the regulations of today's forum, although this is being conducted in forum mode and although we will not be requiring witnesses to give evidence on oath, I do have to caution you that these are proceedings of the parliament and consequently warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. I also have to caution you that the giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and could be considered a contempt of the parliament. That caution will apply to everyone who is in the room today. I will repeat the caution at lunchtime and perhaps at the breaks, so that we do not have to go through it every time someone comes to the table.

If you are here as an observer and you have something to add, or you want to participate or get a point through to the committee, then you will be required to indicate before you speak that you are not an invited delegate and that you understand the caution. We will also require anyone who participates who has not already registered to fill out a witness form. I say that because in some of these forums we occasionally have someone from a government office who is here as an observer, or someone who has some pertinent point to make for the benefit of the committee and the participants, but does not have any status. So we will give them status under those terms or conditions—that they fill out a witness form and that they say when they identify themselves that they understand the terms of the caution.

The forum today will hear from a number of state representatives, government agencies, industry associations and community groups. Although you are being called as witnesses to these proceedings, it is intended that we conduct this by way of dialogue and interaction, and to discuss initiatives to reduce road trauma and the effectiveness of the current policies. The inquiry is focusing, essentially, on the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy and the National Road Safety Action Plan for the 2001-02 tranche and for the current 2003-04 tranche. The committee is looking into additional measures to reduce road trauma and into factors that currently exist that might be impeding the reduction of road trauma. The committee is interested to hear about highlights of road safety, to discuss new themes on road safety and to develop some fresh ideas arising out of those three areas.

What we would like witnesses to do today is make a short introductory statement to allow the maximum amount of time for questions and interaction. There will be questions from the committee and, where time permits, comments and questions from other representatives present. If you wish to make a comment or ask a question and you have not already been introduced—in fact, I think we should do this globally throughout the day—as you stand, identify yourself and your organisation. This will assist the Hansard reporters to complete their work effectively. Also, the secretary of the inquiry has suggested that, if you are making a comment or asking a question, it would be best to come forward, and, if you are a listed guest, come to a microphone. If you have any supporting written material, please let us know. A number of our Labor colleagues have sent apologies today, for obvious reasons. Mr Alby Schultz, the Liberal member for Hume, as you would be aware from media reports, had a very nasty accident involving the loss of the sight of one eye during the week and obviously cannot be with us today.

[8.46 a.m.]

BILLS, Mr Kym, Executive Director, Australian Transport Safety Bureau

CAMERON, Mr Iain F., Executive Director, Office of Road Safety, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Western Australia

HOWARD, Mr Eric, General Manager, Road Safety, VicRoads

CHAIR—It is intended that Mr Bills will give us an overview of where road safety is at present. That might set the general theme for the day.

Mr Bills—Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the ATSB and for organising this one-day forum. In my allotted 20 minutes I will present a very quick introduction and overview of national road safety in Australia.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mr Bills—My understanding is that questions may be best addressed later in relation to the more detailed presentations. In terms of the size of the problem, there are over 1,600 road deaths in Australia each year and more than 22,000 serious injuries, according to recent ATSB data. Road crashes are a major cause of premature death, accounting for about seven per cent of years of life lost through all causes of death, and, of course, particularly prevalent in the young driver age groups and particularly for males.

The BTRE has estimated that the economic cost of road crashes is about \$15 billion per year, using 1996 data, but a fairly conservative human capital methodology. From 1970 to 2002, the road fatality rate dropped from 30.4 to 8.7 deaths per 100,000 population. The number of fatalities per 100 million vehicle kilometres travelled dropped from 4.4 in 1971 to 0.9 in 2001. Seatbelts, blood alcohol limits and random breath testing, helmets, speed limits, road and vehicle design and enforcement all contributed. But Australia is still well short of OECD best practice.

The National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010 is a cooperative framework for coordinating road safety initiatives of federal, state, territory and local governments and other organisations and bodies capable of influencing road safety outcomes. It was adopted by the Australian Transport Council in November 2000 and commenced in January 2001. The National Road Safety Strategy has a 40 per cent fatality reduction target, from 9.3 deaths per 100,000 population in 1999 to no more than 5.6 deaths in 2010. There is no injury target, as when the strategy was developed there was no reliable national count available

The goal of 40 per cent is challenging but achievable if governments, industry, road user bodies and others all work cooperatively towards it. Cooperation is reflected in the membership of the more than 40 members of the National Road Safety Strategy Panel. The green line on this figure shows the reductions that would need to be made to make steady progress towards that 40 per cent target in 2010. There are a number of ways of achieving the 40 per cent target but one estimate was made by Vulcan and Corben in 1998. This was an indicative estimate adjusted

downward to allow for expected growth in road use and to avoid double counting of gains when measures are implemented simultaneously.

If you look at the pie graph you will see that close to three-quarters of the 40 per cent target indicatively is a result of the maintenance of real funding for measures to improve the safety of roads—about 19 per cent—particularly major upgrades to roads and black spots, and the flow-through effect of vehicle occupant safety improvements that were already implemented or scheduled, amounting to about 10 per cent. Most of the remaining improvement was expected to be achieved through improved compliance with existing rules on drink-driving, speed and restraint use—in other words, through improving road user behaviour—which is shown there as nine per cent. Only a limited impact of intelligent transport systems technology is assumed in this simulation—around two per cent—but of course this will have a much more substantial long-term impact and you can see that pages 9 and 10 of our submission go into that in more detail.

Uniform progress against the 40 per cent target would require an annual reduction of about five per cent in the fatality rate or, to be more precise, 9.7 per cent after two years. After the first two years to December 2002, the actual cumulative reduction was 6.8 per cent—short of the pro rata target. The ATSB, with other jurisdictions, coordinated a new Road Safety Action Plan for 2003 and 2004, which you all have. That was more focused than the first action plan and ATC ministers have endorsed it. Allied to the plan is a National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy because about one in five road fatalities involve a heavy vehicle. Strong growth in road freight is forecast, even after allowing for substantial increases in rail transport. A strategy to reduce heavy vehicle linked fatalities was coordinated by the NRTC with the ATSB and there is also a linked action plan. This is complementary to the national strategy and was endorsed by ministers earlier this year.

I will now return to the overall Road Safety Action Plan for 2003 and 2004. It was designed to provide a clear focus on priority action areas. It was developed by all jurisdictions with advice from leading researchers and input from the National Road Safety Strategy Panel. It is not a list of everything that could, should or will be done to improve road safety; it really is a focus document. In 2003 the fatality rate picture has improved since 2002 as is shown in this figure. The improvement this year has brought us very close to the green line. You can see the blue line approaching the green line from above, representing pro rata progress towards the 2010 target of 8.2 compared with what the green line assumed, which is 8.1—so, it is very close. Most of the decrease in 2003 is attributable to a sharp reduction in fatalities in Victoria. However, despite approaching that line, there is no room for complacency. We cannot expect the downward trend to continue without a further concerted investment of effort and resources. But it is encouraging to be more or less on track. This reinforces the view in the current action plan that the target is still achievable.

In terms of areas of focus in the current action plan, these include safer roads, including black spot programs and targeted mass application of cost-effective measures to improve the safety of larger sections of the road network; speed management, including improving compliance with speed limits through integrated education and enforcement, and selective reduction of limits on roads with a relatively high crash rate; and impaired driving, including as a result of alcohol, drugs and fatigue. There is a strong consensus that those first two are particularly important over the next decade to achieve the reductions we need. Other areas of focus in the action plan are

licensing and driver management, vehicle measures including seatbelt reminder devices, and encouraging corporate and individual vehicle purchasers to select safer vehicles.

In respect of special groups like cyclists, motorcyclists, pedestrians, elderly road users, youth and Indigenous people, the action plan puts forward a small number of group specific measures, but global or indirect measures are usually most effective. I will give some examples of this. Fatigue or drowsy driving among car drivers is a major cause of fatalities. Effective measures to reduce car driver fatigue are hard to find. Public education may help, but drowsy driving is linked to lifestyle factors that are difficult to change. There is no foreseeable prospect of an effective enforcement based approach, and fatigue detectors are unproven and there are some concerns about potential negative outcomes. In contrast, indirect road based measures to prevent fatigue crashes or reduce crash severity are known to be cost effective.

Let me give two other examples of indirect solutions. First, inattention and errors: we may hope that exhortation and warnings would solve the problem of distracted driving, but we know that a safer road environment, better vehicle design and reducing the kinetic energy in the system will work. Or take pedestrian fatalities: the pedestrian is usually found to be at fault by coroners and the police, but big reductions in pedestrian deaths since 1989 have occurred through small changes in driver behaviour, in particular small cuts in urban speeds.

Let me briefly touch on the issues papers provided with the DOTARS submission coordinated by the ATSB. Road funding for safety improvements is covered in attachment 7 of our submission. Options for improving young and novice driver safety, including graduated licensing and promising developments in driver education, are at attachment 8. In relation to that, in response to a proposal from Minister Anderson, the ATC has asked Austroads to develop proposals for a national post-licence driver development program for novice drivers. A major trial of a new program is about to commence in New South Wales based on the Finnish Insight training approach. There is also an issues paper on speed and road safety which summarises road evidence that quite small changes in travel speeds result in substantial changes in risk, in contrast with individual driver experience, and this is covered in attachment 6.

On average, there is one serious injury crash per 10 million kilometres driven, so many high-risk drivers have a misleadingly good safety record, but that does not mean they are not engaged in high-risk behaviour. I believe the committee also has a paper on the economic costs and benefits of changes to speed limits on rural roads, including interstate roads, which was released by Minister Campbell on 26 November and is research the ATSB commissioned from MUARC. There is also detailed road fatality statistics in attachment 9 of our submission.

Briefly, on the cost of safer roads, gains from improvements are heavily dependent on expenditure decisions, so it is not a simple matter of more road spending giving better results. Priorities assigned to different types of road spending are quite critical. Modest increases in safety targeted projects, like black spots or mass action, can achieve the same safety outcome as a large investment in general road construction, and the benefit-cost ratios are very high for many of these safety treatments.

In terms of community attitudes to speed, there is increasing support for strict speed enforcement. In 1995, 26 per cent of respondents to ATSB surveys believed motorists should not be booked for doing 70 kilometres per hour in a 60 zone; as of last year, 11 per cent now hold

this view. Forty-nine per cent now favour enforcement tolerances of less than five kilometres per hour in 60 zones, and 68 per cent believe that an extra 10 kilometres per hour will significantly increase the risk of crash involvement. Ninety-one per cent correctly believe that an accident at 70 kilometres per hour will be a lot more severe than an accident at 60, and 42 per cent think that the overall level of speed enforcement activity should be increased, seven per cent favour a decrease, the remainder accept the status quo, but a majority are still suspicious about revenue raising.

There are two quotes from the *National Road Safety Action Plan for 2003 and 2004* that are worth repeating:

There is no reason to believe that the target is unachievable.

And:

Measures to achieve a faster rate of progress are available. They are well researched, and likely to be cost-effective. They are not particularly radical: in fact, to a large extent they represent best-practice approaches already adopted in some other developed countries.

Of course, the search for new, innovative and effective measures needs to continue but for the short to medium term up to 2010, we need to keep a focus on the well-researched measures listed in the action plan, including road improvements, speed management and driver impairment countermeasures, particularly for alcohol and restraint use.

This inquiry is very welcome and can serve as a platform for a fresh impetus to reach the 40 per cent target or better. We are almost on target pro rata but a continuing commitment, coordination and partnership are required to get from 8.2 to 5.6 deaths per 100,000 population by 2010. We need to guard against cynicism and complacency and remember key lessons—for example, regarding speed. A 1983 House of Representatives committee report highlighted the importance of addressing speed in advertising. Despite some progress under the voluntary industry code on vehicle advertising, the ATSB and jurisdictions believe there is still too much use of speed in new vehicle advertising that can undermine key road safety messages.

Cynicism that speed cameras are sometimes set by some jurisdictions in areas to maximise revenue rather than in high accident zones and that revenue is not directed to future safety measures can erode the growing community consensus on safety. I have two final thoughts from the strategy:

The road toll should not be accepted as inevitable.

The priority given to road safety should reflect the high value that the community as a whole places on the preservation of human life and the prevention of serious injury.

Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Bills. That was a very good overview. It puts us all in the picture of where the current road safety agenda lies. I have one question for you. You made a lot of

reference to black spots. Do we interpret from that that it would be the general view of your group that the government should continue or expand the black spots program?

Mr Bills—I cannot comment on policy but certainly there is unequivocal evidence that the black spots program is very effective in saving lives and there are extremely high benefit to cost ratios. I am sure my colleagues from that area later today will reinforce that point.

CHAIR—Thank you. Mr Eric Howard, who is General Manager of Road Safety in Victoria, will give the next presentation.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mr Howard—My presentation is in two parts. With your indulgence, I will need some help to reload the second set of slides as we move through. Let me quickly move through the slides that you have in front of you. I do not intend to deal with each of them. There is interesting material there for you to look at at a later time if you wish.

Victoria's road safety strategy is called 'arrive alive!' It is based upon a whole range of commitments and coordination arrangements and it contains 17 challenges. Copies of that are available, but essentially all of the usual suspects, if you like, in road safety terms, are in that document. The key issues are the commitment to a reduction of 20 per cent over five years in deaths and serious injuries; the signing up to the document by three Victorian government ministers—my minister, the Minister for Transport; the minister for the TAC; and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services—a very public commitment to reducing the road toll; and, as I mentioned, the 17 challenges. There is a lot of management and coordination activity that we think is a big part of Victoria's effort in road safety terms, and that is included in the document itself.

Looking at some numbers, the average road toll in Victoria before 'arrive alive!' started—it commenced in November 2001—was 414. You can see that the target by 2007 is 331, a 20 per cent reduction. The good news—and we are not complacent by any means—is that, as of a few days ago, that rolling 12-month total is still 342. We have had good gains in the last 18 months, and I will talk about some of the factors that we think are behind that. The gains in the last 12 months, compared to the average before 'arrive alive!' started, are shown across road users. You can see that the benefit has been spread across those users, particularly the vulnerable road users—pedestrians and motor cyclists. The fatality picture I am showing goes back over the last couple of years. The green line was the pre 'arrive alive!' average; the red is the number of fatalities. The number has fallen from a peak of 460 for the year in about May 2002 to a current figure of around 340.

However, it is very much a picture in two halves between Melbourne and country Victoria. The blue line shows metropolitan Melbourne—again these are rolling 12-month figures—and the red line is country Victoria. As Melbourne was falling, country Victoria was still increasing. Fortunately, we are seeing some falling off at this stage but there are some great challenges to do something about fatalities in country Victoria.

There are four key factors—infrastructure, vehicles, speed limits and human behaviour—if we want to do something about road safety. I want to talk about these quickly and in terms of a

future direction that we are going to follow and that we think offers the opportunity to change the system. I will look at the behavioural issues—speed and speeding, and alcohol and drugs—and then look at road and roadside safety and vehicle safety. Victoria, as I am sure you would be aware, has followed a very tough strategy with speed in the last 18 months. There has been increased use of mobile cameras, and their covert operation, the philosophy being that, if you speed anywhere any time, you may be detected. We are saying, ‘We don’t want you to speed anywhere any time.’ That has been accompanied by tougher tolerances—lower enforcement levels, some fixed cameras, speed and red light cameras, tougher penalties and lower thresholds for demerit points. Next year we plan to introduce point-to-point cameras on the Hume Highway as an attempt to do something about that country road toll. You would be aware that the measures taken in Victoria were not without enormous controversy.

I now want to focus on another graph. I am sorry about all the figures and graphs but in our area they are very much necessary to focus on these things. The blue line is again the rolling 12-month fatalities in Victoria. You can see that it reached a peak at 460 in around May 2002. The green line is the mobile camera infringements—to a different scale, of course—that are issued each month. You can see how they took off in about May 2002. You can see the low point out to the right of the black dotted line where the green line comes down. They took off in that period and went from about 50,000 infringements a month to about 100,000 infringements a month. Where they took off was where the enforcement tolerance was lowered, so the test became much more stringent for motorists. Not unexpectedly, the number of infringements escalated. What is pleasing is that at the same time the number of fatalities started to fall. You can see how the blue line has continued to fall over that period. There are undoubtedly other factors involved—a major accident black spot program, safer vehicles, all sorts of other behavioural measures and so on—but the concurrence between the reduction in fatalities and increased infringement levels is of interest. We think it is also significant that the infringement levels have fallen back to an average level, which is what the red line attempts to show.

Mr SECKER—Where does the 50 kilometres per hour limit in urban areas come in?

Mr Howard—The 50 kilometres per hour residential limit came in in January 2001. There are undoubtedly some benefits as a result of that. It is an important factor, but the real issue was encouraging motorists to reduce their speed. We as a community do not understand what an enormous difference across the system a few kilometres an hour in average travel speeds means in terms of risk. We as agencies have a responsibility to get that message through to the public.

Again, looking at speed zones and where the fatalities have occurred, the blue line in the middle of the graph is metropolitan 50 and 60 kilometres per hour roads. You can see how the fatality level has fallen from 110 a year to around 55—an enormous reduction in risk on those roads. However, the red line is country Victoria, the 100 and 110 kilometres per hour roads. There we are seeing at last a small reduction, but you would have to say that, looking back over the last four years, we have not really progressed a great deal. I will talk quickly about some reasons for that.

In country Victoria, many of the crashes, as you see in that graph, are in the higher-speed zones. They have risen very quickly since 1998 and it is very difficult to enforce speeds across a rural network. We all understand that. But we know that there are enormous benefits available. I will turn from speed enforcement to speed limits—the other side of the coin and an important

part of the graphic I showed earlier. Speed limits are there because they limit the amount of energy that you have to lose in a collision. That is essentially why we have speed limits. They should reflect the nature of the crash risk on a given road section. I would suggest that we do not fully understand that and certainly do not as a community generally apply it.

You can see there the speed limits in Victoria. We have had an 85th percentile approach. There have been a lot of initiatives—lower speed limits in metropolitan strip shopping centres and on arterial roads and 50 kilometres per hour limits in the middle of country towns, as New South Wales has. And we have time based speed limits coming in in school precincts. To answer your earlier question, those reducing speed limits in high pedestrian use areas have had an impact on those urban area fatalities.

Drink-driving is another major challenge for us. We have introduced tougher penalties. Alcohol interlocks are now required for repeat drink-drivers and high-level first offenders. There about 40 of these in place now in Victoria. They have been required only since June of this year. It is a slow ramp up as people finish their disqualification post May 2002, when the legislation came in. We think this offers tremendous benefits. The technology will only improve. New South Wales, as I am sure you will be aware, has already called for this sort of technology to be in every car in future. We think it offers tremendous protection. Alcohol is still a major risk factor on our roads. In the metropolitan area, we have seen improvement; in the country we are beginning to see improvement.

I will keep going while the other slides are being loaded. Let me turn to drugs and driving. Victoria has just introduced legislation into the parliament for random roadside saliva testing for drugs—methamphetamine and the active component of cannabis. These two drugs have a major presence, particularly the active component of cannabis, in the bloodstream of driver fatalities. In Victoria last year, some 27 per cent of driver fatalities had a trace, to some degree, of an illegal psychotropic drug in their bloodstream. That is a fairly sobering statistic. Subject to the upper house in Victoria passing this legislation in the next couple of weeks—it has been through the lower house—we are optimistic that it will have quite a deterrent effect upon these two drugs in particular, one in the heavy vehicle industry and the other associated with recent cannabis use. It is important to note that there will be random roadside screening for the drug and careful targeting of times and locations. There will be laboratory confirmation of the result where it is a positive screen. I mentioned the two drugs it is applicable to. And, of course, there will be strong protections to ensure that the results cannot be used outside the road safety area.

Let me quickly go back to drink-driving. This slide shows the fatalities in Victoria—the red in country Victoria, the blue in metropolitan Melbourne—where drivers have been over the 0.05 limit. You can see the enormous difficulty we had in country Victoria in late 2002 and early 2003. It is improving but it is a long way above the long-term picture. Drink-driving has made quite a comeback—certainly in our state—in the last couple of years. As always with enforcement, particularly drink-driving enforcement, it is an enormous challenge to use appropriate tactics and strategies to get on top of that.

Mr SECKER—Do you have a breakdown of 0.1 above and 0.1 below?

Mr Howard—I do have that but I do not have it with me here. We are generally seeing some reduction in the higher level BAC readings. There is more at the lower levels. Having said that,

we know that the impairing level is 0.05, and it is still a very worrying figure. It is a figure that has always been measured. There is nothing that has changed in the measurement system. There has been a change in social attitudes, we believe.

Mr SECKER—At one stage there was an argument that there was not much difference in the rates between 0.05 and 0.08. That is why I asked.

Mr Howard—In Victoria's experience, there has been this deterioration in what we are measuring—in driver fatalities. If we go to road and roadside safety, you talked about black spot programs. We are very strong believers in those black spot programs. We appreciate the federal program. Victoria ran a very large black spot program over the last four years—spending \$240 million. That is certainly giving us some benefits and will continue to provide benefits into the future. From memory, the benefit-cost ratio of the federal black spot program as assessed independently in Victoria was about 13 to one. They are enormous benefit-cost ratios for the community. We are putting a lot of attention into the development and application of modelling of risk on the network. Black spots are about coming along after an accident and dealing with the problem that has been demonstrated to exist. We think we have to get ahead of the game to some extent—there is always going to be a need for that—and look at the risks on the network before crashes occur. That requires a lot of detailed analysis and some very carefully targeted investment.

In terms of casualty crashes on rural roads, I want to focus on run-off-road crashes for a moment. The large bar graph there shows the number of casualty crashes on 100 kilometres per hour and 110 kilometres per hour roads in Victoria over five years that are run-off-road crashes. You can see that it is the major problem. The challenge is what we can do about it. The problem is that about 70 or 80 per cent of those run-off-road crashes end up hitting a fixed object, mainly a tree. We have grown up with roadsides like this. We do not appreciate how dangerous they are. If there was a cliff 30 or 40 metres high where that line of trees is, there would be a barrier in place. It is just as dangerous as going over a cliff at that sort of height, but we do not see it in those terms because it is what we have grown up with. There are solutions, and they are readily available. One of the challenges in making the rural network safer is to find the higher-risk sections; clearly, where there is vegetation next to a 100 kilometres per hour road, it is high risk. We have to find ways of targeting investment over the years to come in a way that tackles that. In terms of risk and speed limits, this shows the Hume Highway, which has a 110 kilometres per hour speed limit, which is a reasonably safe environment. If you were to go back to the previous slide, it is 100 kilometres per hour and a much less safe environment. That is the sort of thinking we need to further develop and better understand.

Ms LEY—Are there native vegetation laws that prevent you from cutting down some of those trees?

Mr Howard—Yes, very much so. We understand the significance of those remnant pieces of vegetation. There are things you can do, but at the end of the day it is an important community asset that is highly valued. If you cannot selectively remove or replace, then there are other solutions.

With regard to vehicles, VicRoads and other road safety agencies—Monash University, TAC, RACV and others—have adopted policies to enhance the safety of their workers. It is a growing

area of interest and concern. We have policies about the sorts of vehicles that we buy and the practices that people follow when they are at functions—avoiding alcohol and so on. We think that that is an area that companies and governments will increasingly become much more involved in.

Regarding the purchasing of safe vehicles, there is the European Transport and Safety Council. If car owners purchase the safest cars in their classes—and that is a little theoretical—the road toll could be cut by almost half. That is a sobering statistic. We are very much involved in the Australian New Car Assessment Program with the Australian Automobile Association and the various motoring organisations in other states. It is a very important program and it is changing manufacturers' approaches to safety. We need the federal government to be involved.

On improving vehicle safety, we have to give the consumers much more information about vehicle safety than they have at present. If the government does not give them that information, where will they get it from? If the public could be made aware of what is available in other countries, they would start demanding it here. Unfortunately, they lack that information. We are working with manufacturers to encourage them to adopt new safety features earlier than they would be required to by regulation and we would look to the purchasers of fleets to specify increased standards of safety as a way of putting market pressure on the manufacturers.

I have an overhead to illustrate a point in the previous slide. This is from the automobile associations—the motoring clubs—around Australia, and it compares Australian and UK features that are available on certain models of cars, as depicted on manufacturers' web sites. Basically it is saying that you can get a lot of features on vehicles in the UK that you cannot get on the same vehicles here. The question is: why not? We have a safer driving kit that is available and widely utilised around Australia, and we hope to keep promoting that from Victoria.

I will finish in terms of the future direction. We believe that a safe system approach is a vital way for road safety authorities in this country to proceed. It is based on a northern European approach, particularly the Swedish approach, that we have to accept that accidents are going to happen. Human beings will make mistakes. We are not talking about the people who break the law, but people will make mistakes. If they make mistakes, is it reasonable in this day and age that they lose their lives? The road transport system should be designed on the premise that accidents are going to happen and in a way where people could withstand the forces that they would endure if they were in a collision. We expect individuals to abide by the rules—we cannot do a lot for people who break the law—but system designers have to build in safety. Those system elements include: road infrastructure, which is the responsibility of the road authorities; vehicle design, which is the responsibility of the manufacturers; and appropriate speed limits, which is the responsibility of the various state road authorities.

We know that if you have a head-on crash or crash into a fixed object at less than 70 kilometres an hour, you will probably survive and not be killed. If you are a pedestrian who is hit by a vehicle at less than 40 kilometres an hour, your chances of survival are much increased. There are some messages there about how we should look at our road system. Without going into all of this particular graphic about the safe system, which is really borrowed from the Swedish road authority, I will refer to the line that talks about road infrastructure safety standards, which is about the safety of the road itself, with barriers and so on, and the safety standard of vehicles and their restraint systems—that is, active safety and passive safety. Those

three factors, in combination with a safe speed, should lead to crash outcomes where people are not killed—they will not lose their lives. It is a long-term vision and it will take many years to achieve, but through sensible application over a long period of time, particularly on the high-volume routes where the system risk is greatest, there are enormous opportunities to make great gains in terms of our road toll.

In Victoria, we have adopted this approach and we will be moving forward down this track in future years. We are hopeful it will be adopted at a national level through Austroads itself. As an example, this is what the Swedes do. They have a very different problem to ours—head-on crashes are not as big a problem as run-off road crashes in Australia. They have the opposite problem. They have good clear zones but lots of head-ons, for reasons I do not have time to go into. They put wire rope barriers down the centre line of their roads. It is a very unusual solution, with one lane going one way and two lanes going the other and then the barrier being swapped around after a couple of kilometres. They are getting enormous reductions in fatalities as a result. This is all about making the system safer. The speed limit on these roads is about 110 kilometres an hour because people cannot have head-on crashes. If they go off the road they do not hit trees. There are some ways in which we can address our network, particularly on the higher volume routes and the national highways.

In summary, research advice has told all of us what to do and continues to tell us what to do. We know what can and will work. We are changing driver behaviour, and that is important. In Victoria, we have had good success in metropolitan Melbourne in changing driver behaviour but, in the country, speed and drink-driving remain major issues. The public understanding of speed and crash risk is limited. We saw the material from the ATSB earlier, and we have to do more to get that message across. But there are great possibilities for adopting the safe system approach and having safer speeds and safer infrastructure, particularly in higher speed zones. Alcohol and drugs are major issues, and we know there are things to be done with novice drivers and heavy vehicles. But the behavioural challenges tend to be finetuning. The issue, in Victoria at least, is about introducing a safe system approach.

From a federal government viewpoint, I would suggest that safer infrastructure on the national highways is a priority, as is happening. But there is an opportunity to target the high-risk high-severity crash areas with some targeted support and some targeted investment. Certainly, we would like to see the black spot program expanded. The Commonwealth has an opportunity to play a very proactive role in improving vehicle safety, including support for ANCAP—the Australian New Car Assessment Program—and doing more in vehicle safety, including in terms of its own fleet. We would like to see ongoing support for the improvement in vehicle advertising standards.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Howard. We will move to Mr Cameron.

Mr Cameron—Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to share the experiences from way out west.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mr Cameron—The title of this presentation is ‘Moving Down from a Higher Plateau’, which, I guess, acknowledges that road safety is improving in Western Australia. However, we had

some improving to do in terms of our recent record of deaths on our roads. I would like to briefly summarise where we have come from, where we are now and the plans we have got that were recently announced by the WA government on 16 November for further improving our road safety record—the Arriving Safely strategy.

This graph—and the red line is Western Australia—shows that, in 1990, we were below the Australian average. In fact, we were second best only behind the ACT on a population rate per 100,000. In the 1990s we certainly slipped above that. We did not get worse; the rest of Australia got better. We tended to plateau at that point in time. However, since 1998, we have been on a steady improvement and, in 2001, we actually dipped below. We are now tracking very close to the Australian average.

As I indicated, the WA government has recently announced its vision for improving road safety. It is quite an ambitious aim. The goal by 2007—we are a competitive lot—is to be equal to the best jurisdiction in Australia. At this stage, whilst it is a moving target, that is estimated to be New South Wales—apologies to Victoria—at 4.9. The significant challenge for us is that our Perth metropolitan area right at the moment is 5.07 and our country area rate is about 21.6. That country rate is mainly country people, despite myths that it is tourists or city drivers. It is certainly a significant issue for us and reflects broad areas of our road network.

As in any strategy over a few five-year periods, you have upward pressures. I would acknowledge the work of Monash University, which put a lot of work into supporting the development of our strategy. A number of factors have been identified in putting this together that will work against us. Whilst, on the one hand, it is good, the strong economic growth of Western Australia in particular will continue to put upward pressure on our road trauma. However, since 1998 that economy has been good, yet we have still been able to achieve a downward reduction. As a state, in the next few years, as a percentage of our population we are going to have more younger drivers coming through than the other jurisdiction, which will give us considerable upward pressure on our road trauma. Like most other jurisdictions, in terms of our fuel prices and the diversity of the vehicle fleet—in that many more larger vehicles are being sold and many more smaller vehicles are being sold—that diverse mix in the vehicle fleet, when it comes to collisions, is a particular challenge. We are not sure of that impact. Drugs and fatigue are also unknowns in terms of the extent to which they will be a problem.

