

## Special Issues

- 7.1 During the course of the inquiry the Committee was made aware of a number of issues concerning particular road user groups—heavy vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians and young people. While some of these matters have been dealt with in earlier chapters, others will be dealt with here.

### Heavy Vehicles

- 7.2 In an effort to meet the specific needs of the road transport industry, the Australian Transport Council has adopted a separate National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy and Action Plan. These are designed to complement the Nation Road Safety Strategy, and dovetail into that framework. The overall goal of the strategy is to reduce the proportion of fatal crashes involving heavy vehicles despite the expected increase in the road freight task.
- 7.3 The *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010* identifies eight strategic objectives:
- increased seatbelt usage by heavy vehicle drivers;
  - safer roads;
  - more efficient speed management;
  - reduced driver impairment;

- safer heavy vehicles;
- enhanced driver and industry management;
- effective enforcement; and
- targeted research and education.<sup>1</sup>

7.4 Seatbelt usage is seen as a particular issue in heavy vehicle accidents. There are low seat belt compliance rates among truck drivers, with consequent high injury and fatality rates amongst drivers involved in accidents. The Strategy estimates ‘that 40% to 50% of heavy vehicle driver fatalities could be prevented by seat belt use at rates similar to those achieved in light vehicles’.<sup>2</sup>

7.5 Driver impairment is another critical issue for the road transport industry. Driver fatigue, drink driving, use of stimulant drugs, and medical conditions have all been identified as significant problems which must be addressed.<sup>3</sup>

7.6 A number of issues have been identified with regard to vehicle safety, including seat belts, improved cabin strength and underrun protection. The Strategy notes:

There are currently UN-ECE standards in place internationally for heavy vehicle cabin strength, front, rear and side underrun protection. These standards have not yet been adopted in Australia, but are under consideration with the view to adopting them as Australian Design Rules.<sup>4</sup>

7.7 The development of Performance Based Standards (PBS) will address safety issues on specialist heavy vehicles:

Under a performance-based approach to regulation, standards would specify the performance required from vehicle operations rather than mandating how this level of performance is to be achieved. Regulatory requirements will be more closely aligned with the realities of how vehicles perform, how they are driven and operated, and the characteristics of the road network.

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1 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, p. 12

2 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, p. 13.

3 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, p. 18–19.

4 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, p. 20.

Productivity improvements, increased safety and better protection of infrastructure are the main aims of PBS.<sup>5</sup>

- 7.8 Industry accreditation programs and ‘chain of responsibility’ legislation are seen as two key strategies in enhancing driver and industry management. Chain of responsibility legislation and ‘smart’ technologies are seen as the keys to effective enforcement. Education is regarded as important to improving the safety culture of the road transport industry. It is also vital to the safety of other road users.<sup>6</sup> The Strategy notes:

The behaviour of other road users plays an important role in the cause of crashes involving heavy vehicles. Research shows that truck drivers are responsible (or partly responsible) for only 38% of fatal crashes involving trucks. It is therefore important that the driving community is made aware of this fact and is provided with a range of strategies to help them better understand how to avoid coming into conflict with heavy vehicles in the traffic stream.<sup>7</sup>

- 7.9 The *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Action Plan 2003–2005* identifies a range of specific measures to be carried out within the framework of the Strategy. A number of these measures are due to be dealt with as part of the Third Heavy Vehicle Reform Package, which includes the NRTC Fatigue Reform and the Compliance and Enforcement Reform. The Compliance and Enforcement Reform is designed to give legal effect to the ‘chain of responsibility’, making all sections of the road transport industry, not just drivers, responsible for compliance with road transport and safety laws. Its provisions are due to be implemented in model legislation—the Road Transport Reform (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill—due to be passed in each State and Territory.<sup>8</sup>

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5 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, p. 21; National Road Transport Commission, Submission no. 36, pp. 28–30.

6 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, pp. 22–4.

7 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, p. 24.

8 National Road Transport Commission, Submission no. 36, pp. 19–26.

- 7.10 In its submission, the Australian Trucking Association endorsed the National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy and related reforms, but nonetheless identified a number of areas requiring further attention. The industry itself is looking at measures to deal with fatigue, speed and drug use. In evidence before the Committee, Mr Althaus of the ATA highlighted the growing culture of safety and the role of industry accreditation:

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.<sup>9</sup>

- 7.11 He believed that industry accreditation combined with the ‘chain of responsibility’ under the compliance and enforcement legislation ‘would push more and more people to seek to buy freight services from accredited operators’:<sup>10</sup>

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 ... 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.<sup>11</sup>

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9 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 96.

10 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 97.

11 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 98.