I will give a brief snapshot of where our crashes occur, and who is involved and why. Quite an age range is represented on this graph, but, in particular, young males up to the age of 29 are overrepresented. Like other jurisdictions, alcohol, speeding and fatigue are the three key factors in crash occurrence, with speed and the non-use of constraints contributing to the severity of the crash outcomes. As I indicated, in any given year, 60 per cent of our road trauma is in country areas. However, about 55 per cent of our overall road trauma occurs in urban, built-up areas. I will come to that in a moment. Hospitalisation crashes tend to be reversed. As I have said here, 50 per cent occur on less than 70 kilometre per hour roads. Despite popular myths, only about nine per cent of our fatal crashes occur on gravel roads.

The next slide shows another way of looking at it. MUARC, when they put this together for us, reflected that Western Australia was probably the most urbanised state in Australia in terms of the way we choose to live. If you add up the areas in that slide, about 73 per cent of our

crashes by cost are occurring in urban areas—that is, remote towns, country towns and the Perth metropolitan area.

What we have chosen to do is take a very strategic approach in our road safety strategies to really focus our efforts in terms of proven effective countermeasures that we know will make a difference. To explain very simply what could be a rather complicated slide, down the left-hand side there is a series of road safety issues and particular at-risk groups. Across the top are the classes of initiatives or the classes of responses that we are going to focus on to improve our road safety. If you take the one in the middle, 'Safer roads', to show the significant contribution that 'Safer roads' will make, the black dots represent where there is a direct and proven benefit in the research which shows that, if you improve the safety of roads, you will reduce, for example, drink-driving crashes and speed related crashes, and you will improve outcomes for younger drivers, older drivers, Aboriginal people, motorcyclists and cyclists.

We have chosen an inclusive strategy whereby you focus on a number of classes of initiatives which will have benefits for a number of road users. The open circles represent where there is some evidence to support their benefit. The two question marks are an each-way bet. In terms of pedestrians and safer modes of travel, people are safer when they are on public transport; however, if their access to and from it is not well designed and is not safe in the system then that places them more at risk as vulnerable road users.

In terms of where we are going for 2007, these are the targets. The estimates vary from a low one to a high one, depending on the amount of investment, resource and focus of the effort that we can achieve over that period of time. Our baseline is working off about 218 fatalities in 1999-2000, and that is assuming about a 2½ per cent increase in annual distances travelled, but you can see the figures there. Depending on the extent to which we can invest, one of the significant investments is in the area of the safer roads, black spot and the safety components of road enhancement programs.

In terms of where we will get those from, the benefits are from a mix, as Eric identified, in a range of areas. Road improvement is the biggest one. Depending on the extent to which we can invest in and support those safety improvements, we expect to get anywhere between about 26 per cent and 42 per cent of our reduction from those road improvements—but specifically from safety treatments, not from general road-building initiatives.

Road user behaviour, both through community education and enforcement—again with an anywhere, anytime philosophy and unpredictable and random enforcement—is about 20 per cent in terms of behavioural changes. We have some low and high estimates for travel speeds in urban areas, but if we can achieve the low reduction, we expect to achieve about a nine per cent benefit. That depends on us getting a five per cent reduction in the travelling speed of vehicles across the entire road network. The upper end of that is 10 per cent, which we know will be much more difficult to achieve. We will have to be educating and enforcing to a much higher degree to get that. Vehicle safety features will also contribute to those overall reductions.

Just to look at a couple of the key issues in specific areas for us, the first one is speeding. That rather busy graph reflects rolling monthly monitoring of our community education campaigns. We track people weekly in the Perth metropolitan area and in country areas through random interviews conducted by a market research company. That shows that about 60 per cent of young

males in particular admit to deliberately speeding, at least on an occasional basis. However, the pleasing thing with those trend lines is that the blue one is an increase, which reflects that a greater percentage of those young males now say that when they do speed they speed by between only one and five kilometres over the limit. The reduction is occurring from the group that was in the six to 10 kilometres over the limit area—the pale line. So that group is actually declining, so the young males are moving from the six to 10 down to the one to five area.

The difficult group—the red line down the bottom—which has not shown much change and has, in fact, gone up at times, is the group of about eight per cent of young males who tell us that they regularly exceed the speed limit by more than 10 kilometres an hour. They say things like, ‘The road rules are for everyone else. I know what I am doing. I’ve got a good car.’ So in recent times we have gone after that group with a couple of particular campaigns. As I say, with that peak there we got quite concerned and, for the first time, had a go at that particular target group, and we then followed that up with a similar campaign.

There are a couple of other indicators from that tracking. The fact that speed is still a factor in 35 per cent of our fatal crashes is not moving very much. However, there are changes in community attitudes towards speeding, especially among young males. The two key graphs there are in terms of their social proof—whether it is completely or largely unacceptable. Our baseline was that around 30 per cent believed that it was, and that has now increased to around 40 per cent, so more of them now believe that it is not acceptable to speed by more than 10 kilometres an hour. The moral unacceptability rate has similarly also gone up from about 48 per cent to about 76 per cent amongst males aged 17 to 39. So those attitudes are shifting.

One of the significant factors in contributing to that for us has been our speed camera program and our enforcement. Over the same period—I have not overlaid it on this graph—since 1998, as I said earlier, our road trauma has been improving in terms of the number of fatalities. Significantly, the number of vehicles we were able to monitor through speed cameras at that time has gone up, and there was also an adjustment to our tolerance limits in March 2001. But the percentage of vehicles continuing to speed through speed cameras has declined by between 60 and 70 per cent since 1992, which we believe is making a big contribution, particularly in the urban areas, to reducing the travel speeds and the incidence of speeding.

In terms of the speed agenda and talking more about reducing travelling speeds, one of the key areas in our strategy is to achieve a reduction of between five and 10 per cent. One of the key initiatives contributing to that was the introduction of 50 kilometre per hour speed limits on 1 December 2001 in all urban built-up areas throughout Western Australia. I would stress that these are preliminary results and, at the moment, this month we are into the second year monitoring period. The preliminary data in the table there from Main Roads shows about a 36 per cent reduction in fatal crashes in the 50 kilometre per hour zones. MUARC are doing a comprehensive analysis for us. I only have a very preliminary figure that still needs to be worked through and confirmed with the data, but they are looking at about a 25 per cent reduction in serious crashes on 50 kilometre per hour roads. Our projections were similar to those achieved in New South Wales and Queensland. We were expecting and hoping for around 24 per cent to 25 per cent reductions so, depending on the final confirmations, that certainly appears to be right on the mark. The speeds on those roads have actually decreased slightly more in most urban areas than in the country. Between one and three per cent reductions have occurred in the Perth metropolitan area on those roads. It is certainly making a contribution.

Like most other jurisdictions, drink-driving continues to be an issue for us. It is improving, if I can put it that way, and the percentage of fatal crashes involving drink-driving has decreased from about one-third in recent years to about one-quarter. Those graphs show that we are getting some shifts in those who do drive after drinking reporting that the number of drinks they are consuming is decreasing. For those having three to four drinks, the purple line there is going down slightly, and for those having one to two drinks it is going up slightly. Those having five or more drinks are more heavily over the limit and are the more difficult group to reach, particularly in country areas. We have big differences in attitudes towards drink-driving in country areas. One of our south-west studies shows that most young males in the country believe that at 0.1 they might have some inability to control a vehicle and at 0.15 they probably should not drive. So we have significant differences there in terms of their attitudes, combined with the fact that if they know there are police out there they know how to avoid them in those smaller country towns. That remains a considerable challenge for us in terms of those attitudes towards drink-driving. Those figures are I guess enhanced or made worse in areas where alcohol consumption per head in the far eastern and the north-western areas of the state are more significant causes of drink-driving related crashes.

Restraints continue to be an issue for us. About 21 per cent of people killed in 2002 were not wearing a restraint. There were big differences again between the city and the country—13 per cent in the city versus 23 per cent in the country. Again, in the far eastern and north-western areas of the state, those figures go up as a percentage regionally as well, getting as high as 38 per cent in some of our country regions. Compliance—those that tell us they always wear a seatbelt—is about 95 per cent in the Perth metropolitan area versus 80 per cent in the country. The majority of those killed are male, and are young males. They believe a seatbelt will protect them in the event of having a crash, but they do not believe they are going to have a crash. They think, ‘I’ve got a good car, I’m a good driver and I know these roads.’ In the tracking results I showed you earlier from our campaign earlier this year, for the first time in any campaign 100 per cent of our respondents said they did not believe they would get caught for not wearing a seatbelt.

One of the successes in the area of restraints has followed a model that the Northern Territory introduced. We moved to place restrictions and bans on people travelling in the open load space of vehicles such as utes. Typically we would have expected between six and eight deaths a year, giving us a total of about 18 or 24. Since we have introduced those legislation changes, we have only had three deaths. One of those was an emergency services fireman, where his fire vehicle collided with another vehicle just north of Perth during the fighting of a fire. Another one was a police officer who was also attending duties. So we have had one death outside of those services since we introduced those changes. If we could get those results with any other particular initiatives, we would be delighted to find them. That has been very significant for us. It is quite rare to be able to put your finger on such a specific strategy as that.

The double demerits initiative was introduced in Western Australia in 2002. It has certainly worked to enhance our enforcement and has enjoyed very strong community support. We have extended a trial to June 2004 to determine if there will be any wear-out effect. The pleasing thing when we analysed a wide range of data was that the different data sources showed that drivers reported driving more safely at those times. They told us they were going to drive safely, and they did drive more safely. Police increased the amount of enforcement activity, yet their infringement rate per enforcement hour was down. Our total reported crashes, including serious

and fatal, were also down in comparison to reported crashes in the similar periods the year before. So it is being continued on a trial basis. It only focuses on speeding offences, restraints and alcohol offences where you incur demerit points.

Mr SECKER—So this is done on special occasions like holiday weekends?

Mr Cameron—Yes, gazetted public holidays and long weekends. It is not simply school holidays. It is more specific: Easter, Christmas and long weekends. To briefly summarise, all of these figures are based on fatal crash data per 10,000 vehicles, kilometres travelled and as a population rate. Then we show across the top some of the significant initiatives that have occurred during that time period in Western Australia. All of those indicators show us that in that 40-year period the data is remarkably consistent in terms of the pattern of improvement that is occurring. Significantly for us, since the formation of our road safety council in 1997 and our enhanced efforts, particularly in education, enforcement and the black spot roads programs, we have started to see those improving trends. After a couple of years of being nervous about whether it was the start of a new trend, we are more confident that over the last five years we have significantly shown an improvement. All of those figures are showing a significant improvement.

Since 1989 our serious and fatal injury deaths in public health terms have improved by about 36 per cent, which is a significant benefit to our community. In terms of requests from a national and collaborative viewpoint, we really support the directions and focus of the National Road Safety Strategy. The Western Australian strategy, as you would have seen, looks at targeting those key initiatives. There are a lot of things that we know do work, but the challenge is to actually implement those to the extent that we need to. Of course we are always looking for new initiatives, but the challenge for us is to work together to implement what we know will actually work. We will do our bit at a national level. I acknowledge that the collaboration nationally and amongst the jurisdictions in this area is significant.

We request support with the introduction of more aggressive seatbelt reminder systems in vehicles. We really believe that an engineering aspect to that will complement an education and enforcement solution, particularly in country areas. The difficulties of enforcing seatbelt compliance in country areas are enormous, as is consistently getting an education message out there. We believe a greater promotion of ANCAP and the vehicle safety features, particularly at point of sale, to maximise consumer awareness is important. These are initiatives in the national strategy and in the action plan. We greatly request guides for speed enforcement; we believe we could benefit from further collaboration in that area, and for intelligent speed adaptation and some of the new technologies, as well as support for increasing consumer information. Some of the comments Eric was referring to about the safety and design of roads are things that we, in our strategy, would like to provide more information about for consumers—what they should be expecting regarding the safety and design of roads.

In terms of continuing to build community support, one of the issues for the Western Australian community continues to be the portrayal of speed and power in motor vehicle advertising. It continues to be an issue although it was first raised by us a couple of years ago. I note that was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry in 1983; we are still getting letters from the community saying: ‘Why can’t you do something about this? Aren’t you supposed to be improving safety?’ None of us are saying that it is the sole contributing factor but it is one of

those environmental factors that the community is telling us concerns them. We would like to be able to show them that we have achieved something in that regard.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Cameron, for a very good presentation. Ladies and gentlemen, these are very good presentations, so please do not take this in any way as criticism, but if we keep going this way we are just going to go over the same territory again and again and it will leave no time for interaction whatsoever. I would like to ask the remaining presenters to skip through any areas that we have touched on. The states are not on trial. While we are interested to know what each state is doing, if you are doing something that is substantially the same as Victoria and Western Australia, skip over that. We want to hear of some new initiatives or the highlights of what is happening in your state. We are already a quarter of an hour behind and we have not had one debate.

Ms O'BYRNE—Can I ask the presenters to provide us with a written analysis of the current programs that they are currently involved in? That is something we could receive later and therefore get through a bit more.

CHAIR—Let us hit the highlights so we can get a bit of interaction going.

[9.52 a.m.]

ALLAN, Mr Phillip Thomas, Acting Director, Road Safety, Department of Transport and Urban Planning, South Australia

MAHON, Mr Gary, Director, Strategic Policy, Queensland Transport

CHAIR—I welcome the representatives from Queensland and South Australia. Are you happy enough with the approach I just outlined—not to go over the same territory unless you have something to add to what Victoria and Western Australia have said?

Mr Mahon—I am quite happy to progress and at least give you some themes and highlights of the Queensland approach. We have put forward a reasonably substantial submission to the committee so I am sure all the details will be dealt with in that.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mr Mahon—This is a summary of the last 10 years for Queensland. Queensland particularly supports the objectives and priority areas of the National Road Safety Strategy. You can see by way of this graph the reduction in the toll over the last 10 years, but over the last four or five years it is certainly starting to plateau somewhat. You can see there from the interventions of Random Road Watch, the first Queensland road safety strategy when we adopted our more aggressive speech management approach, the adoption of 50 kilometres per hour in local streets and competency based testing and so forth, where those interventions have had their effect, which was particularly in that period between about 1995 and 1998.

But the more concerning factor for us is the growth in hospitalisations. I will touch a little on that point as we go. The other point I make is that, during that period of about 10 years, we have been progressively working towards trying to build a better or healthier culture in the community towards road safety. There are many aspects of fatality and injury within the community that seem to be somewhat accepted or taken as the collateral damage of using roads. That is an area that we believe we need to make a lot more gains in.

In terms of factors impeding progress, as I mentioned, hospitalisations are up almost 14 per cent from 1992 levels. There is a similar pattern effectively occurring around the country. We need to better understand the effect of our countermeasures on these serious injuries. One of the factors that need to be taken into account is that there is no nationally consistent coding of injuries. As such, injury levels are somewhat different around the jurisdictions and it makes it just that bit more complicated to identify what effects countermeasures are having on hospitalisations.

We have touched on community values and Queensland's approach of building a community culture. We believe that promoting a culture of road safety on a national basis much more aggressively than we have been has the potential to reinforce appropriate driving practices throughout Australia. The point has been touched on today that, through human judgment and human nature, it is somewhat inevitable that crashes will occur, but many crashes occur that are

not just the result of the inevitability of human nature; they are behavioural issues that do need significant treatment.

It is widely accepted that an optimal level of road safety can be achieved through an integrated approach. We utilise the Haddon matrix, which effectively deals with three crash phases: the pre-crash, crash and post-crash phases. We believe that an approach that clearly delineates between these preventative measures and the countermeasures will particularly help in obtaining better crash reductions. Road safety is often focused on current issues as they present themselves in crash data. We believe more work needs to be done in trend analysis so that we can be more proactive in treatments that we adopt. ITS is a particular area of opportunity there. Queensland has supported the ANCAP program since its inception in 1993. Building those trends and issues in a national perspective will be important in determining where we take the fleet from here. Whilst the ANCAP initiative has had a reasonable level of success, you also have to bear in mind the average age of the fleet in Australia and how we are going to accelerate the reduction of the age of that fleet over the next 20 to 25 years so that the benefits from these design features can be better attained.

With regard to the Queensland road safety strategy, we are about to announce a new strategy. It will be announced by our Premier in the next week or so. That strategy deals with the period from 2004 to 2011 and will put us in synchronisation with the national plan in that we will be adopting a state strategy one year after the timing of the national strategy. That gives us the time to be informed by the national trends, agreements, approaches and so forth so that we can build on that within our state strategies. Our strategy deals with two-yearly action plans. During that eight-year cycle, we will adopt four road safety action plans. They deal quite specifically with the initiatives that we would be looking to introduce over those particular periods. I just want to reinforce that culture again. We are going to be striving very hard to gain a culture that considers any level of death or serious injury as unacceptable on our roads.

Queensland's approach to road safety over the next eight years will be a little different to the past 10 years, because the previous strategy went for a period of 10 years. It will not only reinforce a stronger emphasis on the areas that we have been focusing on and the successes that we have had but also hone in on an additional focus around four particular areas. These are: building alliances with our partner agencies; targeting at-risk groups more specifically rather than just necessarily the behaviour and/or infrastructure issues; dealing in more research and trying to derive better interventions out of identifying and gaining a better understanding of the future trends and issues; and dealing specifically with hospitalisations.

When I talk about building alliances, we are strengthening and building those alliances to the extent that we use the word 'alliance' now because we think it symbolises something much stronger than what you might call 'collaboration' or 'consultation' and so forth. We are signing up a much wider range of agencies now to the Road Safety Strategy per se and they will build it into their business plan. That scope now includes our departments of health, emergency services, police, main roads, local government and us. That is a much stronger piece of symbolism, as well as collaboration, to demonstrate that all of those agencies will factor road safety into their business planning and considerations in terms of their corporate goals. Targeting measures that improve the safety of at-risk groups in a framework that manages inappropriate behaviour through enforcement, legislation, education and so forth will be a much higher priority.

Analysis of future trends will allow us to respond to both our immediate environment and the longer term future. As mentioned before, the hospitalisation area is of significant concern to us and we are looking at trying to develop a better understanding of the nature of those hospitalisations and the types of injuries so that we can look at the countermeasures that might need to be improved.

In terms of successful initiatives, a particular one that I would mention is Queensland's speed management program. Speeding continues to be a road safety issue in Queensland. From my colleagues who have given the previous presentations, in terms of their trends and so forth, there is not a lot of difference between our experience and theirs. I would mention one particular stat. In 2002 in Queensland, fatal crashes in high-speed zones still accounted for 49 per cent of all fatal crashes. However, the Queensland speed management program has been quite successful. Our evaluations have estimated that about 1,550 crashes on average are saved per year as a result of our speed management approach. Speed cameras were introduced in 1997 and our evaluation shows that over 100 lives are saved each year from this program. It has declined a little more since then but, as I mentioned before, we are now starting to plateau.

The ANCAP program has improved occupant protection levels afforded by new vehicles, but we need much better adoption of these vehicles in our vehicle fleet. We believe that we could reap further benefits from ANCAP through better communication strategies. When you consider our current successes have occurred despite fairly low public awareness and performed through promoting ANCAP vehicles through fleet strategies, we do not believe the ANCAP philosophy has been adopted well enough through the wider vehicle fleets. There is greater scope to move from passive to active safety features in ANCAP assessment, and in monitoring compatibility issues in the vehicle fleet, particularly with the increasing number of four-wheel drives for example as a proportion of the fleet, compatibility is an issue that we need to give more consideration to.

Focusing on a more forgiving road environment, we use the term 'forgiving roads'. It deals with everything from audible edge lines to barriers. Recent research has given us a lot of opportunities in terms of low-cost treatments related to the nature of the way roads are painted. Double barrier lines, turn prohibitions and various enhanced traffic control devices, for example, all make a contribution towards a much better result.

We have also implemented three phases of a penalties and sanctions review now. We are looking for innovation in terms of penalties and sanctions; we are not trying to follow a model of simply increasing points or increasing fines. We are about to release phase 4 of that review, which is going to give somewhat different treatment to specific areas of concern, such as seatbelt restraints. The focus of our attention in penalties and sanctions is starting to swing much more strongly to recidivist offenders and changing the nature of the way we deal with second and subsequent offences—particularly within a period of 12 months—which is the area in which we believe we may be able to return better results in terms of behaviour change.

Drink-driving is another area that we are paying attention to. We have just commenced a comprehensive review of our whole drink-driving approach. We are putting everything on the table—the levels, the penalties, work licenses, the nature of testing, where the testing will be occurring and so forth. The whole package of drink-driving and the nature of the way it is treated

under our legislation and applied in the field is under review, and we expect to bring forward the results of that over the next 12 to 15 months.

Many interventions have been mentioned by my colleagues in relation to drugs, seatbelt restraints, speeding enhancements, fatigue and so forth. We are working on all of those interventions. We pay particular attention to experience around the rest of the country and around the rest of the world and we look for guidance from that experience. Competency based training in driver licensing, pre and post licence training and the nature of the way that it might occur, and various experiences throughout Europe that give us some room for encouragement in terms of the way we might look at our graduated licensing system are all areas that we are paying particular attention to. In the interests of time, that is a quick snapshot of essentially the route that we are following.

CHAIR—That is good. Thank you for condensing that. This is not said by way of criticism, but I do not quite get your drift. You put a lot of emphasis on hospitalisation, but, let us face it, looking at hospitalisation is just reporting on the event after it has occurred. How do you relate 64 broken legs, 125 broken arms and 75 head injuries to road safety?

Mr Mahon—There is a lot to learn from analysing the nature of the injuries and the type of accident in which they occurred—whether that be a motorcycle accident, a motor car accident, a truck accident or whatever the case may be. When you can get a better understanding of the trends from the nature of the injuries, it gives you a lot more information to help you look at the types of countermeasures you need to introduce to minimise that type of injury in terms of hospitalisation. You cannot generally make the assumption about a certain type of vehicle design, for instance, if it is bringing about a certain type of serious injury. If that vehicle design is contributing to a certain type of serious injury, you need to revisit the type of countermeasure that you develop.

CHAIR—What is your view on the black spots programs that the other witnesses have spoken fairly strongly about?

Mr Mahon—We see black spots as important to mention within our forgiving road strategy, and we would expect to see that it be continually supported.

Mr HAASE—I will take up where you have left off, Chair, because I was becoming a little concerned that the other submissions made no reference to the number of accidents that resulted in, perhaps, major trauma, a life of incapacitation and huge costs to individuals and government. I am very pleased that Queensland is analysing the hospitalisation cases. That is not a question so much as a statement. I thank you for the evidence you are giving.

Mr Mahon—Thank you.

CHAIR—Mr Allan, could you give your presentation, please?

Mr Allan—I think I have been relegated to the reserve bench.

CHAIR—No, there is no reserve bench. Sorry, I am not listening properly. The witnesses from New South Wales have to leave early, so we will call Dr Carseldine and Dr Job, and Mr Allan will reappear with them.

[10.10 a.m.]

ALLAN, Mr Phillip Thomas, Acting Director, Road Safety, Department of Transport and Urban Planning, South Australia

CARSELDINE, Dr Don, Manager, Speed Management, Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales

JOB, Dr Soames, General Manager, Road Safety Strategy, Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales

CHAIR—In the case of New South Wales, can you move through the areas we have already covered, and perhaps flesh out the areas where you have particular expertise or are having particular successes—or where you are having particular failures—so that we can discuss them.

Dr Job—We have a fairly different looking presentation for you. You have our submission. We thought we would give you an introduction to it for questions by giving you several sentences on each of the seven areas we have covered. Our submission is specifically focused on issues which we thought were relevant to the federal jurisdiction rather than an overview of what New South Wales is about. So it will be quite different looking in those terms. There are seven areas. The first one is the voluntary code for motor vehicle advertising and for motor industry advertising. We believe this voluntary code is not working. We also believe that any argument that it is working now, or has started working recently, has no basis.

The last revision has not succeeded in terms of reining in the problem with the advertising in this industry. Even in the last week I have seen advertisements on TV which would contravene the essential force of the voluntary code. We have brought examples with us which we could show you. We, therefore, suggest that what we really need is not a voluntary code but a mandatory code, with pre-approval of advertising. One of our other problems with it is that advertisements go to air and the process of vetting them, in the unlikely event they will even be withdrawn, takes many weeks. So the ad virtually runs its full length anyway. So we are recommending a mandatory code and we are recommending pre-approval of advertisements.

The second area we wanted to address is the federal black spots program. This has been an excellent program. We have already heard from the other states that there is excellent evidence for extremely good cost-benefit ratios. The Bureau of Transport Economics estimated that we get \$14 worth of economic return for each dollar spent. So we agree with what has been said and we think that an extension and full funding of that program has value.

CHAIR—Just a quick intervention. Is your state matching or putting a parallel program in to match the Commonwealth funding, as Victoria is doing?

Dr Job—My understanding is that we match the dollars and on top of that we see to the administration of it.

The next area I will address is speed cameras. We know you were particularly interested in our evaluation of the fixed speed cameras. Dr Carseldine will speak to that soon. The next area we have addressed is an Australian Design Rule for breath interlocks. As we have already heard from Victoria, interlocks are seen as a valuable tool for addressing drink driving. Drink driving was still responsible for 23 per cent of fatalities in New South Wales in 2002 and we see interlocks as a valuable measure for circumventing a great many problems and a piece of technology which allows better ways to address the problem than current enforcement.

The next area is daytime running lights. There is good evidence from a number of international studies that daytime running lights reduce crashes. We, therefore, are recommending initially voluntary introduction of, moving to an Australian Design Rule for, daytime running lights. This is a very small expense which gives us significant gains in road safety.

CHAIR—Is that all the time or at specific weekends?

Dr Job—The recommendation would be for lights which are on all the time. It is not the headlights; it is a specific set of lights designed for daytime running. So the vehicle either has the headlights or the daytime running lights on all the time it is on.

The ANCAP program we have also heard about. We support this program; we think it is important. It is currently funded by the states, the New Zealand government and various automobile clubs. We commend to the federal government that they fund that again. They used to but have withdrawn from the program. It has been very valuable and would be consistent with the national road safety strategy which assigned 25 per cent of the anticipated reductions to vehicle improvements. This is one of our major ways of gaining vehicle improvements. It is certainly well ahead of the Australian design rule process in terms of getting the industry into safer vehicles.

We are recommending a review of current policy on federal taxes on four-wheel drives. Currently, four-wheel drives attract a five per cent tax and passenger vehicles a 20 per cent tax. This is very problematic from a road safety point of view. ANCAP testing and various other features and analyses show that four-wheel drives in general have considerably greater aggressiveness in terms of what happens in a crash. That is, the occupants of other vehicles hit by four-wheel drives are considerably more likely to be injured or fatally injured. This arises inevitably from mass and shape—the height of the vehicle et cetera. Those features often negate recent advances in passenger vehicle protection by virtue of colliding with vehicles of a height for which those protections were not designed. Therefore, we recommend that, in order to reduce the level at which these vehicles are coming into our fleets and especially into fleets in metropolitan areas it would be of value to change that tax benefit that accrues to four-wheel drive vehicles. That is all I want to say as an introduction and a very broad overview. My colleague is going to address the issue of the evaluation of our fixed digital speed cameras.

Dr Carseldine—By way of explanation, we have given the fixed speed camera evaluation some prominence in our presentation because we heard the deputy chair say on ABC radio some time ago that the committee would like to hear about this. From the committee's point of view, what is interesting about this is that we have done it rather differently to the way many jurisdictions have implemented speed cameras. Being something different, it could be something

the committee would be particularly interested in. I will give you the short version of the presentation, so we will be skipping through some of this quickly.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Dr Carseldine—On the basis of thorough overseas evaluations we decided in the late 1990s that fixed speed cameras would be a good way to go in New South Wales, and some of the evaluations that we were looking at used the fixed speed cameras in a particular way. They were installed on black lengths of road, that is, where there was a specific set of criteria about speeds and crashes over a fairly substantial length of road. When I talk about a substantial length of road I am talking about something that is over a kilometre long, generally speaking. It is usually somewhere between one and three kilometres.

Our cameras have been implemented unidirectionally—they only take pictures of cars travelling in one direction on the roadway and they are a permanent operation, meaning that there is always a camera in the box. Some other jurisdictions rotate cameras through a larger number of boxes so that there is not always an active camera there. One unique feature about the way we have done things in New South Wales is that we very clearly signpost where all our cameras are. Because these are black lengths we want people to slow down on those lengths and therefore reduce the rate of crashes on those specific lengths. I hasten to add that fixed speed cameras are a tool and they can be used many different ways and there are different ways of getting success from them. While we are doing something quite different from Victoria I do not by any means want to appear critical of the way they are doing things. Clearly they are getting results. Our cameras are not covert, as in Victoria, for example. They are very clearly signposted. There are 100 in our general program and we have 11 more cameras in a trial at school zones.

This is what motorists see as they are approaching any one of our cameras. This sign is quite gigantic. As you can see, it not only reminds motorists that they are approaching a speed camera but it tells them what speed they should be doing. There are three of these signs, each with a slightly different message. That is the second sign and that is the third sign that they would approach before they get to the camera. So you would wonder why anybody would ever be caught by one of these cameras, but I can assure you that there are very large numbers of people who still get caught despite all of this. I add that the locations of all the cameras are on the RTA web site and they are even in street directories. We give the information to people who publish street directories and they are all in there, so there is no secret about where the cameras are.

On the site selection, as I said, they are black lengths and we use strictly applied criteria. They are one to three kilometres in length, we take into account the crash length and measured speeds, and there are other criteria related to the configuration of the site that we need to take into account. ARRB Transport Research undertook the work for us, and they started in 2000. This was a long-term study so that we had plenty of time to see crash patterns and driver behaviour patterns emerging over a lengthy period. There is no use looking at these things over a very short period. We looked at the community attitudes and reported behaviours; we had four waves, we had speeds surveys and we had crash data analyses. The final report is on its way.

We initially had 20 sites that were urban and rural and we added eight sites towards the end of the study just to increase the number of sites that we had overall. We also selected a range of control sites so that we could compare what was happening in similar non-camera sites to the

camera sites. This methodology ensured that what we were measuring was the effect of the camera and not some other incidental effect that was intruding. We measured speeds at six, 12 and 24 months. I will not go into the details of the methodology because we are not all statisticians in the room here, but for those who are interested in that sort of thing the information is available. We looked at the proportion of vehicles exceeding the speed limit and those exceeding the speed limit by 10, 20 and 30 kilometres per hour. Again, I will skip over the methodological stuff.

We looked at crash data as well: 36 months of data before, 24 months of data after. The dates are staggered because the cameras were put in at different points of time. I have already mentioned that the black lengths are one to three kilometres long, and those are the lengths over which we measured the crashes. We measured any crashes, not just those at the camera or 10 metres either side of the camera but on the whole black length that we originally defined when we were deciding to put the camera in there. We looked at crashes by different levels of severity and we looked at control lengths of road as well, again to make sure that the results we were looking at were effects of the camera and not some other effect. Again, I will skip over the detailed methodological stuff.

Getting to the business end that you are really interested in, mean speeds at all speed zones and across the board were down by a substantial amount. Those are very meaningful values in terms of crash risk. There is one there that is on the borderline for significance but all the others are very statistically significant. Looking at the proportion exceeding the speed limit 24 months after the camera first went in, you can see that we have got very large reductions, and they are very highly significant. Looking at the proportion exceeding the speed limit by more than 10 kilometres per hour, again you can see there are very large reductions—all statistically significant.

The crashes are of course what we really want to know about; the other ones are only kind of interim results. These are the results that we are really looking for. We found that, over those black lengths, crashes were reduced by nearly 20 per cent for all crash types. Tow-away crashes were reduced by a smaller amount—17 per cent roughly. Injury crashes were down by marginally over 20 per cent and casualty crashes by about 23 per cent. Fatality crashes were down by nearly 90 per cent.

Those are the sorts of results you would expect to get. From knowledge of road safety research, if you were reducing vehicle speeds through a black length, you would expect to get reductions in crashes at the severe end of the scale and there would be a lesser effect on what we could call small fender benders.

CHAIR—Just before you conclude, your black lengths are not just picked at random; they are areas which have a crash and injury history.

Dr Carseldine—That is right. There is a set of detailed criteria that we provided with the submission. It is rather technical but I will summarise it. There are crash criteria. There has to be a certain rate of all crashes and a certain rate of injury crashes to satisfy the criteria over that black length.

CHAIR—You go one to three kilometres, is that right?

Dr Carseldine—Over the whole length, yes. We define the length that we want to concentrate on and we look for sites that satisfy those criteria. If we find sites that satisfy the crash criteria, we do speed surveys on them. We put tubes down on the road and measure the speeds of vehicles for a week, 24 hours a day. We measure those speeds against our speed criteria for the site. The mean speed measured there must exceed the posted speed limit.

CHAIR—You leave the public in no doubt that there are fixed operating cameras over those areas—

Dr Carseldine—Yes.

CHAIR—so cooperate or be filmed.

Dr Carseldine—Yes, that is right. We make that very clear. We make it very clear that these sites are selected because they are black length and they have met these criteria. We publish the criteria so there is no mystery to it. We have been audited by the NRMA in the past to ensure that what we have done was correct. I would say that the only exception to the criteria I have just mentioned relates to road tunnels. Where we have built road tunnels there are clearly very serious danger considerations in terms of high speed crashes in those areas. That relates to the impact on people directly involved in the crash in terms of the impact, fumes or fire if that occurs, and getting emergency services in to deal with the situation. In such cases, we put in the cameras without needing to satisfy the criteria.

Moving to the conclusion, we have found that using this road safety tool has been highly successful in terms of speed reduction. I have not given you figures for speed variability but this approach also has a very pronounced effect in that it brings all vehicles to a very similar speed. That reduces the potential for conflict between vehicle movements and that is one of the reasons we believe we are getting these crash reductions—apart from the actual reduction in speed itself.

CHAIR—So the flow of traffic becomes smoother as well?

Dr Carseldine—That is right. We regard it as a traffic calming measure in the area where the camera operates. We reduce the higher speeds and all vehicles tend to move through at a very similar speed. It is proving to be quite a good way of treating these black lengths. The greatest reductions, as I have pointed out already, are in the more severe types of crashes. Just to give you a feel for it—and this is not strictly a good way of putting it statistically, but it is very illustrative of the effects that we are getting—we had 21 fatalities in our defined black lengths at the camera sites that we evaluated in the three years prior to the cameras going in, and in the two years subsequent to the cameras going in, there was one fatality—from 21 down to one. The one fatality that occurred was about two kilometres away from the camera. It was our longest black length, it was a 3.3 kilometre black length, and it involved an unfortunate elderly gentleman crossing the road with his walking frame at night who was hit by a car going at 30 kilometres per hour.

Mr HAASE—At what distance from the camera do you have your first large warning sign?

Dr Carseldine—That will vary according to the speed zone. For a high-speed zone, it would be half a kilometre ahead, and then they would be evenly distributed up to the camera. For a low-speed environment, it would be more like 300 metres ahead of the camera.

Mr HAASE—My observation is that it does not require drivers to slow down for any great period of time.

Dr Carseldine—That is true. One of the downsides, I suppose you could argue, of doing it this way is that people will know exactly where the camera is. That is not ideal in as much as the black lengths that we are talking about, as I have just pointed out, can be 3.3 kilometres long and there will be drivers who will slow down and then speed up as they go past the camera. But I would say to you that the crash results speak for themselves. We do measure some of that behaviour—slowing down and then speeding up—but nevertheless we are getting the desired result. I would also add that we are now looking at the Victorian approach. They are currently putting in point-to-point speed cameras. We are looking at that kind of approach with great interest, because we know from some English research that point-to-point speed cameras have the capability of subduing vehicle speeds over greater lengths. So that has some potential and we are certainly interested in it.

Mr HAASE—Dr Carseldine, it is not a criticism; it is simply an observation. Thank you.

Mr SERCOMBE—Your calming effect seems a bit like replacing the viagra effect with the valium effect, which is probably not a bad thing. It has been shown, for example, that when they use dry zones in urban areas the problem is transferred somewhere else. You have a great success rate in this area where you have the camera, but is the speeding being transferred elsewhere or are the accidents being transferred elsewhere—or is that just too hard to measure?

Dr Carseldine—We really do not have any evidence of that. It is a concern. There have been road treatments where, as you have observed, it seems that what you have done is move the problem to a different place. We have started with black lengths that have already had a crash and speeding history, so we are treating something that is already there. As a precaution, in our study we did look at lengths of road either side of our black lengths. It greatly increased the complication, the expense and what have you of the study, but it did show that, although vehicle speeds were higher in the lengths either side of the black length than they were in the length covered by the camera, in general there was not an increase in crashes.

Ms LEY—I am interested in your comments about the advertising effect on people's behaviour and that car advertisements promote speeding. I want you to explore that a bit more, and have you done any studies or formed an opinion about the effect of film and television movies and dramas on young people's behaviour?

Dr Job—We have not done specific studies of that, to my knowledge. I have only been working with the RTA for three weeks.

Dr Carseldine—Simon Chapman did a study.

Dr Job—There is Simon Chapman's study, which is actually a study of people's reactions to a number of ads which have been shown on Australian TV. Don could perhaps give you more

detail of the results of that study. There are a number of studies around the world, however, that show that people model behaviour—that is, that people’s behaviour will be affected by things they see on film and television. I think that we are on very safe ground in terms of expecting in general and in principle that you would get this effect. Don could give you some detail of Simon Chapman’s work on this.

Dr Carseldine—Professor Chapman from the University of Sydney conducted this study. He approached us and the RTA for support with the study. It was his study, but we did support it. What he did was to show a large number of people in the young age range—they were 17 to 35—various advertisements. A few of them predated the code of practice; most of them postdated the code of practice. We are talking about car advertisements, of course. Some of them clearly did not have any speeding or power focus, so it was not all biased towards speeding. He asked people to rate the ads that they saw on a whole range of dimensions—some of them, of course, being focus on speed, focus on power and so on, because they were some of the things that he was interested in with that study. It showed that, with a lot of the advertisements, the young people rated speed as the major factor. In 80 to 90 per cent of cases, people rated speed or power as the primary message that was coming through in the car ad. In other words, contrary to what the industry would try to tell us—they would say that people were focusing on the features of the car, what a nice car it is and how nice it would be to drive—that study demonstrated to us that the message that was received was that these cars are powerful and fast.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for that presentation.

[10.39 a.m.]

ALLAN, Mr Phillip Thomas, Acting Director, Road Safety, Department of Transport and Urban Planning, South Australia

CAMERON, Mr Iain F., Executive Director, Office of Road Safety, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Western Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. Mr Allan, in your presentation could you hit the highlights—that is, areas where you think you can offer something or where you feel South Australia has some deficiency that we might be able to pick up on.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mr Allan—I always thought talking after lunch was a big challenge, but this must be pretty close to it. I want to outline the fact that South Australia is performing fairly poorly. We are aware of that. We have a number of challenges and there are some positive signs on the horizon in terms of improving road safety. Statistics are always fairly tricky—you can use them to create whatever you like—but I will give you some examples. Over the past five years South Australia has had a fairly moderate decline in road fatalities—just over one per cent. The figures on serious injuries are about the same.

This graph illustrates pretty clearly that since the early nineties there has been very little change in the fatality rate in South Australia per 100,000 of population. That is perhaps even more dramatically reflected in the rate of serious injuries. You will see that from about 1990 onwards it has been around the same level—around 1,500. So it is clear that South Australia has a number of challenges ahead of it. As we currently stand, we are the worst performing state at the rate of 10.1 per 100,000 population. As everyone has said, and I will not go through it, the national target is about half of that, so it is a significant challenge.

I will go very quickly through these just to try to give some background on the particular issues South Australia faces. First of all, there are nearly 100,000 kilometres of roads in South Australia and 87 per cent of that is in the hands of local government—very little is national highway—and only 10 per cent of the roads are in the arterial network. Interestingly, about 71 per cent of the network in South Australia is unsealed roads—nearly three-quarters. The arterial network carries most of the traffic volume and it features pretty strongly in the number of crashes—probably not surprisingly.

A lot of people have mentioned speed. I think South Australia and Western Australia are the two leading lights in having speed limits of 110 kilometres an hour. Around three-quarters of our arterial network is currently zoned at 110 kilometres an hour and all of the national highway network apart from—as Mr Secker will know—the bit between Bordertown and the border, which is in some state of disrepair and is zoned at 110 but temporarily zoned at 100 at the moment. South Australia has the second oldest vehicle fleet in the nation. So we have some interesting road issues and some interesting vehicle issues.

I will take you through some specific trends to show you the nature of the problem. This overhead demonstrates that there has been an increase in rural crashes over the last decade and a decrease in metropolitan crashes. I know Mr Cameron mentioned it but in South Australia—and the same probably applies in Western Australia—over two-thirds of people killed in country regions are from the country. There is this myth that X, Y or Z has driven from the city, but two-thirds are from the country. We believe that is an issue that needs to be addressed. That slide reflects that two-thirds are from country regions; I am not sure where the unknowns come from, but there are 2 per cent of them.

This is a pretty interesting graph. It shows that in the last five or six years the number of drivers and riders killed in crashes with a blood alcohol level above 0.05 has increased in South Australia. In fact, it was at an all-time low of 22 per cent at around 1998 but in 2002 you will notice that it has reached the same level as 1983. So 20 years has passed and it has got to about the same level. I grant you there are ups and downs in the middle, but one would question the massive education and enforcement campaigns. BAC issues are a challenge that need a bit of a fresh look. The yellow line represents motor cycle riders over the age of 40. That has increased fairly steadily in the last decade.

Mr SECKER—There are lots more of them.

Mr Allan—Partly it is because there are more of them. But notice also that in between the two the light blue line has not actually changed that much—that is, the 26- to 39-year-olds. The 16- to 25-year-olds line has seen a decrease. I am trying to give you some examples of where we are focusing our attention.

You need to take this with a bit of a pinch of salt because it depends on how police record excessive speed as a cause of crashes or fatalities. What this does show is that excessive speed seems to be a significant issue and, indeed, the 2002 figure was about triple what it was in 1992 as a factor in road crashes.

What staggers me—and I am sure it staggers just about every road safety person—is that this graph shows that 36 per cent of vehicle occupants killed on rural roads in South Australia were not wearing a seatbelt. That absolutely staggers me. The same rule applies and the same trend applies in South Australia that about 95 per cent of people are wearing seatbelts, but it clearly shows the risk you face if you do not have one on.

Another issue we have is that Aboriginal road deaths are very disproportionate according to the population and that may be something that needs a national focus as opposed to a state-by-state focus. As for young drivers, there has been a decrease here from 30 per cent 20 years ago to 20 per cent now. But to us it is still unacceptable that so many young people are killing themselves or severely injuring themselves on our roads.

That is just a snapshot of some of the issues. The government has taken road safety seriously and has made quite a focus of it to the point where we have the first road safety strategy since 1995. We have actually put pen to paper and said how we are going to implement that strategy in 2003-04. There is an action plan that tells you where things will happen. As with any evolving operation, the action plan is largely the bits that I knew about, which are the transport department's expenditure. What we would like to do in future years is put a bit of health and

police in there as well to show the total funding directed to road safety. I got a bit sick and tired of the media either not knowing or misquoting various road safety statistics, so we put out a book, which is pretty simple—it is only about eight pages long—and we distributed it to all media. The number of times we have seen that quoted since it went out about two months ago is unbelievable. It is probably one of the best things we did. So we have done all that.

The government has also established a Road Safety Advisory Council with an independent chair. They have set up 12 task forces. They have also established a fund for anti-speeding revenue to go into to be spent on road safety. Significant funds have gone to establish the Centre for Automotive Safety Research that Jack McLean, that many of you will know, is heading up.

Having said all that, we are saying that the road safety strategy that we have—and you will see it if you read that red book—pretty much mirrors the national road safety strategy. We are comfortable that the gains are to be made from a nibbling away in a whole heap of areas as opposed to trying to find a magic bullet that seatbelts or drink driving acted as some time ago. It does focus on safer roads, safer people and safer vehicles in much the same way as the national road safety strategy does.

These are some of the recent innovations—and I might make some comments on those for the committee's information. We did introduce the 50-kilometre default speed limit in urban areas on 1 March. We did it very gently. The police offered a 'three-month education period', as they prefer it to be called, as opposed to a moratorium, in which drivers were cautioned rather than fined. It is bedding in well. I think we are still a bit early—it is eight months in. There are probably a handful of issues we are still working our way through—and by issues I mean particular roads, which will not mean anything nationally—but it is working well. We did drop the speed limit to 100 kilometres an hour on 1,100 kilometres of the rural arterial network. As Mr Secker might know, that met with mixed reactions in country regions.

ACTING CHAIR—It was not very popular.

Mr Allan—However, we think it was a good step for everyone. Anyone who was ever driven on some of the roads where we dropped the speed limit might wonder why it was 110 in the first place. We have introduced some changes to the licensing scheme for young drivers. We have made the learner's test a bit harder and put in a few hurdles for P-platers. It would be fair to say that there will be some other changes to the licensing scheme. We see young drivers as a particular issue.

Most of the other states will probably laugh at some of these things, but we were largely catching up. We have introduced demerit points for speed and red light camera offences. We have a number of red light cameras that will check both. We have introduced mobile RBT. When it went to parliament it got through only on a limited basis; now it is allowed to operate during school holiday long weekends and on four other 48-hour periods each year as determined by the Minister for Police but there is pretty strong support for full-time mobile RBT. We strongly support the black spot program. The state spends double that amount it gets from the federal government on its own black spot program. The government also increased shoulder sealing funding and put some more money into rest areas. I have mentioned the community road safety fund, the task forces and the Road Safety Advisory Council. As I said, we have a few little positives happening.

From media reports—I have to be careful about what I say because it is really police business—we know that mobile RBT is springing up to 10 times the number that fixed RBT was springing. It will have a deterrent effect on drivers. We do know that there are fewer deaths. On roads that were 60 kilometres last year that are now 50 kilometres fatalities have dropped from 11 to about five for the same period. As most people have said, the data on injury crashes takes a bit longer to sort through. It is just a bit early to comment. The initial signs are positive that the 50-kilometre limit has slowed people down and has reduced crashes and fatalities.

ACTING CHAIR—According to the Victorian figures there was a good result in built-up urban areas with the 50 kilometres limit but virtually no change in rural areas. Is the same thing happening in South Australia?

Mr Allan—As you will be aware, we introduced 50 kilometres in a number of country towns, at the request of councils generally. The figures are not really there to give you an honest answer but I think it would be true that we are noticing speed slowing down across the board and crash rates dropping across the board. It is not specific to the metropolitan area.

ACTING CHAIR—I will be interested to get that—

Mr Allan—I think we all will be. Unfortunately, we are about a month or two ahead of my saying a whole heap of things. Anyhow, the Road Safety Advisory Council is currently preparing phase 2 for the government's consideration. You can extrapolate from what I have said some of the issues that might be addressed in phase 2. If I told you that there are task forces working on things such as speed, school road safety education, roadside hazards, penalties, drugs and alcohol et cetera, that would probably give you an idea of some of the inputs into phase 2.

We were also a bit daring: we actually went out to public consultation. We put a document on our web site and asked people to provide feedback. We got 60 submissions, which does not sound like a lot but it probably is a relatively large number. We are using that input as part of getting towards phase 2 as well. There is imminent a significant package of road safety reform in South Australia.

In terms of what we have said to this committee, there were three issues that we raised in addition to Aboriginal driving issues that should be dealt with nationally. They were that we think that greater focus should be put on school road safety education. That may be, again, a national collaboration or working together, or it may be that the action plans that ATSB put out will say a bit more about it. ITS and car technologies have been mentioned. That issue needs to be addressed. The other one that we have suggested is that there may be some benefits in looking at uniform driver licensing, particularly for novice drivers, across Australia. At the moment, with the best will in the world, there are a heap of different systems in different states. While that may not be the end of the world, perhaps there are some advantages in having some consistency between jurisdictions. That is it.

ACTING CHAIR—I have a question for anyone here today, and that is: when we talk about statistics we always seem to talk about road deaths per 100,000 population rather than road deaths per kilometres travelled. I do not know if there are different figures for South Australia; they are quite stark in Western Australia. For example, I think it is about five deaths per 100,000 for urban areas, and in country areas it is 21.6. I think if you actually looked at distance travelled

you would see a far different story. I wonder if you have those figures for South Australia and whether there is a marked difference.

Mr Allan—I have not got detailed figures here, but around 60 per cent of fatalities are in country regions and around 50 per cent of serious injuries are in country regions. I do not have per vehicle kilometre statistics. So it is a significant factor—

ACTING CHAIR—But there are probably a lot more kilometres travelled.

Mr Allan—That is right; there probably are. I thought Mr Cameron's graph showed some comparison between these that showed some similarities.

Mr Cameron—The pattern is the same. The reason for the public health measure per head of population is that it allows you to compare road safety outcomes with cancer, cardiovascular disease and those sorts of things. So there are a lot of indicators you could use, and the picture becomes slightly different, as you say, whether it is per registered vehicle or million kilometres travelled; and, yes, they will represent things in a better or worse light. But the accepted standard is on a population health basis, so that we can compare road safety with other issues.

Mr Allan—The only other comment I would make is that what we are looking at is trends—whether it is trends per population or per vehicle kilometre probably does not matter a lot at the end of the day; it is trying to get the toll down.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

[10.57 a.m.]

BROOKS, Mr Chris, Team Leader, Road Safety Research and Strategy, Australian Transport Safety Bureau

COLLESS, Hon. Rick, Member, STAYSAFE Committee

FAULKS, Mr Ian, Committee Manager, STAYSAFE Committee

HANNIFEY, Mr Roderick Michael, (Private capacity)

REDSHAW, Dr Sarah, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney

CHAIR—Thank you for your attendance—particularly you, Mr Colless. We know what Fridays are like for members of parliament. When you give up a Friday to come to something like this, it means an added constituent load later.

Mr Colless—I am delighted to be here.

CHAIR—Could we have the New South Wales STAYSAFE presentation.

Mr Colless—I will ask Mr Faulks to give you a brief update on the activities of the committee, and I will expand on some of our recent activities of the last few days.

Mr Faulks—A briefing paper was forwarded to the committee. Could that be formally recorded as a submission under my name rather than under the committee's name?

CHAIR—Has this come in since your original submission?

Mr Faulks—Yes. It is the one that I sent a couple of days ago.

CHAIR—Would one of my colleagues like to move that the submission be taken into the record as an exhibit?

Mr HAASE—So moved.

Mr Faulks—Road safety, from the presentations that you heard this morning, is very clearly a state and territory province in Australia. Road safety agencies, in terms of their practical delivery of policy and the legislation that governs the use of the road transport system, are primarily a state and territory province. Driver licensing, vehicle registration and traffic policing are all conducted at a state level. What is particularly refreshing, from the presentations that I have heard this morning, is the enormous amount of consistency across the various Australian jurisdictions—in terms of problem identification and, in many cases, the kinds of solutions that are being sought.

For several of the states there has been, for several decades in some cases, a commitment by the state legislatures to have a dedicated road safety committee. The STAYSAFE committee in New South Wales is one example of that, and it has existed for around two decades. In Victoria, a committee of some form has existed since the 1960s; and in Queensland there is the Travelsafe committee, which has existed for about a decade as well. Other states have had, at various times, select committees that have examined road safety matters, but certainly it is the case that Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have had standing road safety committees that have had, in the main, an oversight role for those state agencies involved in the primary delivery of road safety activities.

I have listed in the submission that has been forwarded to you the terms of reference for the STAYSAFE Committee. Those terms of reference have essentially been unchanged for the last two decades, so parliament has consistently said, 'These are the sorts of things that we wish the committee to examine, and these are the sorts of issues in particular where we think the focus should be.' The primary function of the STAYSAFE Committee can be summarised as being a monitoring and review role. The committee currently has an annual program, where it seeks to gain advice on a calendar year basis from seven core portfolio areas in the state administration which are: Roads, Police, Transport Services, Health, Education, the Special Minister of State portfolio—which deals with the motor vehicle accident processes in New South Wales—and the Attorney-General's Department, from which we seek information in relation to the operation of the court system when dealing with traffic offences and criminal offences associated with driving.

In addition, we also have a separate role, which is to review and report on countermeasures that are aimed at addressing road trauma. There have been a variety of those sorts of reviews conducted over the years. Some 60 reports of the STAYSAFE Committee have been produced, covering the full spectrum of the kinds of matters that you have been hearing about this morning. Our current inquiries include a major inquiry looking at vehicle based countermeasures that can better lead to drivers being able to monitor, manage or control their speed. We also have an inquiry into the safety of railway level crossings. We have a very short, sharp inquiry planned for next week looking at inappropriate joyriding activities, known as car surfing—that is, riding on the bonnets or roofs of vehicles, standing up in the trays of utes while you are doing circle work, that kind of approach. It is a very particular and very focused exercise by the committee, because it has been identified that there are some legislative issues. The committee is having a look at that and we will be making some recommendations. And, as I indicated, we also do the annual reviews of road safety on a regular basis.

One thing I would like to announce to the committee is that the STAYSAFE Committee has resolved to host a national meeting of all of the parliamentary transport and road safety committees again next year. We held a similar meeting in 1997. The Commonwealth held the first in 1995 and Queensland held one in 1999. We think it is appropriate to try and pull in the parliamentarians who have a road safety interest in the committees to deal with those sorts of matters.

CHAIR—Will you be inviting this committee?

Mr Faulks—I am simply foreshadowing that a formal invitation will be forwarded to you. With a bit of luck, it will be associated with World Health Day next year, which is on 7 April, as

World Health Days always are. Next year, World Health Day is devoted to road trauma and road safety, so we will hopefully get those to coincide.

If I can just turn very quickly to the inquiry that is looking at speed and motor vehicles. I just note that the traditional approaches dealing with speeding have primarily involved a public education focus looking at school based education or public advertising, police enforcement through a variety of mechanisms—including speed radar, laser technologies, and these days fixed speed cameras, point to point systems and so on—and road environment measures, which are typically included under the notion of traffic calming but also a variety of perceptual management systems associated with road markings, the width of the roadway, gateway treatments and so on.

CHAIR—This is a personal observation and not necessarily the committee view, but I have often wondered if we do not persist with an advertising campaign sufficiently. There was the ‘bloody idiot’ campaign, which in itself was effective but it did not continue long enough or was not varied enough. Then we had the campaign with people trapped under vehicles with gurgling blood in their throat, which was fairly stark stuff. But, again, it did not seem to stay there long enough to resonate. Then we have seatbelt campaigns from time to time. Should we perhaps be looking at a six-monthly or 12-monthly theme right across Australia—something like Slip, Slop, Slap or Do the Right Thing; pick up the lolly paper and that sort of thing—where you constantly hammer the public for six months on seatbelts and then perhaps the next six months you do something else, but do it uniformly across Australia? I would like to hear your comment on that.

Mr Colless—That is an excellent suggestion. Certainly the results, as you mentioned, of things like the Slip, Slop, Slap campaign were very successful. There has not been any such coordinated road safety campaign across Australia of that nature to my knowledge. It is something that we should be moving towards.

CHAIR—We have to rely on committees like yours to set the priorities.

Mr Colless—That is right, absolutely.

Mr Faulks—That was also a feature of my opening remarks—that is, that we have a state and territory based road safety approach. You will find in New South Wales, for example, that there will be coordination across a whole range of government agencies and associated organisations where they will all agree on a particular structure to an annual advertising program, but to the best of my knowledge that does not filter across to the other jurisdictions.

CHAIR—Do you bring in the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations and say that, in addition to paid advertising, could your announcers adopt this as a theme for six months so that it becomes a top-of-mind issue for the whole public?

Mr Colless—You would need to get all the players in the system—from the advertisers through to the local Roads and Traffic Authority people—involved in it.

Mr Faulks—There is a degree of cooperation across the jurisdictions in terms of getting a return on the investment for advertising. For example, New South Wales is utilising some speed

advertising that was originally developed in Victoria. It has simply been adapted. That is a fairly commonplace exercise across the jurisdictions.

CHAIR—We do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Mr Faulks—Yes, and you get a better return for your investment dollar by doing that.

Dr Redshaw—In relation to advertising campaigns, there should be a forum, especially for young people, where they can discuss the ads, because they tell us that they do not stand out from the rest of advertising on TV. When they get to sit down and talk about them, they start to get the point. It starts to mean something to them and they can talk amongst themselves about the advertising.

CHAIR—That is a very good point. Thank you for that.

Mr Faulks—I will just very briefly allude to the inquiry into speed and motor vehicles. It is important in relation to what your committee is doing because the STAYSAFE Committee is examining the relationship between the state approach to road safety, where states are responsible for the regulation of vehicles and assessment of their roadworthiness, and the national province of vehicle standards. We are looking for vehicle based technologies that can better enable drivers to monitor, manage and control their speeds. But there is an issue about how far the states can go within a regulatory environment when the responsibility for that environment is a national responsibility. Some of the issues that the committee has been examining are looking at how far should those approaches to those technologies be market driven rather than regulatory driven. We have been discussing those sorts of matters with vehicle manufacturers, distributors and so on. It has been a particularly interesting process to undertake.

To summarise my understanding of what the manufacturers are saying, there are a variety of technologies that would potentially yield enormous benefits purely from a road safety perspective. But from the perspective of marketing a product, which is what the vehicle manufacturers are in the business of doing, they see that putting into the vehicles technologies which may have a good safety benefit may necessarily result in a reduction in their market share. So they are reluctant to move towards such things as speed advisory displays in the dashboard, modifying the speedometer display, installing speed limiters in vehicles and so on. I just wanted to mention in passing that image and marketing, as alluded to in the discussion about motor vehicle advertising, is a particularly dominant theme rather than concerns about the safety technologies that are associated with the vehicles.

The whole issue of the development of vehicle telematics and the impact of that has been alluded to by a number of witnesses who have appeared today. The committee is examining that as a particular issue and that has been addressed within the briefing paper. I note that the New South Wales presentation, which the committee has endorsed, did make specific mention for a national focus on alcohol ignition interlocks. I would simply indicate that if you move towards the adoption of that sort of technology as a standard for motor vehicles, then it is not much further to go beyond that to simply require the installation of data loggers or some form of onboard vehicle monitoring system that would consistently be in every vehicle making the driver conscious of the fact that their driving performance is being monitored in such a way. There is a variety of evidence from a number of overseas studies that indicate you can have quite superb

reductions in overall crashes, let alone the severe trauma crashes, by having those sorts of devices fitted.

The problem for New South Wales is one that has been faced by other jurisdictions—that is, our road trauma reductions over the past several decades are now appearing to slow. New South Wales appears, from the committee's perspective, to have essentially stabilised, stalled, plateaued out, stagnated—a variety of terms have been used—

CHAIR—The Victorian one is very similar, isn't it?

Mr Faulks—Yes. Since probably about 1996-97 onward—there is debate about when that process started—we seem to be oscillating around the figure of 560 to 580 deaths a year, sometimes a little more and sometimes a little less. The last figure I saw on Monday before we left Sydney predicted that the end of year figure would be 555. So we have done reasonably well this year and most people were thinking that we would get a lower than usual road toll. For some reason, it looks as though we will come in at around about the average, and we will still be on that stalled or plateaued kind of level.

In New South Wales, the overall approach to road safety has been the subject of decade-long road safety planning documents since the early 1990s. The first was called 'Road safety 2000'. Essentially, it ran from 1991 to 2000, supposedly. But the committee's assessment, in a report it handed down last year, was that the strategy itself seemed to have become somewhat tired and looked as though it had been abandoned around about 1997-98. The new strategy, the 'Road safety 2010 strategy', was actually launched in 1999—about a year to a year and a half before the old strategy was supposed to end. I think that is indicative of the fact that that first strategy had sort of died.

I have raised some issues in the briefing paper for your consideration about whether or not it is really practical to have decade-long road safety strategies. Certainly the New South Wales road safety 2010 strategy is in need of review now because most of the major features of that, which were announced in 1999 and thought to be running out to 2010, were already implemented by 2003.

CHAIR—Doesn't the national strategy talk about breaking the 10 years down into five tranches of two years?

Mr Faulks—Yes. The New South Wales strategy picked up that same decade-long focus but effectively ran with a variety of proposed measures that have been implemented within the first four years. The question is: where do we go now? That is why I think New South Wales is likely to undertake a fairly substantial review process, though we have not been informed of the case.

CHAIR—I still think there are a lot of areas that have not been picked up on. For example, this committee in the previous parliament did a study on fatigue in transport. We made a lot of recommendations in that. There is one issue that I think is important as we come up to the Christmas holidays. Evidence we received was that people get up at 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock in the morning, when their circadian rhythms are at their lowest ebb. They say, 'We'll get up early, we'll drive to grandma's and we'll be there for breakfast or morning tea.' The number of accidents with whole families being, if not wiped out, in serious accidents within 50,

75 or 100 kilometres of home, when ostensibly they are up and fresh, is quite remarkable. I have never seen any work done on that, and it happens every Christmas and Easter holidays.

Mr Faulks—I think that is possibly the burden that parliamentary committees have to bear in relation to their recommendations. We, similarly, have a report on driver fatigue that was issued in 1997, I think, and effectively none or very few of the recommendations would have been implemented. In New South Wales we just saw on 1 November the statewide introduction of 50 kilometre per hour speed zones. The STAYSAFE Committee recommended exactly that process in 1996. In 1994, the committee recommended the installation of video cameras in highway patrol police cars so that there would be an objective record, particularly in relation to police pursuits. The committee thought it would also enable police to start to address inappropriate driver behaviours that were rather difficult to prove in court. That is now being implemented, nine years after the fact. I sense the frustration and agree with it. It is the nature of the beast, I think.

Mr HAASE—My question harks back to the statistics and the gathering thereof. We have had some evidence thus far about the safety aspect of daytime running lights. I wonder if you can give us any indication about the collection of data in that regard. I have long held a view that, if you look at people who drive with their lights on, you see more, if you like, sober drivers, and perhaps they would be a little less inclined towards road trauma. I am concerned about the accuracy of the data.

Mr Faulks—I am not aware of anyone who is collecting that data in New South Wales or nationally, but it may come out during the discussion today. Certainly in talks with fleet operators, while they tend to not fit out their vehicles with an automatic daytime running light provision—so that some seconds after the ignition comes on the lights come on—many fleet operators simply provide an instruction to the staff who are driving their vehicles to turn the headlights on. In my particular case, I do not turn the headlights off. My headlights go off when the ignition goes off and they come on when I turn the ignition on again. I leave them on all the time. I think that is a fairly common kind of practice, but nobody is documenting it that I am aware of.

Ms O'BYRNE—I thought ATSB were currently doing an inquiry into those sorts of things or had commissioned an inquiry.

Mr HAASE—The statement is frequently made that trauma occurrence is very low amongst drivers who drive in the daylight with their headlights on. I am interested to know how that data is collected and whether we have assured its accuracy.

Mr Hannifey—I am a truck driver. I work for Toll Liquids, which is a company which now has compulsory turning on of headlights or daytime running lights. We drive fuel tankers, and there is also a requirement by Mobil Exxon now that any vehicle that is driven for them has either its daytime running lights or headlights switched on automatically. I travelled to Sweden two years ago. It is a requirement over there, and I asked about it whilst I was there. I do not have figures, but the gentleman from Volvo that I was with believed that they save 100 lives a year through compulsory daytime running lights.

I believe that has started in Australia. There is a company by the name of Mills Transport that had had a number of accidents involving cars and trucks—probably five or more years ago—and they are the first company that I am aware of anywhere in Australia to institute that practice. I asked a number of their drivers about that and they said the reasoning behind it was that people had said that they did not see the truck. They found that when people had their headlights turned on it is a better awareness measure. You are probably aware of how some vehicles blend into their surroundings—darker vehicles blend into the road surface or white vehicles might sit behind something and not be seen properly. Headlights are seen as overcoming those problems. One thing I would say is a problem with truck drivers is that these people who run around with their fog lights on 24 hours a day, seven days a week is pose value, and at night they are an absolute menace to drivers who are being blinded by glare. So we must balance the two. I am a firm believer that daytime running lights are a good thing but we must kill this thing of running around with your fog lights on for pose value and blinding people at night.

Mr HAASE—Well said.

Ms O'BYRNE—I understood that the Australian Transport Council commissioned two reviews in 2002-03.

CHAIR—Thank you for that contribution. Could you sum up now, please?

Mr Faulks—I will conclude by pointing out that in New South Wales, the Hon. Carl Scully, the Minister for Roads, has announced that he will be convening a country road safety summit early next year to address the issue identified in New South Wales of the imbalance of road trauma that is occurring in country areas as opposed to metropolitan areas. I have noticed that Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia have all raised that as an issue. I am just flagging that that process will be ongoing, and you may be able to seek some information from him about the way that summit will be structured.

Mr Colless—I have a few quick comments on some specific issues which we have picked up in the last few days after talking to both industry and government agency people in Victoria. We did spend quite some time yesterday with the two major vehicle manufacturers in Melbourne, and one of the issues they raised that struck a chord with me was the issue of vehicle design and the response times required for changes to the Australian design rules. They gave us some specific samples of the improvement in head trauma in particular from fitting side airbags and side air curtains to various models, but they are not producing those as standard equipment. When we quizzed them about why that was the case, they replied that they are an option and there is a sales penalty if they fit that as a standard piece of equipment and then put the price of the vehicle up by the \$500 to \$1,000 that it costs. They then incur a penalty in their sales as a result.

The obvious solution to that issue that we see is to create an ADR to make that mandatory, to ensure it is fitted to all vehicles; but they explained to us that there are substantial delays in getting Australian design rules changed to take into account things such as side air curtains. That to me seems astounding. We have just heard the discussion on daytime running lights—it is the same sort of thing. It appears to me that the research that is being done by the industry people themselves would say that side air curtains are certainly one of those things that should be fitted to all vehicles but are not required at this point in time.

Ms O'BYRNE—When you say ‘substantial delays’ and ‘a long period’, what sort of time frames are they?

Mr Colless—They are talking about from five to seven or eight years to get the design rules changed to allow for those sorts of things. Some of the other technologies where the research is not yet completed also need to be looked at. The things I find very exciting such as the ISA technology and those sorts of things are some way off, but we need to be ready to move on those with ADRs when they become properly researched.

I would also like to make a few comments on road conditions. We have seen substantial evidence today on the difference in the figures for fatalities and serious injuries between metropolitan and rural and remote areas of the state, and that appears to be across all states not just in individual states. I wonder whether, given that the vast majority of arterial roads where most of these accidents occur are in fact state funded roads, we are seeing a lower commitment from state governments in providing funding for state funded arterial roads. The black spot program has been accepted very well by both local government and local communities throughout New South Wales. It has been an excellent program. However, we do need a better balance of funding between rural and metropolitan roads.

The third thing I would like to speak briefly about is the driver control factors that we have heard about—speed, alcohol, fatigue, seatbelts and those sorts of things. Those things are basically controlled by enforcement. However, there is one aspect that has not really been spoken about today and that is expert driver training for young drivers. There has been some mention of school education type programs, but I understand that in other countries there are quite substantial driver training programs required before young people can even get their licences. I am not talking about schoolroom type things but more about in-vehicle expert training on skid control, anticipation, learning when a vehicle is beginning to come under stress and all those sorts of things which kids learn by experience—and many of them do not get the necessary experience to get the skills they need.

Ms O'BYRNE—There is also an argument that, particularly with younger drivers, if you make them think that they are really good drivers you might actually create a situation where they take risks because they think they are very competent. So one of the arguments has been about whether you can create too much confidence.

Mr Colless—That is a good point. I wrote a few notes, and one of the terms I have written down is ‘psychological factors’. I think that something that has to be built into that training program is giving kids the right psychological training to become good drivers, rather than just giving them the expert skills so that they go out thinking that they are good drivers when they still do not necessary have on-road experience.

I believe that to achieve improvements in road safety we need to consider all the factors: vehicle design, road conditions and driver control. We should be looking at programs which bring the metropolitan and rural and remote injury lines down together rather than having one cross over the other. We must strike the right balance between all those issues and pick programs that are going to be effective in their respective areas.

CHAIR—We have someone else at the table. Would you please identify yourself.

Mr Brooks—I am Chris Brooks from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. I have noted your caution, and I would like to comment very briefly on the daytime running lights issue. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau has commissioned a review of the research literature on daytime running lights. We expect that to be released publicly very shortly, but I am sure we could make a copy available to the committee next week. In brief, I believe that the weight of evidence supports a safety benefit from daytime running lights. What is more difficult to get a handle on is the cost effectiveness, because there are costs in terms of installation and running, increased fuel usage and some increased emissions, because you are drawing more energy from the car.

There is a range of proposals around that says that you might be able to optimise the system by having a smart system that operates only under low light conditions rather than operating whenever the vehicle is going. But I believe that the report which we have commissioned from ARRB Transport Research indicates that the problem is that we do not quite know how the benefits relate to different times of the day. The report will provide a lot of information but it will also leave some questions unresolved, particularly in terms of cost effectiveness. We can make a copy of that available to the committee.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Mr Brooks—We would also be able to make available information on fatality rates per distance travelled by state.

Ms O'BYRNE—Wasn't it also touching on making trains more conspicuous as well? Was that part of the research?

Mr Brooks—No. There has been a project done on train conspicuity. That was a separate report. We could provide that as well, if you like.

Ms O'BYRNE—The committee has an interest in that area as well.

Mr Brooks—All right, but that is separate from the car daytime running lights issue.

Ms O'BYRNE—Okay.

Mr Faulks—We could provide an update of our inquiry into level crossing safety if that would assist the committee.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Mr Brooks—Thank you for the opportunity.

[11.30 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, Assistant Secretary, Vehicle Safety Standards, Department of Transport and Regional Services

CHAIR—Welcome. I am going to be a bit savage with time for your group because we can get you back at any time at the committee's convenience. I am going to cut your time from half an hour to 15 minutes because we are running out of time. We will probably call you back for a separate sitting with the committee in February, if that is in order, for anything we cannot pick up on this morning. I am sorry to do that to you, but you are part of the family so you will have to take the hits!

Mr Hogan—I will make some introductory comments. I will shortly switch over to Mr O'Neill to make a very abbreviated presentation on the Australian government's black spots program. I note that Kym Bills and others have today spoken about the high benefit levels that emanate from black spot programs and also the importance of black spot programs in terms of making the national road safety strategy work, so at the outset I would like to put some figures on the record in terms of the effectiveness of the Australian government's black spot program.

A black spot program was run between 1990 and 1993. In 1995 an evaluation of that program found that it was reducing serious crashes by about two-thirds at the treated sites. In relation to the current black spot program, which commenced in 1996, the 2001 evaluation confirmed that it was a highly effective program, returning an average of \$14 in benefit for every \$1 invested, as one or two others have mentioned. It also identified that in the first three years of that program's operation it was estimated to have prevented some 32 fatal crashes and more than 1,500 serious crashes. The benefits of those works are compounding through time. Having said that, I hand over to Barry O'Neill.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mr O'Neill—I will very briefly run through our presentation. The current black spot program was introduced in 1996. The government has twice extended the program. It has operated continuously since then and it is now in its eighth year. The latest extension of the program was for four years, starting in 2002-03, and \$44.5 million in funding has been provided each year until 30 June 2006. The level of funding allows for the treatment of about 400 locations around Australia each year. Since 1996 more than 2,900 projects at crash sites across Australia have been approved, representing an investment in road safety of more than \$320 million. This slide shows the break-up of approved projects between the states and territories. Each state and territory is allocated a proportion of funding under the black spot program, based on its relative

proportion of population and casualty crashes. This table shows the annual allocations for each state for the current program.

The program aims for the identification and cost-effective treatment of locations with a record of casualty crashes, placing significant focus on the need to reduce rural road trauma in accordance with national road safety policy objectives. It uses a proportion of funds to treat sites and lengths of roads in areas which have been identified as potential crash locations through official road safety audits and to implement other road safety measures. Australian government funding for the program is consistent with, and is a significant factor in, the national strategy to lower the Australian road toll. The program aims to provide financial assistance to improve the physical condition or the management of locations that add to the high incidence of crashes involving death and injury, which are so-called black spots. It also aims to encourage the implementation of safety related traffic management techniques and other road safety measures that have proven road safety value.

The eligibility criteria for the program are that the site must be able to demonstrate a benefit to cost ratio, a BCR, of at least two. For discrete sites—for example, an intersection, mid-block or short road section—the minimum eligibility criterion will be a history of at least three casualty crashes over a five-year period. For road lengths, the minimum eligibility criterion is an average of 0.2 casualty crashes per kilometre per annum over the length in question measured over five years. For road lengths, a section of road can also be considered if it is amongst the top 10 per cent of lengths of road identified in each state or territory which have an identified higher crash rate than other roads. The requirement for a history of crashes is necessary to ensure that those sites that do have a recurrent problem are targeted. However, the Road Safety Black Spot Program also recognises that there are road locations that could be considered as accidents waiting to happen. Therefore, up to 20 per cent of program funds can be used to treat sites where road traffic engineers have completed a road safety audit and found that remedial work is necessary.

Around 60 per cent of fatal crashes and 50 per cent of serious injury crashes occur outside metropolitan areas. The need to reduce road trauma in rural areas was identified as a priority in the 1997 road safety package. The National Road Safety Strategy for 2001 to 2010 recognises that currently not all road users experience the same level of safety, and therefore the strategy specifically targets inhabitants of rural and remote areas. In recognition of this, approximately 50 per cent of black spot funds in each state are reserved for projects in non-metropolitan areas. This urban-rural criterion is not applied in Tasmania, the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory. Joint funding of projects with other levels of government and/or community and business groups is encouraged, although joint funding is not a requirement of the program. Projects where the Australian government's contribution is estimated to cost less than \$750,000 will be given priority consideration.

CHAIR—I chair the black spots program in Queensland. Some of the criticisms I hear of the scheme are that the odd manipulative council picks an intersection where there have been a few crashes but where the intersection is not inherently dangerous, where the crashes have been caused by human error, overt hoon action or something like that, and that the black spots program is used either to get a roundabout or to get a set of traffic lights. Another suggestion I have heard is that the black spots program is sometimes used just to get a set of traffic lights in

and to cost shift from, say, a local authority to the Commonwealth. I would be interested to hear your comments on that.

Another comment has been put to me by the smaller councils. You say that 20 per cent of those black spots are delineated by a safety audit, and the smaller councils tell me that sometimes the cost of the safety audit is more than the cost of the money they would spend to fix the black spot; that they might pay \$50,000 or \$65,000 to get engineers to do the safety audit for, say, a \$50,000 to \$100,000 job. I put the proposition to you that every year, in addition to the 80 per cent that goes onto known casualty sites and the 20 per cent that goes onto audited sites, an average amount of, say, \$1 million per state be put aside in, say, 20 lots of \$50,000 or 30 lots of \$35,000 and that that money be allowed for black spots purely on an engineer's certificate and not on a full safety audit. In other words, you will give councils the discretion of identifying a crook culvert or a blind hill on a gravel road somewhere that might need 100 metres of asphalt and a double line across the top of it without having to go through that bureaucratic process of spending anything up to \$65,000 on an audit. What is your view on that?

Mr O'Neill—The program is directed at saving lives and at low-cost treatments for the maximum benefit for those treatments. We do recognise that there are some sites where, on assessment, expenditure of money will save lives. But we really think that before the government could commit to that sort of money there would have to be some objective assessment of the site. We are aware of the additional costs incurred in running a road safety audit, but there are measures which we have been trying to communicate to local government to reduce that cost. It is quite feasible for the local engineer to receive training as an auditor and carry out the audit as part of his normal functions, and that would significantly reduce the cost to the council. There are ways around that. But the primary aim of the program is to direct funding to sites that have a known casualty history.

CHAIR—Do you have a suspicion that sometimes some manipulative councils might be using black spots funding to get roundabouts and traffic lights installed that they should otherwise take on as an in-house responsibility?

Mr O'Neill—The primary nominations for the program do come from local councils, because they have the local knowledge. But we do require assessment of the proposals, and the assessment takes into account the types of accidents that are being caused and the treatment has to relate to those types of accidents. We do not necessarily accept that the installation of a roundabout is necessary, unless the accidents occurring at that location will be treated by the installation of a roundabout. There is a sort of assessment process that relates the treatment to the accidents occurring at the site.

CHAIR—Do you have any other comments, Mr O'Neill?

Mr O'Neill—No.

CHAIR—Mr Robertson, would you like to add something?

Mr Robertson—I have a presentation that is normally about 30 minutes long. I can knock it down to five minutes if you wish.

CHAIR—Would you prefer to do that or would you prefer to come back in February?

Mr Robertson—We could come back in February, and we would be quite happy to do that.

CHAIR—Does that throw you out today? I am sorry to do this to you.

Mr Robertson—I was just going to give you some background on the development of vehicle safety standards and the Australian Design Rules, which would perhaps put a little bit of context around some of the comments that have already been made here, because they would need a little bit of information accompanying them to make them understandable. I can do that in February if you wish, or I can run through it now.

CHAIR—I think it would be better in February. But I do thank you for coming today and I am sorry to inconvenience you.

Ms O'BYRNE—Can I ask a few quick questions?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms O'BYRNE—They probably fall into the area of your submission, Mr Robertson. I specifically wanted to ask about the report numbered CR211a, which was about the seatbelt reminder systems and all those sorts of things. Are you able to discuss that at all?

Mr Robertson—Yes, I can. That is a report by the Monash University Accident Research Centre which effectively examines whether, if you adopt certain assumptions about the effect of certain reminders, it would produce a positive cost benefit. They made a favourable case in that report. Since that—because it was part of the National Road Safety Strategy—we have prepared a regulation impact statement. Part of what I was going to explain in the presentation is what is actually required in that. It is more than just asking, 'Do the costs add up?' You need to get right down to asking, 'What is the problem? What are the regulatory options? What are the non-regulatory options?' We are about to release that statement publicly. We have a little bit more work to do on it. Essentially, the outcome of that is that the market is responding very well, which mitigates the case for regulation.

Ms O'BYRNE—So you do not think we would be needing some Australian Design Rule, which we have just heard will take six or seven years anyway?

Mr Robertson—I could comment on that as well; it is not quite right. At this stage my answer would be no, given the level of market penetration. The regulation always remains an option, and if we did not get that sort of market penetration then certainly the regulatory option is there. But there are other issues about whether that will actually deal with the problem effectively.

Ms O'BYRNE—The ATSB reports that have been done seem to indicate that it is going to have a very positive outcome. What other information do you think you need in order to make those kinds of decisions? If the report is saying that this would significantly result in a reduction of fatal or serious injuries, I am a little unsure as to why you would not go to a design rule option.

Mr Robertson—There is quite a lot of research being done internationally on this issue both in the United States and in Europe. The European work is in fact driving the market because that is being picked up in the Euro New Car Assessment Program of which ANCAP has the same criteria. Manufacturers get points for putting in the seatbelt reminders. On the question of effectiveness, these systems have had a very patchy history. What seems to be well accepted among the research is that, if you want them to be effective, they have to have high user acceptance. To get high user acceptance you have to work out whom you are trying to deal with. Are you dealing with the casual non-wearer or the dedicated non-wearer?

In countries that have a very high seatbelt wearing rate among the population, such as in Australia, what is left tends to be the dedicated non-wearer. How do you deal with that and what technical specifications do you use? Do you have a system that is intrusive enough to have an effect but not so intrusive as to cause the systems to be disabled? That tends to be the pattern. We even had one manufacturer who used to provide them as standard equipment who took them out of the options list because they had so many customer complaints about the systems and customers wanting to have them disabled. As I say, the issues are not quite as straightforward as saying, ‘Just put them in and it will work. It will solve the problem.’

I think we have some very significant problems here and some of the presenters have alluded to those, particularly in rural areas with young males. Would the seatbelt reminder work? I do not know. It might have an effect; it might not. These are people who are generally not uncomfortable with driving a car without a seatbelt on, so maybe there are better options there. At the moment, to get to the point where you actually do have them in vehicles, that is happening.

Ms O’BYRNE—I take on board the comments that you have made. Do you think that the findings of the report are not correct? Are you contradicting the report? The report, as I understand it, says it will make a significant positive impact. Are you saying that you do not necessarily think that that is the best mechanism? I need to be sure.

Mr Robertson—The report actually made some assumptions. It was there to test whether in a cost-benefit sense that would work. You have to make some assumptions about how effective the reminders would be, about what they would cost, and you would have been able to provide a bit of data there from the manufacturers, because the cost base in the report was relying on the information they had at hand, but there was some more detail needed as to whether that would be cost beneficial. What I would explain in a more detailed presentation is that you need to look much more broadly than simply, ‘Do the costs add up?’ If there are non-regulatory options, the preference is to go with those.

Ms O’BYRNE—Okay, we will be looking at that in February, as I understand.

CHAIR—Thank you to the three presenters and my apologies for having to cut you short.

[11.48 a.m.]

CAMERON, Professor Maxwell Hugh, Adjunct Professor, Monash University Accident Research Centre

JOHNSTON, Professor Ian Ronald, Director, Monash University Accident Research Centre

CHAIR—Professor Cameron, would you like to start.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Prof. Cameron—I am here to report on a study done for the ATSB looking at the whole question of whether speeds on rural roads in Australia could be changed. I am sorry for the different font in the slides, but I can cover that. We have looked at the impacts of speed on road trauma, vehicle operating costs, air pollution emissions and travel time. This seems to be generally related to average speed on rural roads, though there are some circumstances where average speeds are a lot lower than cruise speeds. We valued each type of impact in these areas. We then summated the total monetary impact across various speeds. We looked at three different types of rural roads—freeways, other divided roads and two types of undivided roads.

The fundamental relationship linking speeds with crashes is shown in this slide, which is based on Scandinavian research that is based on a large number of studies of speed limit changes and essentially finds that the number of fatal crashes goes up to the fourth power of speeds, the number of serious injury crashes goes up according to the third power, and the number of slight injury crashes goes up according to the second power. We valued the road trauma costs and benefits of the speed limit changes in two ways. The first was the human capital approach that Mr Bills referred to earlier as being somewhat conservative, but that is still the technique that the Australian government uses at this stage. Secondly, we looked at a so-called ‘willingness to pay’ form of valuing road trauma, a methodology used quite commonly in the United States, the UK and even New Zealand. You will see later that these two valuation methods produce different results.

There is a strong relationship between fuel economy and speed, as you can see here, with the midrange speeds being the most economical. That drives vehicle operating costs for both cars and trucks. There are a lot of different relationships between vehicle emissions and speed, but in the range we are talking about—in the higher-speed zones above 80 kilometres per hour—most of these pollutants increase with travel speed at the time. We have used standard methods for valuing these emissions. You can see those in this slide. I am sorry that the slide now seems to be incompatible with this computer, but generally you can see that each of the different pollutants has a different value in terms of societal costs per kilogram. I should emphasise that we could not evaluate the impacts of noise pollution in this study, but we consider those to be relatively small in the vicinity of rural highways.

We have used standard methods for valuing travel time. Travel time is inversely related to average speed, not necessarily cruise speed in some road environments where average speeds are

lower than cruise speeds. The figures on this slide are the standard ones for valuing travel time as used by Austroads. The figure that is missing from the bottom of the chart is \$32.70 per hour for an articulated truck.

We worked through those results. One of the questions put to us concerned what would happen if the speed limits on rural freeways were raised to 130 kilometres per hour. We looked at a hypothetical 100-kilometre section with 20,000 vehicles per day. As you can see here, we worked out that the travel time would fall by some 16 per cent, the number of crashes would increase by at least 55 per cent—and the serious crashes and fatal crashes would increase even more than that—and each of the pollutants would increase. As I said before, we were then able to value each of these physical impacts as you see on this chart. Basically what you are seeing is that vehicle operating costs are increased by 7.2 per cent. There are savings in time costs—some 17 per cent. Crash costs increased by some 89 per cent, mainly because of the increased numbers of fatal crashes, and crashes involving trucks in particular, and there was a marginal increase in air pollution costs. Overall, on these 100-kilometre sections of road we would see some \$2.35 million per year in extra costs to society—not a large increase compared with the fundamental cost, but some 0.6 per cent. So raising the speed limit on these rural freeways would result in a net disbenefit to society, even though the travel time costs are reduced.

We also did an analysis where we examined each of the individual speeds, both above the 100 kilometres per hour up to 130 and below. That is what you see on this chart. It is essentially the same analysis, but for each of those speeds. You can see on this particular chart that the point at which the total social cost is at its minimum is 120 kilometres per hour. Those remarks apply to all vehicles. On the next slide, you can see that you get an entirely different answer when you are looking at trucks alone. In this case, the speed for trucks that minimises total social costs is of the order of 100 kilometres per hour. You can also see on this chart why the trucking industry prefers to travel at about 110 and 115 kilometres per hour. In terms of the costs they bear—their operating costs and time costs—that is where their optimum is. But when you add in the road trauma costs and some air pollution costs, you get a different answer from society's point of view.

I mentioned that we did a similar analysis based on the willingness-to-pay method of valuing road trauma. That produced figures for fatal crashes that were about three times the standard costs. You can see that, when you do that, the road trauma costs are much more substantial and the optimum speed on these roads falls to 110 kilometres per hour, which is about the current speed limit. In particular, for trucks on rural freeways, the optimum speed would be down to 95 kilometres per hour. We also separated out the cars and light vehicles. You can see that, on the same rural freeways, using the willingness-to-pay method of valuing road trauma, there is a suggestion that the optimum is about 120 kilometres per hour, but it is a fairly shallow function.

We considered what we had found so far and looked at the question of a variable speed limit, the idea being that during the day cars would be allowed to travel at 120 kilometres per hour but at night or during adverse conditions they would be constrained to 100 kilometres per hour, with trucks fixed at 100 kilometres per hour at all times. You can see in this slide that the increase in crash cost is nowhere near as great. It was some 89 per cent earlier. The savings in time are not all that great, because the trucks are still constrained, and so are the cars at night or during adverse weather conditions. But overall, a program such as the one described here would

represent a saving to society of some \$2.3 million per year and about a 0.6 per cent reduction in total social costs.

In summary, we have found that, on rural freeways, yes, there would be travel time savings if speed limits were increased—and reasonable savings—but there would be additional fatal crashes, some 2.8 per 100 kilometres of rural freeway. The optimum speeds—those that minimise the total social costs—depend on how you value them. We prefer the willingness-to-pay method. That suggests that the optimum speed for cars and light vehicles is 120 kilometres per hour and for trucks some 95 kilometres per hour. I have lost the bottom of this slide about variable speed limits, but I think I gave you the information earlier.

We did a very similar analysis on rural divided roads. These are relatively less safe than rural freeways. They carry less traffic but, because of their reduced safety, there are additional fatal crashes if we raise the speed limit to 130 kilometres per hour. On this occasion, if you value road trauma by the willingness-to-pay approach, which I think society is moving towards, the optimum speed is about 110 kilometres per hour for cars and light vehicles but only 90 kilometres per hour for trucks.

We did a similar analysis looking at undivided roads, those two-lane undivided roads that are very common throughout Australia, carrying very light traffic volumes. These are the straight parts of those roads. You can see that the road trauma costs are very substantial by comparison with the travel time and operating costs. On this occasion, the analysis suggests that the optimum speed would be about 95 kilometres per hour, somewhat less than current speed limits on these typical roads. In particular, for trucks you can see that the optimum speed is very much less than the current speed limits—some 85 kilometres per hour.

We carried this analysis a bit further and looked at the question of what happens in the type of terrain where there are many curves, requiring vehicles to slow, or where there are crossroads and towns, requiring vehicles to come to a halt. That is a typical road environment. Here we find that the slowing and stopping processes really substantially increase the vehicle operating costs and also the air pollution emissions, and increase the travel times. On these types of roads, the optimum speeds are down at about 85 kilometres per hour. It is interesting to compare that chart with the next one, which is essentially the same information I gave you before. You can see how big a difference the increased operating costs and air pollution makes.

In summary, on undivided roads, there seems to be no economic justification for increasing the speed limits. This table shows you the optimum speeds, which, in most cases, are some 10 to 15 kilometres per hour below current speed limits or below current actual speeds on these roads, especially for trucks.

One overall remark that I should make is that all of these scenarios where we have considered an increase in speed limits for some vehicle types or circumstances have necessarily been accompanied by increased road trauma and crash costs. The variable speed limit scenarios would constrain the road trauma increases and keep total social costs below current levels. Only on rural freeways is there a case from a social cost point of view for allowing cars to travel at 120 kilometres per hour under good conditions, but constraining them to 100 kilometres per hour under adverse conditions and constraining trucks to 100 kilometres per hour at all times. Thank you.

CHAIR—Professor Johnston, do you want to add something?

Prof. Johnston—Not to that. Mine is a totally different issue.

CHAIR—Would you like to give your presentation?

Ms O'BYRNE—Can I ask a question of Professor Cameron first?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms O'BYRNE—I was mainly going to ask you about everything you have just told us, so that is great. But I want to seek your comments on an issue to do with speed cameras. There was a British report from Dr Alan Buckingham, who disputes the legitimacy of speed enforcement. I would like to get your view on that.

Prof. Cameron—We have reviewed Dr Buckingham's work in some detail. In the next edition of the journal in which he published his paper, comments from me will be published, I believe. Essentially, we feel he was being very misleading.

Ms O'BYRNE—Your research certainly disputes his findings.

Prof. Cameron—Yes, in nearly every aspect of his research. He misquoted, misinterpreted or chose to ignore a large amount of overseas research. We disagree with him entirely on that. If you would like me to, I can forward our comments to you or you will find them in the next edition of the journal.

Ms O'BYRNE—I would appreciate that. Thank you.

CHAIR—Professor Johnston, would you like to proceed with your presentation.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Prof. Johnston—I will keep this as brief as I can. I want to look at future road safety planning, particularly at the national level. I have been involved for some 30 years in road safety strategic planning, federally, with many of the states and with several other countries. So I have a reasonable history in this. The reason I am interested particularly is that we have come a long way. We have made great progress. We are considered internationally a leader, but we are considered a leader only in the behavioural control measures. That is a very important point to make. I am probably going to be a little bit controversial here, because I think the National Road Safety Strategy is fundamentally flawed. Several people have made the point—Ian Faulks in particular—that much of the road safety responsibility lies with the states. The National Road Safety Strategy does not focus on the areas of national responsibility; its fundamental focus is on the coordination of state and territory action. I am not saying that that is inappropriate; what I am saying is that it misses an enormous number of opportunities. Kym Bills said that the current National Road Safety Strategy was very close to being on target at this point, but he added that that is mainly because Victoria was down a fair way relative to everybody else. Victoria is down not because it is following the National Road Safety Strategy but because it is doing something different. We need to be very careful.

The two areas that the federal government has the major power over are vehicle safety and the national roads. I will touch on both of those. Several people have alluded to the design rule system. The design rule system is global lowest common denominator. It just takes forever to get any kind of design change. I would contend that the design rules are almost irrelevant. The manufacturers try to build to what comes through the ANCAP programs, so it is really about safety at a consumer level.

The innovation stuff, as the last folks said, is lagging well behind, so the design rule is certainly not innovating, and the whole process takes way too long. For example, on ADR69, which relates to full frontal impact, vehicles such as the Hyundai Excel, which is very small and does not have front airbags, passes ADR69 but in a real-life crash performs appallingly. ADR73, which relates to offset frontal impact, only covers conventional passenger vehicles; it does not address four-wheel drives or forward control passenger vans at all, and four-wheel drives are the fastest growing category. I am not being critical of the federal government; what I am saying is that the globalisation of the car industry has meant that the actual design rule process has gone to the lowest common denominator.

If we are going to get safety innovations in quickly then we have to look at other processes, and the ANCAP process is one of those. But another process that we are missing out on is the government's purchasing power. If the government specified safety innovations as one of its buying principles then it would very quickly get manufacturing compliance in the models that it wants, and that flows through to the rest of the vehicle fleet remarkably quickly. I will skip that one.

There is absolutely nothing in the design rules on vehicle compatibility. If we look into the future of road safety, that is probably the single biggest problem. The mid-sized cars are disappearing, the big four-wheel drives are growing very rapidly and the very small cars are growing very rapidly, and the unequal mass of the vehicles works counter to road safety. We have to address compatibility, but the National Road Safety Strategy does not even talk about it.

There has just been a little bit of debate about the seatbelt reminder system. I do not want to open that up now except to say again that the seatbelt wearing rate in Australia is extremely high; for drivers, it is 97 per cent. That last three per cent of non-wearers accounts for about 20 per cent of fatalities. So how do we get the last three per cent? We are not going to get them through public education, because these are the dedicated non-wearers. We can only get them through a vehicle related measure.

The European market is certainly bringing in new kinds of seatbelt reminder systems, but they are not very aggressive ones and no country in Europe has anything like our level of seatbelt wearing, nor that target, so we have to have a different approach. There are ways of doing it technologically, but we are backing away from that. The government could use its purchasing power to buy only cars with decent seatbelt reminders. Currently, when you turn the ignition on, the current seatbelt reminder is a little illuminated seatbelt that goes off after five seconds, and that tells no-one anything. So you can use the purchasing power to really force that change through. That would be enormous leadership, but I do not see that kind of leadership happening.

Speedos are my favourite topic. We market cars on speed and power, and we have talked about that kind of advertising and its impact already. The vehicle industry likes to suggest that it

does not have much impact, but we know that is not true. If we stopped installing speedos that went around to 240 kilometres an hour with 100 kilometres an hour being at the vertical point, we could really start to discriminate. It would be impossible for a vehicle manufacturer to sell on speed and power when the speedo looked like that. It is not something that would impact on global marketing, because you can put into our cars any other kind of meter, since all you have is a calibrated speedo. That is not even being discussed.

Ms O'BYRNE—What sort of cost impact is there? I would have thought it would not be significant.

Prof. Johnston—It is absolutely negligible. But it is certainly not something that, philosophically, people want to do.

Ms O'BYRNE—Most of the research has shown that that has been a really big impediment—you want to see if your car really does make 180 kilometres an hour on Australian roads.

Prof. Johnston—Absolutely. Everyone has said all day that speed management is one of the fundamentals. We really have to work out how to get on top of that.

Ms O'BYRNE—Is there much evidence to show that this would make a difference?

Prof. Johnston—There is absolutely no empirical evidence at the moment at all.

Ms O'BYRNE—But it is a really good theory and it is worth a shot.

Prof. Johnston—Yes. All I am saying is that I want to see the thing discussed. I want people to start saying, 'How might it work and what impact might we get?' I am not sitting here saying that you should recommend this—

Ms O'BYRNE—But you are saying that it is worth investigating.

Prof. Johnston—At the moment we are not confronting all of the counters to speeding. We know from the Victorian experience of the speed controversy that there are a lot of people who believe that speeding is a perfectly safe thing to do. While cars are built and marketed as they are, we are not going to break through that barrier.

Moving very quickly to roadside safety, let me say at the outset that the black spot program is absolutely fantastic. It has had enormous effects. The most common rural road death comes from running off the road. Eric Howard showed some slides this morning and I thought they were very compelling. The reasons for all of those road run-offs are alcohol, speed, fatigue, driver distraction and all the rest of it. It is very difficult to control in rural areas, as other people have already said, but we can manage that outcome. We have sealed the shoulders and put in rumble edge lines—and I think we should put in rumble centre lines at the same time—and we have put in small amounts of guardrail.

The point I want to make about the national highways and leadership is that our safest roads kill the most people. That sounds like an absurd thing to say. However, if you look at the number of deaths per million vehicle kilometres, the national highways and freeways have very low

rates, but, if you put enough vehicles on those roads, then, even at those very low rates, in absolute terms that is where a large number of people are going to get killed. Whilst our national highways have very high geometric standards, they do not have very high roadside safety standards in terms of guarding the roadside. There is an opportunity for the federal government to lead in that respect.

I will come back to where I started when I said that the National Road Safety Strategy was fundamentally flawed. This is what I think it should look like. At the moment it starts at the bottom, with an attempt to coordinate state and territory programs. That is a very good thing to do—it gets states to share their experiences and try to get a common approach, but, to me, that is the third element. The first element really is national leadership in the areas where the federal government has the accountability. The vehicle area and the roadside safety standards on national highways are the two that I think really are underperforming. The second element of a national road safety strategy is the national harmonisation. There is a fair bit in there. We have to have the same laws, signs and markings around the country. The third bit is the integrated programs. That is a very rushed version of it.

CHAIR—It was very concise, very good and, as you said, quite provocative. Thank you.

Mr HAASE—We spoke about the alarming statistic of the three per cent of non seatbelt wearers and how many accidents they make up. Do you have any statistics that indicate whether the non-wearing of the seat belt at the time of the accident was an aberration? Are we finding that people, when they are so drunk they do not put their seatbelt on, kill themselves?

Prof. Johnston—What we are finding is that the people who are not wearing their belts are also the ones who are drunk and who are also sort of social deviants. So the more high speeding and drink-driving that is going on, the less likely they are to wear a belt. So the question is: if we get the drunks off the road, will that reduce the number? Obviously, there is a lot of double counting in there. But we are not going to make that last three per cent wear their belts by any other means than, for example, an interlock system in a vehicle.

Ms O'BYRNE—Is that three per cent the drivers or does that include passengers who may be in there—for example, five people crammed in the back of a car?

Prof. Johnston—No, that 20 per cent of deaths of non belt wearers is both drivers and passengers.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[12.13 p.m.]

REDSHAW, Dr Sarah, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney

SOFOULIS, Dr Zoe, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have anything to add to the capacity in which you are appearing?

Dr Sofoulis—I am the chief investigator in the research project ‘Transforming drivers: drivers as a social, cultural and gendered practice’. Thank you very much for the opportunity to address the committee today. I do have a handout, which is available. I want to mention Driving Cultures, which is the program of research projects at the Centre for Cultural Research which was initiated by Sarah Redshaw and which I have joined. It aims to help bring about change in current paradigms of thinking and practice in the fields of young driver training and road safety awareness by developing what we call a cultural approach.

Slides were then shown—

Dr Sofoulis—In this first slide you can see a summary. The dominant approaches to road safety in Australia are framed in terms that Enlightenment thinkers like Descartes might understand. Mind and body, thought and emotion, human and non-human are clearly separated categories. Drivers are officially conceptualised as rational, though occasionally disobedient or drug affected, individuals whose feelings are irrelevant to their conscious command of machines. Obviously I am giving an overstatement of the issue here—I know that you know a bit better than that! But, anyway, driving is understood primarily as a domain of technical rationality in which individuals learn knowledge and road rules and practise skills and acquire expertise that will allow them to predictably control their vehicles. Formal processes allow these individuals to gain accreditation and legal recognition as driving citizens whose behaviour is governed by rational laws, enforcements and penalties for disobedience.

Road safety campaigns conceived within this framework typically make authoritarian and sometimes traumatic appeals to audiences whom they address as generic citizens in need of informing, reminding and threatening. They emphasise enforcements, penalties and the consequences of fines or losing one’s licence and/or they present realistic crash scenarios and their horrible physical, emotional and social aftermaths. The general message is basically: obey the law or suffer.

Safety messages frightening viewers and drivers into avoiding the shocking consequences of a crash by obeying the law or, alternatively, inuring them to this trauma through repetition do nothing to encourage a shared sense of responsibility for safety on the road. One trauma style ad in New South Wales showing two narratives: having a crash or getting a speeding ticket—that is the one where the crash scene is rewind—was read by young drivers we have spoken to not as a message about not speeding but as one about being nice to police who caught you because they were looking after you. Messages like this promote a morally weak and murky position in which

control of driving rests mainly with the same enforcement agencies who are prepared to traumatise viewers with shock tactics. Such campaigns are readily rejected by young viewer-drivers on a variety of grounds, ranging from their lack of identification with the category of citizen or blanket resistance to any message issuing from the police or a traffic authority, to disputes on technical points and optimistic or overconfident estimates of skill at surviving a similar crash scenario.

We would argue for a shift in the centre of road safety campaigns away from this morally weak emphasis on enforcement and consequences and towards an ethic of care and responsibility. If we did that it would become possible to articulate positive goals and scenarios about responsible kinds of traffic interactions and to show how to manage pre-crash scenarios. I should have said, I suppose, that my focus has been largely on road safety advertising and media, so that is what I am looking at.

Ms O'BYRNE—I am sorry to interrupt but can I ask you about the Tasmanian ad that was picked up by the ACT which has the young woman driving and getting a text message from her boyfriend for her birthday. That is a real-life scenario. In Tasmania they found a really good reaction to that. Because that is something simple and normal that people might see themselves doing, is that what you are heading for?

Dr Sofoulis—I think so. And there has been the new one, the Western Australian one that was just briefly shown, the ghost ad—which I have not seen but my nephew has described to me in great detail. It is a bit more like a movie than a regular ad. Things like this with a more normal social scenario may work, and I think that is definitely a way to go. The thing to point out is that speed or road conditions are not necessarily the most important factors in young driver accidents. Social, emotional and sensory orientations, what is going on inside the car, as well as general attitudes to cars and risk taking and other drivers, are significant variables. These are not factors that are amenable either to engineering or legal solutions and, therefore, cannot be adequately addressed within current official road safety frameworks.

Road safety messages for young people might well be more effective if they are detached from enforcement authorities and aligned with other discourses on things like self-esteem, risk and harm minimisation—things that have been successfully used in the health field, for example, around sex and substance abuse. They might require different modalities for representation. Rather than just gruesome, gory realism, special effects, humour, magical realism, the cartoon format, video game format might be more effective, and these are all unexplored alternatives to the stern warning to citizens.

It could be—and this has come up from some of the speakers so far including just now—that limitations in state budgets prevent developing safety messages aimed at specific youth audiences. The pressure is to create ads for generic citizens rather than target groups, though there have been some good examples. Some national initiative to fund the production of innovative, youth-oriented and youth-targeted safety messages would help. This could be achieved by better coordination between states—and there is a little bit happening at the moment but mostly in post-production—or new federal funds or a levy imposed on car advertisers or some scheme whereby car manufacturers did help sponsor safety ad production for the young.

But even more crucial than this is an injection of imagination and the courage to leap into a different framework of thinking in order to achieve best practice in road safety. This could be as simple as involving young people in creating road safety or other harm minimisation messages for their peers. Higher levels of road safety stakeholders could well pay more attention to the local and regional campaigns of road safety officers, many of whom are women and quite a few of whom have abandoned stern and traumatic enforcement messages in favour of positive, encouraging campaigns about avoiding or minimising risk, targeted to specific groups of road users and local subcultures and local driving rituals.

The limitations in the dominant approach to road safety renders it paradoxically dumber about driving culture than most ordinary drivers who, from our own experience and observations of other drivers, understand very well many of the cultural meanings and the gendered psychological, emotional and social factors involved in a wide variety of traffic performances, few of which are ever discussed in formal training or road safety campaigns, with perhaps the exception of road rage. Conventional TV messages about safety are by and large devoid of any reference—apart from the one Senator O’Byrne made about the text messages.

Ms O’BYRNE—There has been a Senator O’Byrne, but it is not me.

Dr Sofoulis—Sorry. That message is an unusual one because most safety messages are devoid of any reference to the sensory, the cultural world, the subcultural, indeed, the mythic and cultural meanings of cars, driving and speed more generally, which far extend normal driving experience. Nor do they acknowledge the mediascape in which they are received—and that is a point Sarah made earlier. They do not even acknowledge the high degree of media literacy that young audiences have. At present, if dominant discourse on road safety notices culture at all, it is also something that can be legislated as well, as in the attempts referred to today, to impose speed limits in representations of cars in advertising.

Implicit in most calls for the regulation of car ads is an obsolete model of communication based on simplistic behavioural psychology that ignores both the cultural and personal context of message reception and the power of an audience to negotiate and construct their own meanings. My written submission includes a chart summarising the now standard 30-year-old critiques of this model and outlines how a more up-to-date understanding of culture and communication could be used for approaching both car advertising and road safety messages and cultural change in general. I make the point here that most road safety messages, by ignoring these cultural contexts—the unconscious, the mythic and the emotional sides of cars—are left entirely to the car commercials to deal with. Road safety considerations leave all that outside.

Expanding the framework for approaching road safety to a cultural approach would lead not only to better media strategies but also to better driver training, which Sarah will shortly talk about. The whole field would be enriched by the mounting wealth of research on the various social, cultural and psychological dimensions of driving—ranging from emotional and socio-cultural factors in car accident rates, social histories of car use, general public as well as specific anthropological studies of car oriented subcultures, general cultural trends to speed and mobility, and the whole mythic significance of driving, including meanings baked into the cars themselves.

In sum, my argument is that it is well past the time for the dominant approaches to road safety to expand beyond the concerns with engineering, technical skills, enforcement and penalties, and simplistic behaviourist and perceptual psychology. Driving is not simply a matter of technical rationality but a culturally and personally meaningful practice subject to all of the irrationalities, desires, vagaries and petty illegalities that humans exhibit in the rest of our social lives. Driving involves performing social, gendered, ethnic and subcultural identities. Traffic is an arena for enacting egoism, rage, vengeance, pride, macho fantasies, territorialities but also, occasionally, generosity, tolerance, forbearance and congeniality: qualities of interaction that could be promoted as the basis of a changed driving culture were we to better acknowledge traffic and road safety as social and cultural arenas.

Dr Redshaw—Following on from Zoe, I would like to say that road safety is predominantly road centred. There are two points I would like to make. One is about the broader social environment that cars and roads exist within. We have tended to plan our suburbs, cities and country areas around the road as having priority. Vehicles are driven as if the road is all that exists when there are driveways coming in and out, cyclists, pedestrians of various ages and abilities, and all kinds of things that we fail to take into account. So I think we need a huge shift to the broader social environment that the car exists within. Advertising is a terrible offender in this area because it tends to show cars on isolated roads that often resemble race circuit situations with single male drivers who have no responsibilities. It is a kind of carefree attitude that is produced. This is how we view the car: we think that motor vehicles should have priority and we forget about the rest of the social environment that the car exists within. Some of the current strategies, like reducing speed limits and so on, are starting to address that.

CHAIR—What are you talking about? Are you talking about those open road type of advertisements like, ‘I can’t get enough of this’?

Dr Redshaw—That is right. That is the Ford advertisement. There is a Commodore ad which has a similar tag. The big popular cars are promoted very much in this way. In these ads there is a lack of other vehicles on the road and there is certainly a lack of any kind of social complexity which the car exists within—the huge social complexity. This is one of the problems that young drivers are up against. When they get in a car they see it as a vehicle of freedom and independence. They can pack a lot more into their day because they can go here and there, pick up friends and get to here and there and so on. They are not being taught to realise what they are doing. They are seeing the car as a way of saving time and that, as we have seen, has other costs. So what they emphasise most ends up being most costly. They will often talk about increasing their speed to save themselves time. They are often running late; they do not have enough planning in their day and that kind of thing.

The second point I want to make is that there is too much emphasis—and this is reflected in a lot of research around the world—on the skill of handling a car. We do not all need to be racing car drivers; we do not all need to be advanced police drivers. We need to be competent everyday drivers, which most people generally are. The skills are picked up pretty quickly, early on in the learning process. What we do not put enough emphasis on is learning how to deal with a car in a broader social context that is extremely complex. Young people come off the farm, where they have learnt to drive the car around the property, and they do not think there is anything more to learn, because they have learned to handle the car. They do not take into account the huge variations in motor vehicles, and road users of a great variety of types and abilities. That is not

going to change; we are not going to be able to standardise the way people drive cars. We need to have an approach that takes into account the enormous complexity that is involved there. It is becoming increasingly complex with different forms of mobility.

The approach that I have taken is to produce a discussion based forum where young people are able to talk in a facilitated fashion. I am one of those people who think that talking is greatly underrated. It is extremely important, particularly because once young people get a provisional licence, as most parents will tell you, they cease to talk about their driving. They do not want to talk about it anymore. This is of great concern and is an area where we need to encourage talking and the development of a language about what they are doing in cars. What I did was to put them into a one-day workshop, where I gave them various activities and exercises designed to make them think and talk with each other about what they were doing in cars. It was successful in producing that result. They said that they were thinking, 'That's what I'm doing.' I was giving them things to tick off and slightly competitive activities where they could see who was better in terms of lane changing, mobile phone use and anything like that. They really had to look at what they were actually doing in cars, not what they thought they were doing. What a lot of adults tend to do is to say, 'I do this,' but they are not really looking at what they are doing; they are looking at what they think they are doing.

I think it is important to give young people that focus so that they can look at what they are actually doing and they can talk about it. If they can talk about it with other people, they can think about it. They can also discourse with their friends and they can have a language to talk about it. You often find young people in cars in numbers, so they can talk with each other about what is going on in the car. A huge element of this is young people being passengers in cars and how much responsibility the passenger has in supporting the driver. That was something that came out of discussions with these young people. That is another important area.

I am just here to emphasise what I call the 'driving with a difference' approach, which is to give young people the opportunity to talk amongst themselves, because us standing there telling them things does not work. It has very limited impact, especially once they have got a driver's licence. Talking with each other and really looking at what they are doing does make a difference. It is called driving with a difference.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Ms LEY—I am very interested, because I think this is a very novel approach. I think it makes an enormous amount of sense. We can all reflect on our own observations of young people, and even the way we ourselves approach cars. There has been a very good description of the problem and I think the solution is going to be a lot more challenging.

Dr Sofoulis—We also need longer term measures too. To really work in this way, the people interested in road safety and transport have to start commissioning research from people who are not just psychologists and engineers. Do you know what I mean? It is going to take a while to get some of that through. If you are talking about cultural change rather than just quickly measurable statistics then you have to have a longer horizon for evaluation as well.

Ms LEY—Congratulations on what you are doing.

Proceedings suspended from 12.35 p.m. to 1.19 p.m.

CHAIR—We now resume this national road safety inquiry of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services. I confirm for those who have joined us this afternoon that, although the committee does not require participants to give evidence on oath, we do caution you that these are proceedings of the parliament and that they warrant the same respect as would attend to the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and could be taken to be a contempt of parliament.

We have to finish at four o'clock, so I ask each group presenting this afternoon to stay as close as possible to their time limit. If anyone in the gallery wants to participate, they must come to the front table to one of the microphones and, if they are not an official participant, they need to identify themselves and, having identified themselves, advise us that they understand the caution that I have just given.

[1.20 p.m.]

APPS, Mr Michael, Executive Director, Bus Industry Confederation

BEDFORD, Mr Eric Douglas, National President, Ulysses Club Inc.

SCRUBY, Mr Harold Charles Wolfe, Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Pedestrian Council of Australia Ltd

SOFOULIS, Dr Zoe, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney

TAYLOR, Mr Raymond David, General Manager, Business and Marketing, ARRB Transport Research Ltd

CHAIR—I welcome to the table the bus and coach industry representative, Mr Michael Apps.

Mr Apps—The Bus Industry Confederation represents bus and coach operators and manufacturers across Australia, so we have an interest at both the operational level and the vehicle standards level in relation to road safety. We represent interests at that level. I thought that, in the interests of time, I would cut to the chase. The submission is fairly succinct and to the point as to where we see the issues. Buses cause, in our view, less than one per cent of total road fatalities. Broadly, they are the safest mode of transport. The focus of our submission is how we might be able to make buses and coaches safer. That is focused on four or five key areas.

The age of the Australian bus fleet is a concern. Really, the age of the fleet is largely determined by the state based contract system for school and route services. For example, the average age of a bus in Tasmania is around 25 to 30 years. In South Australia it is about 25, in Queensland around 30, and in New South Wales and Victoria it is around 12 to 15 years. Those ages are largely reflected in some of the contractual arrangements and the incentives within those contracts to keep the fleet new. From an industry perspective, we also see a clear role for the Commonwealth to play a part in encouraging or incentivising the reduction of the age of the fleet, and that could be done in a variety of ways, whether through an effective tax treatment in the form of depreciation and an effective life rate that is advantageous to promote that kind of thing or through investment allowances. We think the federal government does have a role to play in relation to reducing the age of the fleet, but that would probably be in the form of taxation benefits.

The second key issue is the area of seatbelts and seating. We have articulated our view that we do not support the mandating of seatbelts in all buses, for a variety of reasons. They are already mandated in coaches, but school and route services are not, for operational reasons, really appropriate for seatbelts. I am happy to take questions on that, because it is a technical and sensitive issue. Older buses are a problem, but we think that older buses need to be appropriately retrofitted with seatbelts. We have already included within the current road safety strategy a guide to how to retrofit seatbelts. So there is a variety of things going on in this area.

A key concern is the informal industry developing in passenger transport between taxis and buses, operating outside regulation and outside a whole range of accreditation standards. We also see a range of problems with volunteer drivers ranging from public liability through to asking what the hell is going on there.

We have an ad hoc range of accreditation standards across the states and we think there should be a common approach to bus and coach standards at both an operational level and for the vehicle, and that that should somehow be managed through the National Transport Commission, similar to the schemes that the trucking industry has developed.

Finally, if you look at where the fatalities in buses are occurring, they are where people get on and off the bus or are in and around the bus. Unfortunately they are usually young or elderly people. We clearly see that we need some education campaigns focused on those areas. This sort of education campaign about entering and alighting from a bus and looking for the traffic and not walking in front of a bus used to happen, but it has gone off the agenda. There is probably some scope for campaigns to that effect.

To conclude, we take the view that public transport has not been addressed as one of the key solutions to reducing road trauma and fatalities. It actually is a solution in its own right because it reduces the level of cars on the road. Perhaps that should be seen as a positive policy approach that is encouraged through the Commonwealth and onto the states. The heavy vehicle safety strategy that has recently been developed—which we were heavily involved with and which we are happy with—includes that statement, and I think that might be the first time that recognition has been given to that in a national road safety strategy. In conclusion, that is our view and I am happy to take any questions.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Apps; that is refreshingly brief and frank. I want to raise a couple of points. What is your industry's view about using headlights during the day?

Mr Apps—We have not adopted a policy. I do not think it would be a particular issue for the industry. There are certain views about whether it is effective or not. The industry does not have a policy.

CHAIR—For your regular interstate and intrastate services, coaches are now all fitted with belts?

Mr Apps—All the new coaches are fitted with belts, yes.

CHAIR—In the McCafferty's crash where two people were killed, they were the only two not wearing belts—was that the story?

Mr Apps—From memory, that is the case.

CHAIR—So there is a strong case for them on those longer trips.

Mr Apps—Certainly. There is a recognition that on those longer trips with higher speeds there is a need. But I guess when we look at school and route services, which largely involve regular stops and low speeds and with people getting on and off regularly, seatbelts are impractical. How

do we get them to wear them anyway? That is particularly the case with, for example, mandating them on school buses. But I think the reality is that if we look at what is going on in the marketplace there is a lot of pressure on the industry to actually have seatbelts included on school and route services. That pressure is coming particularly from parents and citizens associations and schools. So I think we are seeing a natural progression of it happening. As new buses come on, some operators are purchasing them with them included, so it is happening naturally through the marketplace.

Mr HAASE—I want to pursue the same line. I see no justification for having seatbelts on any buses if the same criteria cannot be used for having them on all buses. Whether they are retrofitted or for new buses only, over a period of a decade or some such time I think that would be acceptable to most. As far as their use is concerned, we seem to have managed in many environs as regards the wearing of bicycle helmets and the use of seatbelts in passenger cars, so I see no problem with schoolchildren. I would hope that we would eventually move to seatbelts because even at low speeds if you fall off the road or are engaged by some other high-speed vehicle, a seatbelt is a defence.

Mr Apps—There is no doubt about it. The industry's position is that we support the use of seatbelts. In relation to mandating seatbelts, the cost issues do not actually add up, and the industry is moving down a path with some new buses including seatbelts because of marked pressure.

Mr HAASE—So you are only saying that you would not want to see mandatory retrofit on existing buses.

Mr Apps—No. We do not believe that seatbelts should be mandated in school and route services either, for the reasons outlined in our submission.

Mr HAASE—Fair enough.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Apps. We will move now to Mr Bedford, the National President of the Ulysses Club, who wants to speak on behalf of motorcyclists.

Mr Bedford—Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon. As National President of the Ulysses Club I directly represent some 24,000 members throughout Australia. As you will see in our submission, the club membership represents approximately half of the over-40 motorcyclists in Australia. The club started some 20 years ago tomorrow week and in that time it has grown to its current size, with 120 branches throughout Australia. We also have sister clubs in New Zealand and South Africa which have come from our club, as well as new branches forming in Canada, the USA, Germany and Indonesia. So the club is spreading its tentacles representing motorcyclists.

Motorcycling is a number of things. It can be a cheap alternative mode of transport. It may be a recreational pursuit. It may be a person's only mode of transport. But what it is to nearly all motorcyclists is a culture. It was interesting to hear the previous speakers speak about the culture, and we need to address the culture. If you ask a motorcyclist to define what attracted him or her to riding or what motivated him or her to use a motorcycle, you will probably get answers like: 'It's the wind in the face,' 'I love the freedom,' 'It's cheap,' 'It's environmentally

friendly,' 'I like the risk and the adrenaline high' or any number of different answers to describe their passion for riding a motorcycle. It becomes a love affair. It is intriguing and exciting, and it gets in your blood and becomes a part of your way of life.

It is somewhat saddening that the Ulysses Club is the only motorcycle organisation to make a submission to this inquiry. Perhaps this is indicative of the fractured approach that the various state based motorcycle action and lobby organisations have taken and which has resulted in a lack of infrastructure for motorcyclists. We do not have a good lobby group and we are not getting the money spent on motorcycle issues.

The Ulysses Club has been working hard at bringing the various organisations such as the state motorcycle riders associations, the Motorcycle Council of New South Wales, the various motorcycle riders clubs and the industry together under one banner of the Australian Motorcycle Council in order to give motorcyclists a unified voice plus a national strategy to examine and recommend improvements for motorcycle safety. Unfortunately, the federal government refused a request placed with the ATSB through the Motorcycle Consultative Committee for funding for the amount of \$31,000 for the AMC to continue its work.

At present all motorcycle and safety and awareness issues are financed through the various member organisations of the AMC. We get no government funding at all. The work of the AMC cannot continue if the only source of income is from its members. Road safety is the responsibility not only of the users but also of governments, as the cost in economic and social terms continues to spiral upwards. As a responsible member of the community, the Ulysses Club subsidises rider training for its members to undertake skills and safe riding behaviour type courses to a maximum amount of \$60 per annual subscription or for a triennial subscription period. That \$60 is more than the club receives from its members for their subscriptions. We also subsidise a similar amount for members to undertake a first aid course. So, from a \$45 three-year subscription, members can get subsidies to the value of \$120 to undertake training courses. I do not know of any other motoring organisation which provides that sort of service to its members. I think it could be held up as an example to other organisations. We take a responsibility, but what we are saying to the government is that it has to take some responsibility as well.

I would anticipate that 99 per cent of all licensed motorcyclists riding registered motorcycles on the road would also either own, drive or use another motor vehicle, whether that be a car, truck or bicycle, whereas only a very small percentage of car drivers or truck drivers would actually be motorcyclists. Because of this dual use by motorcyclists, we are much more aware of the presence of motorcycles using the road in our vicinity when we are in our other vehicles than non-motorcyclists are. I would suggest also that the defensive attitudes learned by the majority of motorcyclists—and I might put out this attitude: adjustment and learning are ongoing for the life of the motorcyclist—carry over to the other vehicle that the motorcyclist drives, making us much safer car and truck drivers than non-motorcyclists are. The majority of the public do not even notice us most of the time and, when they do, they think we are a danger to ourselves and to them. Those who do not ride will never understand how we are in control and are more concerned about our lives than they will ever be. I am not suggesting that all car drivers be made to ride a motorcycle as well, as attractive as that may seem from our viewpoint, as such a scheme is unworkable and impractical.

Campaigns such as the one run in Victoria last year following the levy to the TAC—they produced an excellent promotional video or campaign and then ran it for a very short time, which showed a car driver and a motorcyclist being stopped midway, the drivers transposing into each other's vehicles and their perceptions of all of a sudden changing to being aware of the motorcycle and things like that—need to be ongoing and they need to be national rather than minority state based. That was an excellent campaign and it went for too short a time. I think it might have featured in New South Wales for a short time. But it did not go far enough—it was just one short campaign.

In our submission to the committee we have highlighted the need for improvements to the road environment to make riding safer, such as clearing roadside hazards, shoulder sealing, audible edge lining, sealing of side roads and driveways back from the road and the clearing of gravel from corners. Whilst these and our other recommendations are aimed primarily at making it safer for motorcyclists, these improvements would benefit all road users. It is our primary submission that the improvement of the road environment would be the single most significant achievable factor in reducing road trauma.

It is a belief held by the club—supported, I would suggest, by the majority of the motoring community—that too much emphasis is placed upon, and too much infrastructure is put in place to enable, speed detection as a road safety measure, especially by automotive speed detection devices. The general motoring public sees the various government speed enforcement tactics as being generally for revenue raising, with their 'every kilometre over' killer message a convenient and easy way to promote the strategy. Having read the other submissions to this enquiry, I feel that most believe that governments rely upon speeding motorists to provide revenue for them, which is why governments do not introduce programs which would reduce speeding rather than penalise it. I ride my motorcycle to work five days a week into the Brisbane CBD from the north side of the city. I ride down Hanford Road. In the three years I have been riding this wide-open four-lane road I have never seen a single motorcycle/motor vehicle accident or evidence of one and yet at least once or twice a week there is a speed camera situated on this road. I do not know where they got their statistics from to make this an accident black spot, but from my observations it was not from motor vehicle accidents.

Each day in Queensland when the camera operators commence duty they log onto a police website they are given the choice of three camera sites to set up their camera for the day. If the operators choose poorly from their three choices—in other words, it is a quiet day and they do not get a specified number of infringements—they get a 'please explain'. The Queensland police cameras are in my opinion, and in the opinion of the Ulysses Club, being used for revenue raising rather than for accident prevention if that is the case.

Driving to work I see, on very rare occasions, a marked police car or motorcycle, and the improvement in driver behaviour in traffic—not only in speed control but in other behaviours such as lane jumping, yellow light running and driving without due care and attention—when that marked police car or motorcycle is around is incredible. It is much safer for me to ride my own motorcycle in that traffic when there is a marked police car around. One of the club's submissions, therefore, is to get the police out of the camera vans and get them back on the road in police cars or on police motorbikes: get them out there and get them visible. How that is funded is not really our position to nominate; it is up to the government, but we believe we need more police out on the road. And I am not saying that because I am a serving police officer,

either; I am not looking after my employment. We believe that, if the police are out there, driver behaviour will improve. If driver behaviour improves, road trauma will lessen.

I have a lot of other things here I wanted to say but they are not really relevant anymore. I have watched all the statistical shows this morning—the various state representatives saying what a good job they are doing and how they are redressing trauma and everything. As far as our belief as motorcyclists is concerned, we are a minority. Sometimes we are represented very poorly in the media. Just recently there was an article in the *Courier Mail* in Brisbane which used a picture of a motorcyclist monowheeling. It was a very fuzzy picture of a motorcyclist monowheeling, so you could not tell where it was happening or which state it was happening in. The article had the by-line ‘Motorcycle hooning’ or ‘A motorcycle hoon’ to illustrate the police minister’s message about impounding cars that had been used for hooning. The minister’s message was that, as a result of the hooning legislation, 900 cars had been impounded for bad behaviour by motorists but not one motorcycle, and yet the media chose to use a motorcyclist to represent the story.

Most motorcyclists are part of the motoring public as well. Our chosen or preferred mode of transport is not being misused or impounded because of antisocial behaviour. We pay our taxes. We contribute more to government coffers in registration and other costs than most of the rest of the motoring public because we generally own more than one vehicle. We believe as motorcyclists that we deserve a better deal in the allocation of funds on infrastructure and for road safety issues. Thank you again for the chance to address you. That is my submission.

CHAIR—Thank you; very good.

Ms O’BYRNE—I have one little question. We spoke to a different motorcycle association in Tassie recently. Earlier in the day we received some photographs of road barriers which had wires or chains across them. They were raised by this group as significant safety impediments for them. ‘If you hit one of those, you die,’ was the line. Does the Ulysses Club have a view on the use of those as barriers?

Mr Bedford—Yes. Part of the original submission I wrote out to give to you today said that the Ulysses Club coming here and being the only representative of motorcyclists was an opportunity for us to avoid raising all those dead issues—such as the wire rope barriers and footpath parking and state levies et cetera which the fractured motorcycle lobby seem to love to get on to—and perhaps come along with a fresh approach. The fresh approach says that if you listen to us and our submissions it will not only benefit motorcyclists, it will benefit all road users. I do not have any problems with wire rope barriers. Anything that stops me from sliding into the path of oncoming traffic if I happen to hit a patch of oil as far as I am concerned is good.

CHAIR—Very good.

Ms LEY—You said that there needs to be a heavier emphasis on improving road infrastructure because that is the most achievable factor if we want to reduce road trauma. I am interested in the weighting that you give to driver education and other factors that are not related to the extremely capital intensive cost of improving the road.

Mr Bedford—It has to be a balanced approach. A motorcyclist is more prone to coming off his motorbike because of a bad road surface and having an accident than a car driver is in such circumstances. Part of the training that we encourage people to take involves gaining skills and recognising safe behaviours and road conditions and to drive accordingly. Educating other road users to the presence of motorcycles is part of that balanced approach as well. You cannot highlight any one particular issue and say that is more important. You need to have a balanced approach to it and say, 'That's important; that's important.' We need to look at all these issues. But as a club we think one of the biggest issues which needs addressing is the road environment because a motorcycle only has so much tyre on the road and a bad road environment makes it so much more unsafe for a motorcyclist than for a car driver.

Ms LEY—There is what I call a motorcycle black spot in my electorate where motorcycles come off the Hume Highway on a shortcut down to Melbourne. There have been quite a few motorcycle accidents on this particular small stretch of country road, which is great scenic riding but if you are not used to it it is probably quite lethal. I wonder how you are addressing that. There have not been car accidents here; just motorcycle accidents. The general thinking is that the cyclists have simply been too inexperienced for the condition of the road.

Mr Bedford—I would agree with you. I represent a club of mature motorcyclists and most of us behave differently from the young ones on their multicoloured sports bikes. That is something that the motorcycle industry has to take some blame for in how they advertise. I read an article in a magazine on the plane coming down yesterday regarding advertising a new motorcycle. They gave a top speed of 283 kilometres per hour for this motorcycle, which is absolutely a ridiculous thing to advertise. It is speed in advertising again. That attracts the young testosterone driven youth to get on one of these high powered motorcycles before they are adequately trained or capable of handling them. We have similar black spots in Brisbane. Mount Glorious is a prime example of that.

Ms O'BYRNE—One of the issues that is raised—and you are discussing inexperienced riders—is that we tend to think that inexperienced riders are probably going to be children or young people. There is a concern with motorbikes that quite often someone gets their licence at 18 and rides a bit then. Then they use a car for 20 years. At that point they are in a position to have a motorbike again as their lifestyle changes. But they have not had any experience for 20 years. What is the impact of that? I am assuming that is something as an organisation you would have focused a bit on, given the nature of your organisation.

Mr Bedford—Yes. One of the very reasons we introduced rider training to encourage our members to undertake skills training courses is that a lot of them are coming back to motorcycling after the mortgage is paid off or when they have an empty nest and time on their hands. That is why we encourage our members to get out and train. Unfortunately, to be honest, the message is not getting through to enough of them. We only have 10 per cent of our members taking up that offer of subsidised rider training. One of the problems we struck was that, as soon as we announced that we would subsidise rider training for our members to a value of half the approximate cost of the course, all the rider training organisations put their costs up \$60 per course so that it was still costing the members the full amount.

Ms LEY—It is a very sound economic theory.

Mr Bedford—They just took advantage of the subsidy.

CHAIR—Mr Bedford, thank you very much for the effort you have put into this submission. Thank you for coming down from Brisbane. I appreciate the time you have given the committee. I now call on Mr Scruby to make a presentation.

Mr Scruby—Thank you for allowing us to present to you today. The Pedestrian Council has been in existence for about eight years. It is a non-profit organisation representing the largest road user group in Australia. It also represents the most vulnerable road user group in Australia. Everyone present is part of the pedestrian group.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

The *Financial Review* recently said that PowerPoint presentations were becoming very boring, so I am trying to make this more exciting by showing you some photos. I will proceed as quickly as I can to try to highlight the plight of the pedestrian.

Our four objectives are the continuing safety, amenity, access and health of pedestrians throughout Australia. We conduct a couple of major national events each year. We have just had the seventh Walk to Work Day, which we conduct in October. You will probably recognise the person in the picture who was our leader this year. We are very grateful to him. We also conduct Walk Safely to School Day which is just being expanded on a national basis this year. That has been a very successful event in New South Wales for three years. It has been trialled in both Adelaide and Brisbane and will expand nationally this year.

I am sure you know the basic costs. These figures are a few years old. Apart from pain, grief and suffering, road crashes cost Australians \$15 billion per annum. We estimate that it has gone up to about \$18 billion. Pedestrian fatalities have reduced from 501 in 1989 to 250 in 2002. Serious pedestrian injuries have reduced from 4,088 in 1989 to 3,239 in 1996. Ian Faulks would be able to tell us why we do not have any more up-to-date statistics on pedestrian injuries. That is a very important statistic because, while fatalities are coming down, injuries are not coming down as significantly. There are a lot of reasons for that. Each fatality costs the community an average of \$1.7 million. Each serious injury costs the community an average of \$408,000. Typically, pedestrian injuries cost twice as much as motor vehicle injuries. I will address the common platitude about revenue raising in a minute, but those statistics are very relevant.

As you can see, pedestrian fatalities are mostly represented in the 60-plus age group. We all know that we are ageing rapidly as a nation. One can only suggest—and, unfortunately, believe—that this trend is going to get worse as we age unless we have some major changes. As you can see, motor vehicle deaths are coming down significantly but pedestrian deaths have plateaued. The reason they have plateaued in relation to motor vehicle accidents is that we are making motor vehicles so much safer. They have seatbelts, airbags, crumple zones, ABS brakes, better roads—the whole thing. But the pedestrian death toll is plateauing and it is a worrying trend.

At the end of 1999, we held a pedestrian summit. A hundred of the top road pedestrian experts in Australia were invited and we then produced a pedestrian charter, which you now have in your possession. I would ask you to read it when you get a minute; it is about a 10-minute read, but I

think you will enjoy it—particularly as you are all part of the club. In it they found that pedestrians have the right to walk with freedom, independence, comfort and safety and with reasonable peace of mind; that there was a need for a complete and unimpeded network of pedestrian ways through urban areas; the need for safe, well maintained, well lit walkways without obstructions or barriers; the need for safe and convenient access to common destinations in other modes of transport; and the need for a public educated on the health, social, environmental and economic benefits of walking.

We all know that 40 per cent of Australians are obese. The trend line is moving upwards and by 2020, if we do not change our behaviour, we will be fatter than the Americans—an awful thought. The one way out of this is walking; if people are to walk, they have got to walk in safety and with a better amenity and a better environment. That is not happening and local councils usually treat pedestrians as the lowest of the food chain. We might get the footpath fixed if there is no other money to spend in the budget.

I want to have a look at a few of the problems we have as second-class citizens: footpath obstructions, illegal and dangerous parking, construction sites, footpaths which lead nowhere, footpaths which are not maintained, pedestrian crossings in zones and street furniture—all which lead to safety issues. Let me show you why we are second-class citizens. That particular offence, in spite of the fact that the driver has committed four others, will attract a maximum penalty of \$68—the same penalty as for parking five minutes over time on a parking meter. It is the same there, and that same truck—this photo was taken five years ago—still stops there every day. It is a route home for a lot of schoolkids who are forced out at traffic lights to get round because that is where he drops off his beer. The same thing at the pub; let's get them all drunk and then send them out on the road squeezing between the vehicles. These were all put in the Auditor-General's 1999 report into street parking and nothing has changed. The RTA called for submissions 1¼ years ago. All the major groups put in submissions and there has not been one word since. This is on Spit Road. This gentleman managed to park and force kids out onto a three lane highway. Again, the maximum penalty is \$68.

Now let us see why we favour the motor vehicle. If you stop in the middle of George Street in a bus lane it is \$220, three demerit points and \$130 tow away, so put it up on the footpath and it is \$68 and you can stay there all day. Incidentally, for a bit of fun, the parking in most inner-city car parks in the CBD is \$68 a day, so where will you park? And why not just deliver the Coca-Cola at the bus stop? People say, 'Where else is he going to park?' Where else are the pedestrians going to get on and off the bus? The penalty is still \$90 and there are no demerit points. Of course if you are the RTA, where else would you put your variable message sign so you can tell motorists that there are roadworks ahead? And when kids are coming home from school—after all the millions of dollars that state governments spend on safer routes to school—we let all the vehicles park on the footpaths so that children can walk on the road. And when we build a footpath where does it end up? At least we give a good sign which says, 'Pedestrians watch for vehicles', not 'Motorists watch for pedestrians'. Where does it end up? There. Where do you walk across the bridge?

We are increasingly seeing the use of these devices by the elderly and they are an excellent device for keeping them in touch with the community, but what is council doing with their footpaths? They do not make them so the disabled or the aged or the infirm can use them. This is a fantastic device that will stop the cost of Meals on Wheels and keep these people in touch with

their communities, but we are not creating an infrastructure for them. We are creating an environment which is unsafe and dangerous. When council built this road only a year ago with a brand-new footpath, where did they leave all the power poles? They left them right in the middle of the footpath—where else?

When we create pedestrian crossings, where do we park? Always in front of them so no-one can see people as they step out. You can see the traffic lights there on the far side; that is where a young boy from our children's school was killed. He came out from the pub. And where does Chubb stop every day? It stops right in the middle of the pedestrian zone. Where do the taxis drop off their fares? It is always in the pedestrian zone. What does the City of Sydney do with its street furniture and the millions of dollars that come from J.C. Decaux? They place them at every set of traffic lights so that you cannot see the pedestrians emerging from behind the street furniture.

Ms O'BYRNE—I do not want to muck up your flow, because it is quite interesting, but what do you think needs to be done at a federal level?

Mr Scruby—If we start at the top of the pyramid then, hopefully, by telling you this you can push the ideas back down, otherwise everyone plays pass the parcel.

Ms O'BYRNE—So would you like some kind of national regulation or set of standards?

Mr Scruby—We would like an inquiry into pedestrians.

Ms O'BYRNE—Why?

Mr Scruby—Because it is a very important issue for this nation. The Prime Minister has seen fit to support a walk to work day because he knows the value of walking, but you cannot get people to walk when it is dangerous. Let me continue—I will not be very long.

Have a look at this. This is a picture of Pitt Street Sydney at Martin Place. A nib is constructed to give pedestrians and motorists better visibility of each other, so where do we put the kiosk? It is right in the middle where you cannot even park, so no-one can see each other on the busiest intersection in the city. And now we make them scroll. J.C. Decaux has said that, if they scroll, 95 per cent of motorists actually watch them, so what are they watching when they are driving through the intersection? The RTA's very own policy states that street furniture should never be placed in a position that obstructs vision between pedestrians and motorists, but it does and everyone turns a blind eye. This one shows the same thing. Pedestrians do cross against the lights, and motor vehicles do run red lights. It is a recipe for disaster.

Australian design rule 42.9.1, which came in in 1988, states:

No vehicle should be equipped with any object or fitting not technically essential which protrudes from any part of the vehicle so that it is likely to increase the risk of bodily injury to any person.

This picture shows a standard vehicle that you will see on the roads anywhere west of the divide. They are all illegal. What do we do anywhere further north than Maroochydore? We have statutory fishing rod holders. If that hit a child in the face or an adult in the chest it would kill

them. At least we have had them banned in New South Wales, which we are pretty proud of, and yet the authorities turn a blind eye even though they are against the law. You are not allowed to attach anything to a vehicle which is likely to increase the risk of injury to a human being.

In Brisbane, they put bike racks on the front of buses and yet in Europe they have now brought out a brand new standard which has made vehicles safe. Here is a picture of a hillbilly—he did not have to put the sign up; it is evident. And here is a picture of a man who came down from Queensland on a holiday who attached his outboard motor to the front of his vehicle with a rope. Here is a picture of a taxi with a bullbar. We have a lot of bulls in the centre of Sydney, as you probably know!

I will go through the other major issues. I will leave copies of two articles from the *Sydney Morning Herald* which I wrote nearly two years ago. We are very proud to have pressured government into a major review of fines and demerit points. Demerit points are the most important tool in road safety. They are a socially equitable tool. They show whether or not a person is a bad driver. It is not about dollars. The rich can afford the dollars. We have so many anomalies. I will read from this very quickly:

The penalties, demerit points and enforcement systems are a veritable minefield of contradictions, anomalies, irregularities, omissions, injustices and confusion. They fail to target the road user who deliberately offends, ignoring the risk that others may be killed or injured.

For example, during holiday periods, a driver will lose six demerit points for failing to fasten his or her seat belt, an offence where nobody else's safety is compromised—

that is if nobody else is in the vehicle. The article continues:

Yet that same driver can drive unlicensed in an unregistered and uninsured vehicle, up a one-way street the wrong way, watching TV, using a mobile phone, with a radar detector, turn right against a no-right-turn sign, stop on a pedestrian crossing, drive along the footpath, drive negligently, towing a trailer full of (unbuckled) children and attract not one demerit point. But there are three demerit points for driving in a bus lane where nobody's safety is at risk.

And there are two demerit points for playing loud music. The whole system is wrong. We have got to get it right. It is a great system for quickly identifying dangerous drivers and getting them off the roads.

Roll-top kerbs are increasingly being built round Australia and they encourage people to drive up on the footpath. Ask anyone from the vision impaired groups. One of our directors is a director of the Royal Blind Society. He said, 'Please get this point across: we can't tell how to get on and off a road now because of these roll-top kerbs.'

Ms O'BYRNE—Cannot tell?

Mr Scruby—They can feel. They can detect a kerb with their cane. They cannot detect roll-top kerbs. They roll. They become an incentive to park on the footpath, which is illegal incidentally. The law states very clearly right throughout Australia: it is an offence to stop—no longer park—on a footpath. Let me take you through Balmain one day to see how many people are on the footpath and how many are parked on the road. They are outnumbered. Rarely, if ever,

do you see speed cameras in pedestrian shopping strips where they are mostly needed and where we should have speed limits of 50 kilometres per hour. We should encourage the widespread deployment of the new red light speed cameras, which we have in Canberra and in Victoria to significantly reduce trauma at intersections where pedestrians and motorists, especially in side impact collisions, are so vulnerable.

Magistrates are totally out of touch with drunk drivers. There must be an automatic loss of licence if you drink and drive. No discretion should be available to magistrates after 0.07 as in Victoria. In New South Wales last year 5,500 drunk drivers did not lose their licences, 500 of whom were high range—absolutely crazy. In the United Kingdom, it is automatic loss of licence for a year if you drink and drive. In New South Wales there is one drink driver who has had 10 drink-driving convictions and never been to jail. The whole system is in urgent need of review. Magistrates have got to learn that they cannot have discretion after a certain point. A member of parliament was 0.22 and got off with a section 556, which is now a section 10. It was not even recorded.

Unlicensed drivers are estimated to be as high as 12 per cent. We must consider the New Zealand system of confiscation of vehicles. There has been a 40 per cent reduction in New Zealand in unlicensed driving. There is no other way to get the recalcitrant driver off the road than to take his or her vehicle. I know the police do not like it, because it is hard work, but it should all be outsourced to the NRMA and the RACV.

Can I be very rude and ask anyone in this room or on the committee if they know what a 10-kilometre shared zone is, because I want to prove a point?

Mr HAASE—I do not.

CHAIR—I have seen a shared zone but I have never seen it at that speed.

Mr Scruby—It is a wonderful opportunity and a total misnomer. Shared gives a feeling of equal or similar rights, does it not? In fact in a shared zone, a pedestrian has absolute right of way. I do not think one in the whole of Australia has ever been enforced. I do not think anyone has ever been booked for doing more than 10 kilometres per hour. They are a phenomenal device used widely in Europe and America where they are known as pedestrian priority zones, which gives the meaning. As a shared zone, no-one will know what they mean. It will take forever to try and change the behaviour. But they are a great opportunity for areas such as car parks and backstreets where you want vehicular access but you want to use it as a permanent pedestrian crossing. Please consider this in the Australian Road Rules. They cannot be changed state by state. This word has to change nationally.

Mr HAASE—You want them called ‘pedestrian priority zones’. Let us be specific.

Mr Scruby—Funnily enough, the Pedestrian Council has a different point of view to the RTA. We believe that a shared zone should be 20 kilometres per hour; they believe it should be 10. That might sound strange but most vehicles cannot even be calibrated at 10, and so it is very hard to enforce. Secondly, we still believe if Holland can work well under a 20 kilometre per hour shared zone—by the way Holland is the only country in the western world to reverse obesity trends, because they walk and cycle.

I am sorry to digress, I am nearly there. I will move to motor vehicle advertising. Really and truly—I watched one this morning. There is a brand new Ford ad. The Ford takes off and it is racing a motorcycle. It jumps a large span of water. The motorcyclist naturally crashes into the water and nearly drowns, but the bloke driving the ute gets to the other side and then he does a wheel spin. The code took years—Lauchlan McIntosh would agree—to get together, didn't it? It is a very explicit code run by people who will not enforce it. Every time you complain, they say: 'But that's fantasy. Everyone would know that is fantasy.'

AAMI released a survey a month ago which showed that 85 per cent of respondents said that motor vehicle advertising encourages speeding and dangerous road behaviour. Yet the motor vehicle advertisers and the motor vehicle manufacturers are saying, 'We don't encourage speeding, but we'd like you to ban all speed cameras.' Senator Boswell was highly critical of the ASB in a letter back to us. He said he would not accept fantasy as a reason for allowing these ads to go to air. He also said he was very concerned at the time taken to deliberate on complaints, which was generally an average of six weeks, when most campaigns do not even last that long. So it is a great rort. Why aren't these ads put off the air before they even reach the air? We are calling for the replacement of the chairman of that organisation, because he is in advertising himself, with a retired judge. I do not know what Lauchie thinks, but we think the rules that relate to advertising are pretty reasonable.

Ms O'BYRNE—So the problem is with their capacity to enforce the rules?

Mr Scruby—Yes. They are not enforced, and they should be enforced within a minute of a complaint coming in.

Ms O'BYRNE—Would you prefer some sort of mandatory code as opposed to voluntary?

Mr Scruby—No. You know what would happen then; it would just become overbureaucratised. But I think—

Ms O'BYRNE—Then how will you will make sure that, if people make a complaint to the ASB, the ASB will deal with it effectively?

Mr Scruby—By giving the chairman discretionary power to take an ad off within an hour. He could look at it and say, 'That's against the code, so it's off.' But there should be a vetting process before they get to air. Have a look at the latest Saab 9.3 ad. We complained. It starts off with the vehicle on a 'no stopping' sign. It drives furiously through a pedestrian zone—you have all seen it—and it ends up doing a 360-degree turn. The code says no sudden turns and no breaking of any state laws.

Ms O'BYRNE—But apparently it is fantasy.

Mr Scruby—It is all fantasy, and so it is permissible. There is a lot of driver behaviour which we could change. But these people are the same people who argue that smoking does not injure health and that we should be able to advertise cigarettes because they are legal. This is a travesty. The ASB should be disbanded unless, very soon, someone is put in there who will actually enforce their code. I am sure a future government, Labor or Liberal, will eventually make it—

Ms O'BYRNE—You are saying that the only way to support this code and make sure it is enforced is through a personality based change. How do you maintain that it is always going to be the case that people will appoint somebody who will enforce the code?

Mr Scruby—I am not saying that. I am saying a retired judge should be appointed. It is not about personality. It is the same thing as a court. You could say every judge is biased, but at least the community would have the feeling that the person, the judge, was going to make a reasonable decision. But we should not have a man from Colgate-Palmolive. Really and truly, this is farcical.

CHAIR—Dr Sofoulis, do you want to make a comment on this point?

Dr Sofoulis—I do. I do not think it is really worth going to a lot of trouble to regulate meanings. Meanings are very poetic. No matter what code you have in place, somebody is going to come up with more creative and metaphorical ways of getting across the same meanings. It is yet to be demonstrated that, overall, ads have more effect than a combination of things like kids watching movies such as *The Fast and the Furious*, playing games such as Gran Turismo and doing driving simulations. Rather than just going for censoring advertising—and most people who say that are not communications and cultural theorists—I think we would be better to articulate what goals we want for our driving culture and to have a system of rewarding car manufacturers for producing socially responsible and interesting advertisements. The trouble and expense required to develop and police a code would be far better spent on articulating what kind of culture we want and rewarding advertisers for moving in that direction.

Mr Scruby—That is great. And we could also put advertising for cigarette smoking back on and reward them for gradually reducing the number of ads. That is absolutely ridiculous. Every state minister and every motoring organisation in this country—each and every one of them—has complained about the ASB, to a point where Carl Scully was on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* six weeks ago. The RACV, NRMA and AAA have all complained.

CHAIR—I think we have got the point.

Ms O'BYRNE—Basically, you think the code is a failure.

Mr Scruby—We are not objecting to the code.

Ms O'BYRNE—The implementation of the code is a failure.

Mr Scruby—Motorists are allowed to somehow raise vehicles to skyscraper heights, and there is no enforcement of the code. They are very dangerous. Anyone who has done first-year school physics knows that a double-decker bus is more likely to roll than a single one. Please have a look; they are very dangerous.

Truck driver fatigue—do you really want a farce? We all know that the three biggest killers on the road are speed, alcohol and fatigue. We advertise prolifically about fatigue, and guess what? You can drive a 20-tonne truck from Perth to Sydney and not get one demerit point, not one. You should lose your licence for falsifying a logbook, and the fine in New South Wales is \$160—

what a joke! They are overrepresented in crashes. There should be a minimum of six demerit points for falsifying a logbook, because fatigue is so dangerous.

Four-wheel drives—really! They are overrepresented in road trauma—no-one disputes that. Many are still very unsafe. We believe this five per cent tariff is a joke. It came in to help the person on the land; now every second mum in Mosman and dad in Toorak has got one. They are damned dangerous vehicles. We now have a Porsche Cayenne that does 250 kilometres per hour, costs \$270,000 and comes in on a five percentage tariff, whereas you have to pay 15 per cent for a nice safe Toyota or Volvo. This is absolutely outrageous. A recommendation might be to put them all back to 15 per cent and then reimburse genuine primary producers who live in the bush, because this is crazy. Why are we funding trauma through discriminatory tariffs?

Ms O'BYRNE—What do you think about reversing alarms? That has been an issue with four-wheel drives reversing.

Mr Scruby—There were 18 people killed last year by reversing vehicles, 12 of which were four-wheel drives, but there are still many cars on the road that are very dangerous. The camera, which I have been on TV demonstrating, is a much better idea than the alarms.

Ms O'BYRNE—Alarms do not always pick everything up, do they?

Mr Scruby—Young children do not react to alarms. The camera is fabulous. As soon as you put it in reverse, you see it in your rear vision mirror. You see the whole expanse. I think that sort of technology has terrific potential. I think the reversing buzzer is good.

On the issue of speed limits, please let us go national with 50 kilometres per hour. It is coming, and it is great. You only have to look at Victoria who went with it first. They now have the lowest pedestrian death rate ever. Fantastic—congratulations, Victoria.

Change penalty gradations to 10 kilometres per hour. It is crazy. In most states you go from over 60 to 75 and then over 70 to 90. Why do we go these 15-kilometre gradations when all the speed limits go up in tens? Bring them down to 10-kilometre gradations. And remember that the National Health and Medical Research Council found that you are twice as likely to have an accident for every five kilometres per hour you exceeded 60. That means that by 75, you are eight times more likely to have a crash than someone at 61. Sorry to push it through, but why is it the same penalty? If we got them down to 10, the police would be far more likely to put the cameras at 69 rather than 71 or 74.

Please phase traffic lights to accommodate the elderly. Traffic lights are all phased to accommodate motor vehicles. You walk through the city and at every corner you stop. Have a look at some of the European models which favour pedestrian access over motor vehicles. Watch an old person trying to cross the road. If they leave at the last phase of green, they cannot make the other side. It is not right.

The gentleman before me went on with the same old nonsense about revenue raising. Have we ever heard one person from the petrol lobby say that it is revenue raising when you fine people for running red lights? I wonder why not. Because they feel vulnerable at red lights. Even more, they would be happy if you fined people for speeding through red lights, like you do in Canberra

and in Victoria. It is very dangerous driver behaviour. But they have yet to understand that speeding is still the biggest killer on the road. It is a huge culture shock. When we were young, a copper had to follow you for a quarter of a mile to book you. Now you get booked in a millisecond, and people cannot get used to it. Speed cameras are not only here to stay; they are going to mean a huge change to our behaviour on the roads. We commend them and we ask the government to raise as much revenue as they can from people who want to speed.

We would like to see all governments move to the covert system rather than the overt—covert being Victoria. You should always expect there to be a speed camera around the corner. By the way, ladies and gentlemen, apparently the Brits have just developed one that sits in a cat's-eye, so we are all doomed! But we do encourage the states to put the revenue from fines back into road safety, like they do in Western Australia. I think that is about it. I am sorry if I have gone over time. Thank you for having me.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Scruby.

[2.15 p.m.]

TAYLOR, Mr Raymond David, General Manager, Business and Marketing, ARRB Transport Research Ltd

CHAIR—Welcome. I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Taylor—Thank you. I will be brief. I had a wan hope that I would be able to get the committee back on time, but when I saw that I was following Harold I decided that—

CHAIR—You surrendered!

Mr Taylor—I know Harold very well from the past. I want to focus on two or three things. I have provided to each member of the committee a presentation, so I will not go through the detail of it. I want to focus on what I think is the potential solution for Australian jurisdictions to ensure that the goals of the various road safety strategies will be met by 2010.

I refer you to the first page of the presentation. It merely states that everybody says it is important that we deal with road environment activity and road environment treatments. On page 2 I have put what I call the low-cost measures so that we are all sure of what we are talking about when we talk about low-cost road environment safety measures. There are some examples of those on page 2: roadside hazards, edge lining, road delineation, roundabouts, pole replacement and centre-line barriers. Those sorts of things are referred to as low-cost measures.

Page 3 is important. It sets out a series of applications where the sorts of treatments I am talking about are applied. They are generally applied in black spots programs, as we know. The black spots programs are what I call a reactive approach to improving our safety: we have crashes, we have injuries and, with black spots, we are addressing those crashes by trying to improve the road environment at the point where injuries have already occurred. We can do that both at a black spot or in a mass action sense. Mass action programs are also crash based but usually apply over a longer section of road or larger area.

When you are moving to address problems in the future, you have got to be looking at proactive approaches, which are more risk based. A road safety audit is one approach—and I know, Chair, that you made reference to that earlier in the day—but the approach which is emerging as one to be used in Australia is what I would call risk management. A risk management approach draws on what was undertaken in the formal road safety audit program but places the identification of risks in the roadside in relationship to one another and enables a road authority or a local council to prioritise those risks. That is the approach which is emerging; it is the approach where Australia has some world leadership in terms of its knowledge; and it is the approach where Australia has some world leading advice and support in software for road engineers—whether they be in a local council, lacking the expertise and contact with a lot of the research, or in a road authority. So the application of low-cost measures is, I think, the trick to ensuring that our road safety goals are achieved.

I will move over page 4. That simply tells you some of the crash factors or the improvement factors. Page 5 looks at the overall benefits of road environment programs in Australia. I have used the black spots programs as an example because they have been assessed. I use a very conservative analysis of about a four to one, to an eight to one benefit-cost ratio. I have heard people here today say that individual programs get better. I am sure that is the case, but for analytical purposes I am happy to use a fairly conservative analysis, because I think the situation demands it. The key question is: if we know what to do, if we know a lot of the treatments work and if we have programs on which to place those treatments, why aren't we achieving the goals? My answer to that is on page 6—that is, we need a genuine scale of implementation. We are just below a significant enough scale of implementation across the country in order to achieve the benefits from known treatments on the road environment.

I have two pages to show you. I have done some arithmetic; essentially I have estimated that across Australia we spend about \$225 million a year on road environment treatments in safety programs. These are estimates; they are not precise but, by rule of thumb, they are pretty well right. Assuming a four to one BCR across the whole lot, we get something like a three per cent net improvement in our road toll. I turn to the next page. With a decent scale of activity and investing \$600 million Australia-wide, there would be a benefit in the region of 13 per cent and we would get Australia's fatality rate strategy very well back on track.

In completing my comments I refer to my last page; I think this is an important issue. I try to identify why the scale is needed and how the level of scale of activity in road environment treatments and placements is important. First there is the actual size of the problem, and that is associated with the issue of crash clustering. Looking at crashes and plotting them across the network, there are some spots where they cluster, but the vast majority of crashes are what I call 'pepper and salted' across a road network. If you undertake a program which focuses on clustering, which essentially is a black spots program, you only tackle a small proportion of the problem. You tackle that effectively because black spots treatments work, but you do not tackle a large enough problem.

So we have to move away from being reactive—that is, dealing with where we know crashes occur—to being proactive: we have to try to improve the safety of the road environment using our skills and knowledge now before such crashes occur. Where route treatments are required, we have to move from being reactive to being proactive. The point of that in a strategic sense is that any decent road safety strategy that is run at a state level will look at trying to merge its different strategies—some behavioural strategies, some road environment strategies and some vehicle strategies. We have been told about a lot of different strategies relating to each of those areas today.

The point about those strategies is that they do not all occur at the same time; they do not always have the same level of impact. Vehicle strategies are a classic example—improved vehicle strategies and vehicle safety strategies; their implementation across the system is very important but it takes a long time. A maximum of something like six per cent of the vehicle fleet is turned over every year; if even half of those vehicles are of the best safety standards you are down to three per cent, and then some are going to crash. You can do the maths. There are strategies for the longer term; and there are strategies for the shorter term, which are enforcement, behavioural and educational. But in the middle is the road environment and, unless

we generate some scale of low-cost road environment treatments now, my fear is that the various strategy goals around the country will not be met.

CHAIR—That was very good and very concise. Thank you very much, Mr Taylor. As my colleagues have no questions, we thank you very much for appearing before the committee and giving evidence.

[2.24 p.m.]

MAKEHAM, Mr Peter Martin, Director, Safety and Environment, National Road Transport Commission

STURROCK, Mr Peter Macgregor, Chief Executive, Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries

CHAIR—Welcome.

Mr Sturrock—Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address you today. The Australian motor industry is becoming increasingly significant in its contribution to our economy; it is also becoming more influential in the global automotive community. In fact, this year for the first time the Australian industry's contribution to export sales alone will be in excess of \$5 billion; its contribution in total, including domestic sales of locally manufactured vehicles, will exceed \$18 billion. The total motor vehicle industry is another matter again. With the gradual reduction of tariff protection, imports now comprise around 70 per cent of domestic new vehicle sales in this country. So the total sales value of the motor industry per annum is approaching \$30 billion.

This year for the first time our total new car market is likely to reach 900,000 annual vehicle sales—a record. With global sales this year set to exceed some 60 million units, Australia's local production of some 350,000 vehicles for both domestic consumption and export sales would seem infinitesimal. In fact, a number of factors are combining to place the Australian motor industry not only on a path of growth but also in a position of influence. This has a direct consequence for future safety design legislation.

Never in the history of our local motor industry has there been so much international investment in manufacturing facilities and, increasingly, in research and development capabilities. During this year, both Mitsubishi and Toyota have announced investments in new research and development centres totalling some \$270 million. Additionally, Ford has just opened its new R&D centre at Broadmeadows in support of its new model diversification into the all-wheel-drive Territory. A fortnight ago Holden commissioned its new engine plant in Port Melbourne, representing an initial investment of some \$400 million. This has followed the recent announcement by the federal government confirming industry policies out to the year 2015, providing a decade of certainty to industry, which enables there to be greater confidence in new model development and investment planning.

Not only does Australia now build cars of world standard, it also creates them—and that is a huge distinction when viewed historically. Young Australian designers and engineers are entering the local work force in positions of some influence which have never before existed, and their ability to positively affect the future development decisions of their global parent companies has never been greater. With global investment has come far greater opportunity for our industry, with its developing sense of self-determination, to make a real impact on world design; that encompasses styling, performance, economy and safety.

In the South Pacific basin, Australia has in effect become an aircraft carrier from which global car companies can launch product into the fastest developing regions. Seen in this context, Australia stands poised to influence the safety standards of vehicles not only domestically but also in our region. As export markets grow, so do economies of scale, all moving towards that critical mass which positively supports our growing manufacturing sector.

A significant opportunity lies in the export of Australian engineered vehicles. This year export sales of vehicles will reach 120,000 units. As an example, the first shipment of Holden Monaros to the United States left Australia just two weeks ago. By the end of this decade it is anticipated that export sales will rise by another 25 per cent to 150,000 vehicles. The total income derived from Australian automotive exports will grow to around \$10 billion a year.

While it is increasingly evident that Australia's design and engineering capabilities and its manufacturing plants are capable of meeting the task of producing cars for the world, the challenges to our future growth now lie in what could be called the variables; the continuously changing parameters of safety and environmental issues are two key examples. Safety and the ability to build our cars economically to a global standard are paramount in this development. Harmonisation of Australian safety standards with the international UN regulations is a desirable outcome in the near future—not only to contain costs but also to improve Australia's competitive advantage in world markets.

The Australian design rules for motor vehicle safety and emission are currently about 70 per cent harmonised with the United Nations regulations. It is not unreasonable to aim for 100 per cent harmonisation in the near future. It is a situation well recognised by legislators and there is agreement to work towards a solution to reduce road trauma. But with the announcement of the post 2005 car industry plan, there is now a sense of greater need to ensure that our design regulations comply with global standards within a time span which facilitates new model development. Decisions taken now will have a significant effect on cars to be built post 2010.

Australia has created an enviable international record in the formulation of automotive safety regulations. For more than 30 years the industry's innovators and the legislators—which have backed them—have played well above their weight. Perhaps the most obvious example in this decision three decades ago was the mandating of compulsory fitment of seatbelts. Australia led the world in that regard. In 1977 Australia also mandated the use of top tether straps for child seat restraints. The requirement for top tether straps has recently been adopted by the UNECE Working Party 29 and is of course already law in the United States. Australia has also adopted impact crash protection regulations which are world leading. We are the only country in the world to require three performance standards: full frontal impact, offset barriers and side impact.

It is inarguable that Australia is certainly prominent in the determination of global safety standards and it is our expectation that, as the world motor industry moves towards harmonisation of standards in safety and emission, Australia will continue to play an important role. In fact, that is already evident in the move to determine global standards for vehicle compatibility. Currently under consideration by industry and governments world wide, Australia is playing a major role in devising test requirements for international adoption. Vehicle compatibility is of course a very contemporary concern. The emergence of the SUV as a vehicle of consumer choice is increasingly placing cars of significantly varying size and mass on our roads. This is a global phenomenon which is attracting widespread study by the industry,

investing tens of millions of dollars in seeking a solution. Australia has established a deserved international reputation for road safety innovation. It is our street cred which will continue to give us a disproportionately high share of voice in these issues of global harmonisation.

Road safety is not just about designing safer cars; it is also about the skills and attitudes of drivers. In this respect, the Australian motor industry is firmly supporting a proposed initiative to introduce enhanced driver education. Creating an understanding at the introductory level of the importance of personal responsibility in road safety is pivotally important. For without buy in from the consumer, there is little hope of achieving the cultural shift which is considered so essential in achieving the positive mind-set so critical to road safety. Our motor industry alone is prepared to invest around \$10 million per year in this road safety initiative, in partnership with federal and state governments and the insurance bodies, creating a fund which should lead to all provisional licence holders in all states participating in a comprehensive training program. It seems to us to be a grand opportunity to improve the defensive skill levels of these new drivers. This is essential when we note the unacceptably high rates of traffic accidents and fatalities of these younger drivers.

The future of the Australian motor industry holds great promise. What is needed now is a further shift in mind-set. Australia can no longer view itself as a motor industry in isolation. Our future depends on controlled integration with the global market on a level not previously experienced. No longer are we the supplicant accepting product of varying standards from offshore plants while simultaneously offering protection to a local industry producing products of arguably dubious quality. That is yesterday's view. It is one we still hear expressed from time to time and it needs to be debunked.

From now and into the future our vehicles and our standards are of world parity and we are increasingly capable of participating in global decisions on matters of engineering safety standards. For decades the Australian industry and governments have worked very closely and very successfully together to improve vehicle safety. We fully intend to continue this positive relationship to further reduce road trauma in the 21st century.

Mr HAASE—There have been a number of points raised today that directly react with the sorts of things you have been saying. I suspect that, among those here today, you are the best to comment about the likelihood of your industry cooperating with the introduction of some of those things to motor vehicles. The first one that comes to mind is a breath activated interlocking system for ignition. In round figures, do you have any idea of the cost per vehicle to introduce that on a grand scale if we had economies of scale?

Mr Sturrock—The short answer is no. Any initiatives like that need to be addressed very much as a standard across Australia and contemplated as being within the harmonised regulations around the world. The emphasis in my presentation was very much on Australia building vehicles for the world, not just building vehicles for Australia. We need to ensure that whatever regulation goes forward—be it in such matters or other matters to do with vehicles large or small—is harmonised with world standards and is not unique. That is simply a function of production efficiency; a function of enabling us to continue to build product for the world market. That is our only opportunity to grow and to succeed as an Australian manufacturing industry.

CHAIR—But you are not saying that at the expense of Australia having other refinements, are you?

Mr Sturrock—No, not at all. We have very clear and well defined standards. We have seen the benefit of that in new models and new technology over recent years. That will continue, without any question. The investment by brands throughout the world in their new technologies is quite outstanding. We bring those to the open market of Australia quite swiftly. We will continue to benefit from international developments within the industry.

Mr HAASE—Do you want to see your industry here in Australia influencing advertisers and ad creators to do something about this fantasy concept and the idea of speed and freedom and everything else that drives testosterone and sells your cars?

Mr Sturrock—I came in on the tail end of Mr Scruby's presentation. I did hear some parts of that. I remind everybody in the committee, as well as those in the audience, that the advertising code was developed by the industry in consultation with all state and federal transport officials. It was developed throughout 2002 and implemented from 1 December 2002. We were very supportive of that process. It was signed off at that time. Throughout 2003 it is important to note that there have been significant changes in the style of advertising for the automotive industry.

Industry members take extremely seriously their responsibilities in adhering to the code and in promoting issues of road safety. We have had a number of recent meetings with officials regarding some concerns that they have expressed to us. We have shared those in a very open and transparent way in the past couple of months. We have had meetings with the federal transport minister and the federal roads minister in the last couple of weeks as well and we have agreed in those meetings with the officials and the ministers that there should be a review of the code at the conclusion of the 12 months, which is effectively at the end of this month. We will continue that process of review and refinement of the code to ensure that it does meet the needs of both a sensible commercial environment in terms of the motor industry and road safety and traffic accident issues, which are fundamental to the community's needs.

Mr HAASE—That is a fine answer, because I am sure you agree that the industry has a responsibility to not lose any more lives gratuitously.

Mr Sturrock—Absolutely. I think we have demonstrated very clearly to the officials, by showing them tapes of commercials which are current campaigns and tapes of similar programs for similar models pre the code, that the difference is quite marked. It is interesting. The officials did comment at those meetings that they did see the change in the presentation of the industry. Having said that, you must also appreciate that every brand and company makes its own decisions and has its own reputation and integrity to protect. Should there be a particular instance where a company has, in certain people's view, breached the code, there is a process of adjudication and a process of change if the complaint is upheld. There may be some need to further refine that process, but we think that, fundamentally, the process is working well. It can be further improved over time, but the implementation of the review is a very positive step in that arrangement.

Mr HAASE—I want to move to something totally different. I think you are in a good position to comment on this. We are talking safety. We are perhaps talking total environment safety. I am

interested in two things: nonpolluting fuels in cars in the future and safe cars—that is, anti-impact electronic devices et cetera. How far away is any anti-impact technology? Is it one decade or five decades away? When are we going to see Australian cars with fuels cells using hydrogen coming off an assembly line?

Mr Sturrock—I think we all wish we knew on the last question. The short answer is that a number of brands internationally are saying that they will have hydrogen fuel cell vehicles readily available at affordable prices for regular transport in five to 10 years. There will be test vehicles before and during that period. The issue is a billion dollar investment. We must recognise that moving from fossil fuels to hydrogen—to steam and water—is a huge change. There are many issues. But that appears to be, as far as the engineers are concerned, the long-term solution to the fossil fuel and environmental emission problem.

It is probably fair to say that, if we are talking five to 10 years for a number of models from a number of brands internationally, we would share in that soon thereafter. But we may be talking around 2020 before we see large volumes of them. It is yet to be determined. But the brands have publicly said on many occasions that that is broadly their timing. We will share in that as a mature, advanced market of the world. If we maintain our focus on global standards and ensure that we are part of that and not unique, then we can share in that technology more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

Mr HAASE—Is this fantasy of anti-impact vehicles, guide paths on highways and things like that on the horizon?

Mr Sturrock—Yes. It is already being tested. It is in some very up-market models of certain European vehicles today. We would expect that that technology is going to roll out just like airbags and ABS brakes rolled out. Over time, the technology will become cheaper and more advanced. There are enormous gains to be made in those sorts of issues. There are a number of things happening with accident avoidance, ensuring driver retention and control et cetera which are very exciting, and I am sure that we will see that come to Australia quite soon as it is developed for world markets.

CHAIR—Thanks, Mr Sturrock. We will now move on to Mr Makeham, who is going to speak on the National Heavy Vehicle Strategy.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mr Makeham—Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I have a few slides to start with to explain what the National Road Transport Commission is. It is a national body set up in the 1991 premiers conference round under a Commonwealth act, but it reports to the nine governments. I will not dwell on that. The principles we have are road safety, transport efficiency, cost of administration and environmental impact, and they are the mandate we have when looking at issues. During recent months, the Commonwealth parliament passed the National Transport Commission Act. Our role has been broadened to include not only road transport but also rail transport and intermodal transport. That formally comes into being in January 2004, so that transition is in process now.

That is enough on the background. I want to talk a little about heavy vehicle safety. We have a clear role in heavy vehicle safety. To set the scene for us and others—it has been raised with us by a number of people—we sought to benchmark the performance of our industry with other OECD countries. The countries we compared ourselves to and considered ourselves similar to were the US, Canada, New Zealand and Western European countries. This work was done for the NRTC by Professor Peter Vulcan, Dr Narelle Howarth and Dr Peter Sweatman a couple of years ago. The study found that Australia's heavy vehicle fatality rate, measured on a fatalities per 100 million kilometres travelled basis, was 47 per cent higher than the USA, 39 per cent higher than Britain, and about the same as Germany and Canada. Interestingly enough, the study found that we do better than Sweden, France and New Zealand.

When we publicised this, and there it is in graphical form—Australia is the pale country third from the left on the screen—there is a big difference in the performance of countries. A lot of effort was put into this study to try to get things as equal as we could. When this was released, in some ways it was seen as a swipe at the road transport industry, but that is the wrong way of looking at it. It really is a commentary on the transport system, which involves not just the industry but the roads and those involved, like us, and you, as legislators. In an overview, and I just want to keep this down to a few slides, the authors of the study said that if our road system could be upgraded to something equivalent to the US or Britain, it would make a major difference. It also looked at upgrading routes and things like that. We have talked about some of the lower cost treatments—roadside habits, black spots and so forth. It also focused on speed, fatigue, day-night issues, seatbelt wearing, cab strength and underrun protection. There was a range of things referred to into the report.

So where does that take us? I think it was a useful wake-up call. We saw it as a way of calibrating Australia compared to other countries, where we can set out to improve ourselves. It is important not to go into denial and point fingers at the industry or somebody else. We have to point to ourselves in our different sectors. In working our way through that time, we came up with the idea of a national heavy vehicle strategy. We have heard a lot about the National Road Safety Strategy, and the national heavy vehicle strategy is directed to do much the same sort of thing but focus specifically on the heavy vehicle industry. So it is not in competition with the National Road Safety Strategy; it is supportive of it and does many of the same things but within a specialised sector. The strategy was developed in conjunction with us—the National Road Transport Commission—and the ATSB, in a coordination role. The major stakeholders—the industry groups, ATA, bus industry, Natroads, the police, AAA and so forth—were involved. It was a collegiate process. The strategy set strategic directions for between 2003-10 and an action plan for 2003-05, which is very similar in the direction of the National Road Safety Strategy.

Let us look at the strategic areas in which the strategy aims to bring about a significant improvement over the next 10 years. The issues are seatbelts—and I will talk a little about each of these as I go through—driver and industry management, roads infrastructure, driver impairment and fatigue, safety of commercial vehicles, and research and public education. I would like to touch briefly on each of these. I will start with the issue of seatbelts. In Australia we pride ourselves on our seatbelt-wearing rate; as a percentage it is up in the nineties for passenger cars. But for trucks it is more likely to be 25 or 30 per cent. In fact, of truck drivers killed in crashes only 10 per cent were wearing seatbelts. So there is a very significant issue in terms of the seatbelt wearing rate. I am pleased to say that the industry as a whole accepts this. This issue has been regarded by the industry associations as something which we should do

something about. So there is a whole range of initiatives that we are looking at in the strategy to try and improve that. It includes both the design of belts, enforcement, employer programs and so forth. Somehow we have to change that culture. The truck driver will drive to the depot in their car with their belt on but not drive their truck with their belt on.

The second area I want to talk about is driver and industry management. This is aimed at getting industry and enterprises to look at safety and get safety inculcated into their operations. The chain of responsibility is a revised legal process which looks at everybody in the chain of transport having a role. We have seen occupational health and safety accreditation schemes such as Truck Safe logistics and an improved understanding of obligation. So there is a whole range of activities there in terms of industry management to try and change the culture.

Speed management is another issue. Speed has been talked about a bit. This continues to be a major issue in terms of crashes in the heavy vehicle sector. Most heavy vehicle operators do comply, but there is a proportion that continue not to comply. So issues such as compliance, enforcement and speed limit need to be looked at. There is also the issue of speed limiters. Some trucks have speed limiters but have been observed going above the speed limit. So there is a whole range of issues that need to be looked at which are in the strategy.

My next point is on roads infrastructure. As I mentioned earlier in my summation of benchmarking, a selective investment in roads would make a very significant improvement to the road toll. One of the principal reasons we do not compare well to the US and UK is our road system. I am not just talking about having freeways everywhere. There are a whole range of improvements that can be made. Eric Howard earlier talked about some of the sorts of things we have in mind. Equally, it is not just an issue of black spots. It really has to be more than that. So it is something that you as legislators, I think, could have a role in.

The truck industry has its fair share of problems in the area of driver impairment and fatigue. We have a major project going on which is just about completed in terms of fatigue. It builds on your own excellent report, *Beyond the midnight oil. An inquiry into managing fatigue in transport*. We also have a range of measures in the strategy such as power napping, workplace drug policies, drink driving measures, light, ridges and so forth. These are all mentioned in some detail in our submission so I will not dwell on them here. We do have quite a comprehensive package in that area.

My next point is on safer commercial vehicles. There is a role here for vehicle standards, and that is a particular role that the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services has carriage of. We are looking at front, side and rear underrun—there are big benefits to be gained from those. In the longer term, we can look at things like intelligent safety systems, collision avoidance, fatigue and roll-over monitors and intelligent speed application—which are the very things you were talking about a moment ago. These are just over the horizon.

Next I want to talk about education, enforcement and research. Enforcement is still one of the most powerful drivers of change in road behaviour. It needs to be underpinned by good research and good public education. The NRTC, which has become the National Transport Commission, has a range of initiatives of its own that it is carrying out as part of the National Road Safety Strategy. As I mentioned before, there is also a fatigue review, which is building on *Beyond the midnight oil. An inquiry into managing fatigue in transport*. In terms of compliance and

enforcement, a major review of the compliance and enforcement laws is just about complete. That will be going out very shortly for a ministerial vote. The chain of responsibility is a concept of the responsibility for safe actions being carried right through the chain from the boardroom of the consignor right through to the receiver. There is also a regulatory review of speeding under way.

We also have another couple of projects which are more forward looking. Performance based standards is a new way of looking at the way in which we regulate vehicles and their use of the road space. Intelligent access is a project looking directly at intelligent transport systems and their application to heavy vehicles. There is a trial in Tasmania, as we speak, using this technology. I have given you a very quick run-through of the National Heavy Vehicle Strategy. There are details of it in my submission and I will not dwell on it. The important thing is that it was built with a group of stakeholders, in both government and industry, who worked very cooperatively. It is also important that they do their part. It is about collective action. It is a logical base for our own safety agenda, and there is strong support for it, but it will not work unless everybody does their bit.

I come to the key challenges as I see them. It is a well-structured initiative, but that will only take us so far. I think road investment will provide lasting long-term benefits. That is a role that you, as legislators, have some say in. Road transport is a very competitive industry. The industry's leadership has a good safety culture. If you look at some of the reports into things like Safe-T-Cam in New South Wales, you see they indicate that 85 per cent of the problems are put down to fewer than 20 operators, so there are some people at the tail who are not playing the game. It is important that enforcement plays a big role in all of that. Thank you, Mr Chair, and committee members for your time today.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Makeham and Mr Sturrock. Colleagues, as we go on I am getting more disturbed that we are getting further behind and not addressing the term of reference. While all the presentations have been very good, the minister has asked us to review the objectives of the National Road Safety Action Plan. We are not doing that. Everyone is telling us what they are doing but not what they think should happen with the plan. We have been asked to talk about traditional approaches that are needed within the plan and we have been asked to identify the factors that are impeding the plan. We are not doing that.

The committee is grateful to know what every organisation is doing, but that is abundantly obvious in your written submissions. So I ask you all, including those presenters who have presented today, to let us have your views in writing, because we are not going to have time to debate them. Let us have as a supplementary submission what you think is lacking in or impeding the plan or whether you think the plan is achieving its objectives. That is what we were asked to do through this forum, but all we are doing is talking to each other and patting ourselves on the back without grappling with making this plan more effective. I do not say that as criticism of any submission. I want to extract from this meeting today more than a talkfest. All the presenters were asked to speak for five minutes to their submission before we became interactive about what we thought about the plan. To achieve this, Mr McIntosh has very graciously agreed to come back to the committee in February. We will do a session with the AAA and the Australian New Car Assessment Program because we cannot do them justice today and, after all, they speak for over half the motorists of Australia, so we will bring them back in February.

I would like to appeal to the rest of the presenters today to let us get to the nub of what we have been asked to do, because I think that is critical. We have heard two or three speakers say that they think the plan is bogged down, that the reduction in trauma and deaths is plateauing and that we are looking for more initiatives. I think that the minister was looking to us to break the nexus and come back to him with some new directions. So to those that have already spoken: please let us have a supplementary submission on your gut feelings about where the plan could be improved and where the impediments are in the plan as it currently stands. For those who are left to present to us today: rather than just talk about what your organisation is doing, give us a five-minute overview and then tell us your view of the plan and where you think the pitfalls are.

[3.00 p.m.]

ALTHAUS, Mr Chris, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Trucking Association

HANNIFEY, Mr Roderick Michael (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Will you make the first opening statement, Mr Hannifey?

Mr Hannifey—Yes. I am an employed truck driver. I have become involved in road safety issues because of a need to get truck drivers involved and to get their views through to people such as yourselves. They spend their time on the road; they are sharing their workplace with every other road user. I have some issues which I would like to see addressed and maybe some of these things, certainly from the truck driver's point of view, can achieve better outcomes than we have now. I have put in a submission and an additional one to you. I will only quickly touch on the points and leave you to come back as to whether these things are addressable and how they can be done.

The first one is driver education. As a truck driver, the statistics from ATSB are that 80 per cent of fatalities between cars and trucks are the fault of the car driver. We could institute an education program at time of licensing; perhaps even with a short, 10-minute video so that the young learner drivers have some idea of how to interact with a vehicle which is 60 times the weight of the vehicle they are driving. At the moment we do not teach them that; they do something silly, they get killed or injured and the trucking industry gets the blame in the press. We are very badly treated there. We could halve that 80 per cent figure of those fatalities, at a minimal cost, across Australia by showing a video and having an education program at time of licensing.

We have had comments on roads. A lot of the road authorities do audits in cars. As a truck driver I know that in a truck the bumps and dips in the roads that are there, which are generally overlooked by road authorities, can impact on the truck. The trucking industry is blamed for damage to roads, and yet there is always an action and then there is a reaction. So if a truck is driven along the road, rather than pounding into it or onto it, the truck and the driver suffer less fatigue and wear and tear and the road will also suffer less wear and tear. If those dips and bumps could be filled in, that is one less hazard and one less road maintenance issue.

We have touched on fatigue; truck rest areas are a very big issue. There has been a lot of work done on car rest areas but they are empty at night. In 10 years and two million kilometres, I have seen five cars parked in a car rest area at night and yet they have 'No trucks' signs. They are designed to keep us out and you have truck drivers sleeping two feet off the side of the road because there is nowhere for them to park. On the Newell Highway in New South Wales there is a blue reflector informal parking bay trial. The idea is that a driver who knows a particular road knows that around the next corner is a bit of dirt where he can safely pull up and go to bed. A driver who does not know that road is not aware of that and, by the time he sees that, he has passed it; it is too late and it may be 50 kilometres to the next rest area.

CHAIR—We spoke in great length on this in *Beyond the midnight oil*. Based on the American experience, if we can use that as a benchmark, Australia is about 3,000 pull over areas short.

Mr Hannifey—Yes, absolutely.

CHAIR—And when they are on a north-south axis they need to be on the western side of the road, preferably with trees.

Mr Hannifey—Yes, shade is an absolutely critical issue. At the moment they say ‘Manage your fatigue’, and yet if you want to get out of the truck and have a sandwich in the middle of the day, you are lucky to find shade in one of 15 rest areas. It is the biggest thing that is missing.

CHAIR—I am just saying to the secretary that we will revisit *Beyond the midnight oil*, so you can be sure that we will take that point up.

Mr Hannifey—Yep. Main Roads in Queensland have just agreed to do a similar blue reflector trial on all of the roads from Goondiwindi into Queensland. It is simple, cheap and effective. It is only an informal rest area; we cannot expect the road authorities to go out tomorrow and build us 10,000 rest areas, but we can put up blue reflectors to tell drivers where these places are simply and cheaply. You have only got to save one truck driver who was struggling to get to a rest area 40 kilometres down the road and fell asleep and there is \$1 million worth of accident avoided. They could do the whole of New South Wales with blue reflectors.

CHAIR—Where the highway straightens up and the old highway has a bit of an arc, you also sometimes see both ends of it closed off. It seems to me that it—

Mr Hannifey—It is a waste of a resource, yes.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Hannifey—The additional material I have also mentions stockpile sites. I have spoken with road authorities. They have a stockpile site which they use to put their aggregate on when they are about to resurface the road. Most of those sites are hardstanding; you have machinery and all the gravel there. Quite often they have shade on their perimeters because they are not designed as a road and have therefore not cleared the perimeter. There is virtually no cost for that—with nothing more than a bit of rock or a pipe to make a decent entry/exit, and perhaps marking it with blue reflectors, you could double the truck parking bays overnight.

CHAIR—Going back to the terms of reference, you are saying that we have not addressed the facilities to alleviate fatigue with truck drivers.

Mr Hannifey—No, we certainly have not. The Pacific Highway is absolutely critical for that at the moment.

CHAIR—Good point; we will take it on board.

Mr Hannifey—Point No. 4 in my submission relates to caravans. There has been a lot of talk about large four-wheel drive vehicles. There are also caravanners. A bloke can drive a Mini

Minor for 10 years; tomorrow he can buy a four-wheel drive and two tonnes of caravan and hit the highway with no education and no licensing—nothing at all. I am involved with caravanners. I started off caravan CB as a communication. I write a column for *Caravan World* magazine on the same basis: to give my point of view and say, 'Look, this is what I do. Whilst you may not see it that way, if we work together rather than you hate me and I hate you, we can achieve better road safety for both users.' That is going along well. It could do with a big push from somebody, such as the government getting involved with some form of education similar to the video I suggested for young drivers. When you bought a caravan you could get a video with half an hour on how to load your van, how weight affects it and a tag bit on the end about sharing the road with trucks, because some people are driving vehicles the same size as a semitrailer and there are no licensing requirements for that.

We were talking about daytime running lights earlier on, and I mentioned the indiscriminate use of fog lights. Fog lights are an absolute menace to people who spend their life on the road, particularly when driving at night. Currently, there is no need for a warning light on the dash for forward facing fog lights; it is only required for rear facing fog lights. I have written to the ATSB, to Carl Scully and to the police asking about that. I think there is a \$67 fine in New South Wales for driving with your fog lights on. At the moment it is done for pose value—every young bloke has a car and, if it does not already have two more lights, he will hang them on the front. With our roads being less than smooth, as you drive at night it is hard enough to get people to dip their lights let alone having them dip and finding even brighter lights under the bumper bar. That is a real issue for us.

I put in a suggestion about overtaking. I actually had a phone call from the ABC this morning about a lady with an overtaking lane issue. I have suggested that, where an overtaking lane starts, a distance be shown on the sign so that when a truck driver or anybody else not familiar with that road comes to a sign saying 'Overtaking lane: 300 metres ahead', it will show the length and say 'One kilometre long' or something like that. As a truck driver, I may be following another truck and I do not know whether that overtaking lane is 500 metres long or four kilometres. I know the capabilities of my vehicle and the vehicle I am following. If I know the length of the overtaking lane, I have a chance to safely make a decision as to whether or not I have enough room to pull out and overtake. I have had a number of complaints from motorists in cars who think that we should automatically back off and let them out. It is very hard in a truck when you get to the end of an overtaking lane and 17 cars are trying to get past you before the end of that lane. There is a problem with some of their designs, in that they finish—

CHAIR—Signs in some states will tell you, part of the way along, when the passing lane is going to terminate—300 or 500 metres or something. You are saying you would like one at the beginning telling you the full length.

Mr Hannifey—The length of the overtaking lane, yes. It would be very simple and very effective.

Ms O'BYRNE—Have you made that request already?

Mr Hannifey—I have made that request to the RTA.

Ms O'BYRNE—What sort of response do you get?

Mr Hannifey—I put it to the RTA through the Road Freight Advisory Council. They said they thought it was a good idea; but, again, it must be a national thing. Those signs are in place in all the states that I travel in, but they vary. I have seen one that says ‘200 metres’ when it finishes 500 metres down the road and another that says it finishes in 500 metres when it finishes in 200 metres—you are stuck in the middle of nowhere.

I have mentioned the stockpile sites. Clearance lights and reflectors on car trailers: I do not know whether there is currently an ADR to fit clearance lights or reflectors to them. I do not always travel the Hume Highway. I spend a lot of my time on second-class or arterial roads, a road that is barely wide enough for two vehicles, a car and a truck. As you travel along you will see a car coming towards you at night and you make allowance for the car only to find that there is a six by four trailer, a car trailer or a boat trailer on the back that either has no lights or no reflectors. Then you have to miss the next three sets of axles with that trailer. The car driver, because there are no lights, forgets the thing is there and he is merrily sitting right on the centreline. I have seen reflectors fitted on the front mudguard of trailers, but they are aimed at UFOs; I cannot see them in the truck. They must be fitted on a flat surface, and I certainly ask that they be a light.

CHAIR—No need to project outwards?

Mr Hannifey—They need to project forward rather than up to the sky. I do not know whether there is an ADR requirement for that. It is not a major issue, but again another accident you get rid of is another one that is not there.

CHAIR—Mr Haase and I do a lot of driving, and to an extent Ms O’Byrne too—

Ms O’BYRNE—Tasmania is a lot bigger than you think!

Mr HAASE—It would barely warm the car up!

CHAIR—Mr Haase has the biggest electorate in the world.

Mr Hannifey—Yes. Advisory speed signs: I do not believe they are applicable anymore. You come up to a corner and it will show a right-hand corner as 85 kilometres. I believe they are out of touch with current motor vehicles. They might have been all right for Austin A40s, but anyone in a current model vehicle that is 10 years old will go around any corner with an 85 kilometre sign on it at 100 kilometres an hour without even thinking about it. Then you will suddenly come to one which says 75 and which is really a 75 kilometre corner, and you think, ‘Jeez, what do I do now? I’m going too fast.’ I believe they need reassessing. I think motorists now generally ignore them and they are not providing the benefit that they used to.

CHAIR—Because they are not accurate?

Mr Hannifey—Not relevant to today’s cars, yes.

Ms O’BYRNE—Cars now handle better.

Mr HAASE—You are saying that the stranger driver slows down to that speed pulling up in front of a truck whose driver knows where he is going.

Mr Hannifey—Even if a truck driver sees a sign that says 85 kilometres he knows that generally, unless you are in a stock crate or something like that which has a very high centre of gravity, that corner can be taken at 100 kilometres an hour. People then ignore those signs, and there is talk that people treat those signs as though the speed is suitable in every condition. In the rain a corner which is signed at 85 kilometres in a current car may be an 85 kilometres corner. People just ignore them because they are not relevant. I think they should be reassessed.

CHAIR—If it is a problem in rain, it should carry the slippery plaque as well, shouldn't it?

Mr Hannifey—It should, and that brings me to another issue for trucks particularly. I think there should be another small diamond underneath that says 'OC' for off camber. In a car it makes no difference to the car driver whether the road is cambered the usual way, is level or is slightly off camber. But to a bloke with a stock crate or a load of hanging meat, a road that has a big camber on it is a substantial danger to him if he is relying on those signs. I know those signs work on a rolling ball, and someone was to send me a copy of how that worked one day but never did. Again, I think the vehicles have bypassed that standard, but for trucks, if those particular standout corners were marked with another sign saying 'off camber', there would be an improvement there.

CHAIR—Can we have a one-pager from you on that with a sketch of what you suggest?

Mr Hannifey—Yes, can do. The last one I touched on earlier. I suggest a national 1800 number for road repairs. I constantly ring authorities and ask them to fix something. There is a gentleman in the RTA at Narrabri who has been excellent. He has fixed about 10 bumps on the Newell Highway for me, and that is just because I have rung him up. I have had a number of people from other road authorities in the truck and within five minutes the first thing they say is, 'I didn't realise how rough it is.' That is where I come back to those dips and bumps. I have rung road authorities at 5.30 in the morning, and of course there is nobody home. At other times I have rung in the middle of the day and have rung the closest town to where I am, only to find be told that Fred, Bill, Sue and Charlie are not there, are at lunch or are out the back. Now you have got to ring another office and do it again. And the average truck driver will not spend 20 minutes on a mobile phone call to report a pothole.

CHAIR—Or if a bit of road breaks up after wet weather.

Mr Hannifey—Yes. There is a section of road at Moree where the actual side of the road had collapsed to a certain depth. It was very dangerous. I ended up ringing the police, and they went out and put signs up. But if there was one number, a bloke would be likely to key it into his phone. Surely, with phone technology now, if you ring up in Moree it could direct you to the local office, and you could say, 'Ten kilometres south of Moree, on the first corner, there is a dip' or 'There is a dangerous pothole.' It can be fixed when it is smaller, instead of when it is bigger and a car has hit it and gone head-on into a truck coming the other way.

Each of the road authorities currently has a number now. New South Wales have rolled theirs out from just Sydney to state-wide. Queensland have just rolled one out from Brisbane to the rest

of the state. But, again, most of Australia's interstate truck drivers travel through at least three or four states. If there was one number—obviously, it could be just a recorded service at night—not only could we save lives but also we could improve road quality and save the road authorities money by having those things fixed when they are small, simple and cheap.

CHAIR—That was a great submission. Thank you very much for that.

Mr Hannifey—Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Mr Althaus—Mr Chairman and members of the committee, I should point out to you and to members of the gallery that Rod is an ex-winner of the Australian Trucking Association National Professional Driver of the Year Award.

Ms O'BYRNE—That was in 2001.

Mr Althaus—That was in 2001. I am going to have to speak to him afterwards because I am sure that I am going to get a call from the chief executive of the fog light association. We want to talk about the industry in more general terms. I think your request for specifics has gone to some of those, Rod. I will reiterate some of them. We know that the road freight task for our industry is increasing dramatically. It is not a matter of if it is going to happen; it is happening right now. This means that the pressure on our industry for numbers of vehicles on the road increases daily. The road safety implications of that are obvious. We are a very big industry, we are a very competitive industry and we are a key economic driver of this country. Yet, over the last decade, we have seen quite a marked improvement in heavy vehicle safety and our interaction on the road.

I highlight the bureau of safety research work that says that, in the last decade or so, we have seen fatalities involving heavy vehicles plateau. But of course, during that time, the number of vehicles has gone up 18 per cent. The number of kilometres travelled has gone up 34 per cent. If you convert that back to a fatality issue, we have actually seen a decline of around 20 per cent during that period. We take some comfort—or, perhaps more appropriately, some encouragement—from those numbers, but we do not rest on our laurels. We want to push the safety agenda further and further. We have seen that a specific heavy vehicle safety strategy has been developed. We are on board with that. We were involved in its genesis. We understand what is in it and, at the broader level, it is something that we will participate in.

But there is another aspect to safety that I want to bring to the committee's attention. That 10 years of improvement has been subject to a number of things. First of all, the industry as a whole has embraced a culture of safety. It has been pushed, it has been promoted and it has been part of what we have pushed as a peak industry group. But the culture of safety has become more pervasive within our membership. That is evident in the statistics. It is also evident in that we have started a program called TruckSafe. It is an industry accredited, third-party audited accreditation system. That system is growing in its impact on the industry and on road safety. I can say that because we now have just under 20,000 accredited vehicles in that scheme.

Of those 20,000 accredited vehicles, we have been able to track details through our insurance companies in the industry and we can tell you that those that are in the accreditation system have a 34 per cent lower accident rate. That is the vehicle and that is the driver. It is a risk

management system but, importantly, it is industry's risk management system. We are standing up and doing this for ourselves, but we are doing it in the context of an overall road safety environment. There are 34 per cent fewer accidents in those fleets that are in that scheme. It is a big vote of confidence in industry accreditation. Industry accreditation is something that government has some control over. It could be an element that is mandated—it could be specified. In the purchases of freight, this accreditation approach is very important to this industry and to the motoring public.

One of the other elements that was outlined before is the 'chain of responsibility' or the compliance and enforcement legislation. It is going to push more and more people to seek to buy freight services from accredited operators. Accredited operators demonstrably have a better safety record, so we are putting that forward as a real action item against the mosaic of strategies that are currently in existence. This self-control, self-accreditation by industry is an important factor.

CHAIR—Is this part of a plan per se? Is it something that is missing from the action plan, or does it need to be put on as an adjunct to the third, fourth and fifth two-year tranches?

Mr Althaus—In the case of the heavy vehicle sector, I think it is very important as a fundamental to say that industry accreditation is a key facet of improving safety. I do not think that has been acknowledged at this point in time.

CHAIR—That goes beyond driver fatigue.

Mr Althaus—Absolutely; it is a risk management strategy. It goes to driver fatigue, vehicle maintenance, driver health, company management et cetera. It is a much more holistic approach. It costs people to join it, and it is not cheap. But when they do, there are demonstrable benefits in efficiency, safety and reliability via the maintenance package. I am putting that out there as one of those things that is in existence, and the more people participate in that sort of scheme the better. It is even better from a government point of view, because we know for a fact that government will not have the resources to do this sort of thing itself. We are into an age of compliance and enforcement—compliance in big black letters and enforcement in small black letters. We, as an industry, need to become more compliant within our own ranks on the issues of safety, environmental performance et cetera. So it is out there, and it is a tremendously valuable opportunity in my view.

Going on from the accreditation argument, I will pick up the fatigue issues that Rod has raised. Rest areas are a disgrace in this country—and you have alluded to that already. We have a changing freight task, we have a changing road network, and yet our rest area capacity seems to be stuck in the mud. We also do not address the detailed needs of a heavy vehicle operator in terms of rest area facilities. Shade is one of the needs, facilities is another. They need to be located at a point where it sits with the driving schedule. There is no point in having a rest area a short distance out of a main city; they are all going to drive straight past. We need to look at the driving time frames and look at the hours required.

Any day—or any night, perhaps—there are 3,000 heavy vehicles moving up and down the Brisbane-Sydney corridor, and yet there are woefully inadequate rest areas. With those that are there, when vehicles pull in they get parked in—they cannot get out. So what do they do? They

have to knock on four or five prime movers' windows to wake the occupants to move their trucks. If they have a death wish they might! It is those sorts of very practical things. There is a rest area on the Hume Highway that, unless you want all the blood to rush to your head or your feet, you would not use because it is on a steep slope. It is totally useless to a heavy vehicle driver, and yet we continue to focus on fatigue as an issue in safety in the heavy vehicle sector and on the roads. That just highlights some of the things that Rod picked up in terms of rest areas.

One of the other things that I think we can do—and the ATA has called on all jurisdictions to do so—is to engage with the industry on a speed summit. There is a small percentage of the industry—rogues, cowboys, called them what you like; and we wish we could get rid of them—who speed. We want to partner government in a response to speeding behaviour. It is a matter of matching manufacturing technology to speed culture within the industry and of government enforcement capacity. Speeding is one of those safety elements which, when combined with fatigue, makes a lethal mix. They are two dominant features. We are certainly still calling on jurisdictions to engage with the industry in a speed summit to work out exactly what we are going to do. There is progress on that front, and I hope to report more.

CHAIR—In the midnight oil, we talked about a chain of responsibility—someone touched on it earlier today—starting from the corporate user of road transport right through to the corporate deliverer of road transport. We touched on things like queuing at warehouses and supermarkets, those sorts of places. We had a lot of witnesses at that time who had very good fatigue management programs. On the point you just made, I have been told frequently since then that that may be true of the company's own branded trucks but, when they are subcontracting other truck drivers to drive for them under contract, they are not imposing the same time limits and speed management guidelines that they would expect of their own drivers and so, in effect, they are fudging it; they are forcing these drivers to meet unrealistic deadlines, whereas they do not do that to their own brand of trucks. Is that common in the industry?

Mr Althaus—It is an issue that is going to come dramatically unstuck with the chain of responsibility and the compliance and enforcement. There is a large number of subcontracting elements to the industry. When you go down an accreditation path and the chain of responsibility is in existence, which it is about to be—the compliance and enforcement bill is going to be picked up—if you are a purchaser of freight services and you are going to buy those services, you are going to want to know for your own protection that the person you are buying them from is achieving a certain standard. Increasingly, people are going to want to buy freight services from people who are accredited in a scheme of one sort or another. Currently, TruckSafe is the dominant one. That is going to drive the bar higher and higher within all elements of the industry. The sort of pressure you are talking about does exist. It is a very competitive industry and there are pressures of that nature from time to time. However, it is clear to the industry and to the industry associations that discipline within the industry is improving. Accreditation will drive that discipline further. Compliance and enforcement and the chain of responsibility will drive it further still. All of those things are approaching—

CHAIR—You had better move on to the next point.

Mr Althaus—The next point is a hairy old chestnut which has been around for a long time. It has been mentioned by many people here. It is the state of our roads; it is infrastructure related.

We look at the investment in roads, we look at the contribution via taxation mechanisms and the like from the industry and it is very important that we see a growing investment in our road infrastructure. Right now we have a situation where there is a very important and essential component in AusLink being considered. We constantly request that this be fast-tracked and appropriately funded, not just for the development of new infrastructure but most importantly for the maintenance of existing infrastructure. We know only too well the balance that this holds between the Commonwealth and state jurisdictions. However, in the context of this inquiry and this committee's work, the safety burden and additional safety risk that comes out of decaying infrastructure is substantial and deserves a much faster response from both levels of government than we are currently seeing.

Finally, I wanted to pick up the issue of education. This industry is suffering a shortage of people, both at the mechanic and at the driver level. We are looking for government involvement in increasing the numbers of people entering the transport sector. This country cannot avoid its reliance—

CHAIR—In what capacity are you looking to increase numbers—drivers and mechanics?

Mr Althaus—Drivers and mechanics are the key areas right now.

CHAIR—And with the mechanics, is that at the apprenticeship level?

Mr Althaus—Absolutely. Also, right now we are facing an acute shortage of people in the warehousing sector. It is quite pervasive and, of course, this is in a safety context as far as this committee is concerned—

CHAIR—Warehousing would be a traineeship, would it not?

Mr Althaus—A traineeship—that is correct.

Ms O'BYRNE—Do you have those identified on a regional area level so we can see if there are hot spots?

CHAIR—Could you give us a one-pager on that?

Mr Althaus—I certainly could, and I can also give you a report that we have just completed. It is a national industry skills initiative report, which highlights the shortage and the rationale. We as an industry, again—like speeding summits and accreditation—are picking up this ball and wanting to run with it. So we are doing our own thing, but there is a role there for government and it is a very important one, particularly in terms of resources. That completes my contribution, and I thank the committee.

Mr HAASE—I have a question if I may, Chair. Mr Althaus, you are admitting that you are responsible for driver management and, in keeping with our discussions of the national strategy, I am aware that quite recently there have been some changes in the national standard for road train drivers and the licensing thereof. Are you aware of that?

Mr Althaus—Yes.

Mr HAASE—Has your association had any feedback about the problems that is creating?

Mr Althaus—I am aware that at this point in time a member organisation within our network—the Australian Road Train Association—has certainly received feedback, and in fact there is a general council meeting to be held this coming week at which I am expecting a report on that. I cannot respond anecdotally right now, but I know that the key group for that sector has received feedback.

Mr HAASE—Are you aware of the development of a strategy to perhaps approach nationally those responsible to extract some mitigating treatment to ease the problem? We have a wheat crop in Western Australia that at this stage looks like it will not be delivered to silos.

Mr Althaus—That is certainly the approach. We are going to look at the limitations that currently exist, look at the challenges that are coming in terms of freight volume and respond appropriately.

Mr HAASE—Thank you for that.

Mr Hannifey—May I offer you a ride in a truck at some stage? Certainly the number of people I have had ride in the truck have learnt something from it and seen a different perspective. The offer is there, if not with me then with someone in your local electorate, because I think you will benefit.

CHAIR—It's not a ride with Big Louie to the outskirts of Chicago! Michelle, do you have questions?

Ms O'BYRNE—On the ATA stuff that you do every Christmas—the 'Don't be a turkey' driving campaigns—my only question is about where you may be developing that to create a kind of bigger or newer image with it. When you do one thing every year, we become really good at going along every year but I think we start to lose different angles of getting the message across.

Mr Althaus—We do run a national drive for safety. We are launching it next week. It happens on 13 December and we are looking at new formats because we need to keep—

Ms O'BYRNE—It is a really good program.

Mr Althaus—Yes. We need to keep you guys in touch with the issues as they are arising.

Mr HAASE—I am booked to participate, I know that.

Mr Hannifey—I also do an audit trip once a year on a highway, which is normally done over a number of days, and invite people from road authorities or from the press or even from television to come along in the truck. That is successful and it has been going for five years. I started that off and, again, everyone that gets in the truck goes away with a different perspective.

Mr Althaus—And takes off their fog lights.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for that—they were two very good submissions. Once again I would like to thank Mr Lauchlan McIntosh and his team, because through their generosity we will be able to do this much more fulsomely than before.

[3.34 p.m.]

YEATES, Mr Michael Macrae, Convener, Cyclists Urban Speedlimit Task Force

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Yeates. Would you like to make some remarks?

Mr Yeates—Thanks, Chair, and thanks to the survivors for the day at this stage. In part to respond to your challenge, I am going to cut out a lot of what I was going to present. I have come across a paper, which I was going to send to you. It is a document on traffic calming schemes, prepared by the Institute for Road Safety Research in the Netherlands for the Swedish government. I commend it to you. There are some key points which I think are highly relevant to the policy position we find ourselves in in Australia with respect to making decisions about road safety. Perhaps this afternoon has been an example of it. In one sense, there seem to be far too many debates about what individuals are doing and what one might call a failure to address what everybody else needs.

Overhead transparencies were then shown—

The Dutch report places an extraordinary emphasis on the need for groups to work together. One of the issues is that we have to make sure that nobody is excluded. Clearly, one of my views is that walking and cycling are excluded and have been, to a rather large extent, excluded from this discussion about national road safety. By the time you count rural people who live in urban areas plus the capital cities and the main conurbations, you are talking about the best part of 90 per cent of the population.

Much of what Harold said earlier I agree with, so I am not going to go over that. But the idea of road safety for all, rather than for specific interest groups, is absolutely crucial. There is no point in having safer trucks or safer cars. I will use cars as an example, because there has been a lot of emphasis on making them safer. We have 50 kilometres an hour speed limits in local streets, which are supposedly safe, but I have yet to find a volunteer to test that. We still use dummies. And, to be honest, you would be a dummy to stand in front of a ‘safe’ car in our ‘safe’ local streets at the moment. The evidence is that we are still killing people there.

We are still killing kids because of the behavioural consequences. As Harold said, kids do not recognise the bells or whistles on reversing trucks. People under the influence of drugs or alcohol do not quite know what they are doing, so we blame them. But we have a road environment which is intolerant of what are, in some cases, normal behaviours. The solution tends to be, if it is a pub, put up a fence or park your trucks on the footpath.

A lot of the problem lies in getting to a position where we can include everybody. I make the point that I am a disabled access auditor, and we did not even manage to include for disabled access in the planning of the seating in here. That is not a criticism; it is the kind of problem we are dealing with when we do not think inclusively. It is so easy to have a reference group where people put up their bids, as we have tended to do today, but do not resolve the problem. My experience working with the Dutch—as you can imagine, I work with them on cycling, walking

and road safety issues—suggests we can learn a lot, including from that particular document, *Traffic calming schemes*. I will leave a copy of it and it is on the web site, so it is easily accessed.

This leads to my second point, which is about learning from success elsewhere. We do not do that very well either. There is token learning from success elsewhere. Elsewhere, in social and economic situations rather like ours, the main road speed limit is 50 kilometres an hour in urban areas and in rapidly increasing areas of whole, large cities the urban speed limit is either 25 miles an hour in the US or 30 kilometres an hour in Europe, and in the UK it is the equivalent at 20 miles an hour. So we have a long way to go.

I will show you some overheads. Paradoxically, for those of you who know Glenelg in Adelaide, at the end of the tram route near the jetty there is a fabulous example of little lanes to the side of the main road—I think it is Jetty Road, where the trams slow down. The speed limit in the main shopping strip is 40 kilometres an hour. The speed limit in the lanes, which you can hardly drive down, until recently had to be 60 kilometres an hour, because there was no option for road authorities or local authorities to lower that speed limit.

There are a number of those kinds of extraordinary statements which I can go on with. I do not really have the time and I am not sure it is terribly beneficial. I want to emphasise the point that we are really talking about: people not being included, such as kids walking to school. When we have a difficult area in road safety, we immediately look to education. Why don't we do area-wide safe routes to schools? As far as I am aware, no state in the country has put a trial project in place to look at safe walking distances to schools for kids. In fact, most policies in this country—the road hierarchy—would prevent that happening. Kids can walk up to a kilometre quite easily, young kids a little less and cycling is well within that range. Take any map of any city in Australia at the moment with the supposedly safe 50 kilometres an hour limit; put a kilometre ring around the schools and shops; have a look at how many 60 and 70 kilometre type roads there are within that circle; cut it off; and then think about how we might do safe routes to schools.

CHAIR—My experience in Queensland—I cannot speak for the other states—is that where that happens you usually have a lollipop crossing. Sometimes there are three or four around a particular school in various parts. That is my experience. I am not trying to be argumentative.

Mr Yeates—Let us move to child behaviour, which was touched on a bit by Zoe and Sarah but, unfortunately, they have both gone now. We do not look at behaviour. From evidence in the United Kingdom, kids as young as three and four, by using little cards, can match how people dress to the kinds of vehicles they drive. These stereotypical behaviours can be identified in three- and four-year old kids. Let us shift to the lollipop ladies. They are a control mechanism that says, 'The roads are so dangerous that you can only cross them when there is a lollipop lady there.' What do the kids do for the next six or seven weeks?

CHAIR—I accept your argument.

Mr Yeates—So why don't we introduce safe school zones permanently—a la the demonstrated work from Denmark and Sweden of some 20 years? It has worked. They have good results. Let me go further: why is it that so many road authorities and some motoring organisations have campaigned actively against the 40 kilometres an hour zones on the basis that

they do not comply with some mythical 85th percentile? I have been quoted before as saying and I will say it again: as far as I am aware there are few other laws which endorse and are set by 15 per cent or more noncompliance. You have to add tolerances for road design, which you need to do, and tolerances for speedos, which we seem to still need to do, despite state-of-the-art technologies, to milliseconds and nanoseconds. We have to have tolerances for radar. We have to have tolerances for this and that. So you start off with perhaps a 50 kilometre an hour speed limit which can be as high as 70 kilometres an hour before it really becomes enforceable.

Some of the points Harold made about speed limits are similar. Why is it so? One argument would be that primarily the interests of the motoring lobby are the ones being listened to, not those of non-motorists. We do not like the use of 'vulnerable', because in fact truck drivers upside down in a 110 kilometre crash on the side of a road are just as vulnerable.

CHAIR—I do not want to hurry you, but you have particular relevance in cycling.

Mr Yeates—I want to pick this picture up, because it is not just about cycling. It is the same perception again and perhaps a good question. We have to address that it is not just about cycling. In the kinds of environments that are being produced where there are good results in road safety in urban areas, it is becoming clear they do not need a lot of specific facilities for cyclists. I do not want to go to where the helmet argument is, but it is arguably much safer to cycle in most of Europe without a helmet than it is here with one. The helmet is a secondary defence. Over there the road environment and the urban setting has been addressed. It touches on integrated policy and implementation.

We have talked about road safety. The Dutch talk about sustainable road safety, and the document I referred to before touches on that. We do not talk about sustainable road safety here yet, and we have to. It is a multiple meaning of sustainability but it has to be looked at. Until road safety authorities look at that, we are going to have a situation where people walking and cycling will be kept off the road because it is dangerous. We will have road safety education which inculcates that view and we will not actually make the roads any safer. I have not really heard anybody talk about road danger reduction.

CHAIR—So what are you telling us should be added to the national action plan?

Mr Yeates—The road danger reduction work being done in the UK is what is immediately missing. A speed limit of 50 kilometres an hour in urban areas is missing. It is 50 kilometres an hour in local streets in the NRSS. It is very difficult for our representative on the NRSS, the Bicycle Federation of Australia rep, to get that issue up, because just about everybody else thinks 50 is already safe. Local streets are 50. Say you go to a rural city, particularly in New South Wales. I do not know Victoria well enough now. Of course, this has been rolling out very rapidly in different places under different conditions. New South Wales, at least, has a number of cities in this situation. One I do know pretty well is Armidale, where the speed limit is 60 on the New England Highway and the western link road and all other streets and roads are 50. It does not happen in Brisbane, Sydney or anywhere else, more or less. As for the 30s and 40s, most of those speed limits were removed because they were considered to be political. I can go there if you wish.

The final issue is the bottom line. Really, we have to look at the European 30-50 thing. I am talking about urban areas. The reason for that is that we hear a bit about auditing. I appreciate the truck driver talking about audits by car. When the speed audits were done in Brisbane, guess what they were done by? They were done by car. They were not cyclists cycling along the roads that are now 60 and have to be 60; they were men driving cars. They were not women worrying about kids going to school. They were not kids cycling to school. They were a particular class of people who are rather well represented, I would have thought, in this audience and probably rather well represented in this debate.

There are a couple of issues I want to touch on further. We are beginning to identify—I have one specific example, it is in Clyde Street, Granville, which I understand is in Parramatta city—where black spot funding has been addressed to pedestrian safety but has resulted in a diabolically horrendous corridor for cyclists. I think that is evidence that the focus of that particular project was a pedestrian safety problem. The speed limit has not changed. The road environment engineering required a certain set of criteria and there is no space left for the cyclists. That is the kind of problem. So while we are lauding the benefits of black spot projects they are not being post-audited for cycling.

CHAIR—My understanding is that on each of the black spot committees in the states there is a representative of the cycling organisations. As these plans are put up, you would expect them to draw attention to something like that.

Mr Yeates—You would, but remember the dot point in my presentation which reads: ‘Combined action and support for road safety for all is not happening.’ That is one example. Zebra crossings are being taken out because they are dangerous. To get back to the issue of school crossings, we had the 30 kilometre an hour trial around schools in Queensland. I flagged very early in the process that it was not going to work, because you are not really going to expect—and, I have been told for years that you are not going to get—reductions in speed by drivers if you only put up signs and do a little bit of education. That is what happened. I absolutely support the 40 kilometre trials in the shopping strips in Victoria, but they are time based. Again, unless parking restraints are used as part of the package, it is very difficult to expect a result if it is time based. They are details.

With driver training, one of the issues coming out of the Swedish work in schools is that we think—and there has been no detailed study, because, unfortunately, they are longitudinal studies—the kids learn an awful lot of what we might call road craft. They do not learn it from a bike education project in a road environment which is too dangerous for their parents to say, ‘Yes, you can go cycling.’ They learn to cycle and learn to walk—learn street wisdom, if you like—over 10 or 12 years of walking and cycling to school. There is hardly a place in Australia where that can be done. So maybe we have to think about starting driver training when the kids are at preschool, riding a bike and walking to school.

Ms O’BYRNE—But there are some very good programs already. A couple of my local schools do a licence test. You have to pass a test to have your bike licence and ride your bike to school. They go through a training program.

Mr Yeates—I understand, but I am really saying that the road environment there has to be good enough that whoever says that they can ride to school says yes to it rather than no. The

point I was going to make was that we need more trials. We heard about a lot of hypothetical work today. We need to be able to have legitimate trials and show that things work. I strongly compliment the STAYSAFE Committee for its work on the 50 kilometre zones, because that was a struggle to get that started in, I think, the early nineties. I also strongly compliment the Unley City Council in South Australia south of Adelaide City Council which has run this 40 kilometre trial for so long against so many complaints and whatever from the motoring industry, and the AA in particular, in South Australia. The package here is really about having to get beyond assuming and advocating that we are doing a good job, because clearly the figures are saying something along those lines, but we are still not counting the number of pedestrians and cyclists out there at the moment in terms of exposure. The argument at the moment is that road safety education has done such a good job that people can walk. At least half the population have access to a bike, but they are not using them, and one of the reasons will be that we do not have that 30-50 thing in place.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Yeates. Obviously we did not allow nearly enough time today for this very complex issue. The committee have decided that we will hold another hearing in February to catch up with a number of people today who we either had to cut short and/or we could not hear, especially the AAA, the New Car Assessment Program and DOTARS. We will have another public hearing in February, as soon as parliament resumes and before we prepare our report, to make sure that we get everything down. I ask all those who have spoken today and whose submissions did not address the terms of reference whether they can give us their view—even if it is only one or two pages worth—on how the national action plan is working, where it could be enhanced and where you find impediments in it, because that is what we are all on about and that is what the minister wants us to do. There have been endless studies on road safety. Excuse the pun, but it has been done to death. What we now need to do, in the light of the evidence today of plateauing in a number of fields of reduction of trauma and death, is find a new way through or how to reinvigorate the program, because after this 2003-04 tranche we will have three more tranches before the end of the decade, and we need to be thinking about how we are going to focus those.

I thank everyone who has participated, especially those who have come from interstate. I know it is a big effort, especially on a Friday, and I hope that we have all got something out of it and that the work we do in February will round off a successful hearing.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Ley**):

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

Committee adjourned at 3.54 p.m.