- 7.12 Nonetheless, the ATA submission identifies a number of areas where government action is required. These included:
- Accelerating progress on the National Road Safety Strategy and the National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, particularly in regard to better speed enforcement, the usage of seatbelts and better vehicle design;
  - Clarifying responsibility for monitoring and implementation of the Action Plans;
  - Increasing enforcement resources;
  - Providing additional financial assistance to industry to
    - ⇒ pursue technological developments such as ITS
    - ⇒ engage in better safety training
    - ⇒ promote general safety awareness
    - ⇒ broaden coverage of accreditation schemes; and
  - Accelerate road infrastructure improvements.<sup>12</sup>
- 7.13 These are all proposals that the Committee supports. It recommends urgent attention be given to new design rules for seat belts, improved cabin strength and underrun protection in heavy vehicles.

### Recommendation 30

- 7.14 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government introduce new ADRs covering seat belts, improved cabin strength and underrun protection in heavy vehicles**

## Managing Fatigue

- 7.15 The ATA submission also called for more action to address the problem of driver fatigue. This Committee has a long standing interest in the question of fatigue management in the road transport industry. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts report, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, made a number of important

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12 ATA, Submission no. 26, pp. 4-5.

recommendations regarding fatigue management in the road transport industry. These included:

- amending road transport regulations to
  - ⇒ incorporate time of day considerations into allowable driving and rest periods, and
  - ⇒ increasing minimum allowable rest periods;<sup>13</sup>
- extending the *National Route 39 Driver Fatigue Strategy* to other major transport routes;<sup>14</sup>
- auditing the number, quality and distances between rest areas with a view to developing national guidelines for the provision of heavy vehicle rest areas;<sup>15</sup>
- seeking approval for the Australia-wide introduction of the Safe-T-Cam system currently operating in New South Wales;<sup>16</sup>
- seeking the development of a national operator accreditation scheme;<sup>17</sup>
- developing State and Territory laws making driving while fatigued an offence;<sup>18</sup>
- developing and implementing a drug free policy for the road transport industry, including mandatory workplace testing;<sup>19</sup> and
- implementing a range of research and education measures to combat fatigue.<sup>20</sup>

7.16 Most of these issues are due to be dealt with in the current round of heavy transport reforms. Nonetheless, evidence presented to the Committee indicates that fatigue management in the road transport industry remains an urgent issue.

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13 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, rec. 2.

14 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, rec. 19.

15 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, rec. 20.

16 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, rec. 21.

17 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, rec. 33.

18 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, rec. 34.

19 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, rec. 35.

20 HORSCCTA, *Beyond the Midnight Oil*, recs 36–9.

- 7.17 The ATA identified lack of rest areas and poor rest area design as a major concern. It urged:

a national review of truck rest areas with a view to introducing a funding approach similar to the current Black Spot program. Improved fatigue management policies (e.g. the introduction of chain of responsibility legislation and reformed driving hours) will not be fully effective if the infrastructure supporting it is not suitable.<sup>21</sup>

- 7.18 Mr Hannifey also identified the urgent need for progress to be made on this issue. In his submission, he stated:

There needs to be urgent attention given to this. An immediate start can be made by just clearing suitable areas on the roadside, which can then be upgraded as funds are available. We do not expect millions to be spent tomorrow, but a start must be made. The Pacific Highway is urgently in need of more rest areas.

- 7.19 Mr Hannifey advocated the adoption of 'blue reflector' rest areas as an interim measure:

There is currently a trial on the Newell Highway, between Parkes and Gilgandra, of marking informal truck rest areas (just a piece of dirt, often with shade, but not a recognised rest area) with Blue Reflectors on roadside guide posts. This has proved very simple and effective and if expanded has the capacity to save lives in showing with some notice, a spot for a tired truckie to pull into, if a recognised rest area is full or too far away.<sup>22</sup>

- 7.20 The Committee endorses the principle of standardised coloured reflectors to mark rest areas, but felt that there may be some confusion with blue reflectors used for other purposes. The Committee believes the use of another colour would be more appropriate.

- 7.21 Just as important was the location and amenities of rest areas. Mr Althaus, CEO of the ATA, told the Committee:

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

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21 ATA, Submission no. 26, p. 4.

22 Mr Rod Hannifey, Submission no. 14.

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.<sup>23</sup>

- 7.22 The Committee shares the concern of witnesses at the lack of progress with regard to fatigue management generally and the provision of rest areas specifically. It urges all governments to address the issue of rest areas as a matter of priority. Interim measures, such as standardised coloured reflectors should be adopted immediately while a more comprehensive program of works is carried out.

### **Recommendation 31**

- 7.23 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government request the Australian Transport Council to:**
- **devise standards for truck rest areas;**
  - **establish a program of works based on those standards; and**
  - **immediately commence a program for establishing temporary truck rest areas based on interim measures such as standardised coloured reflector stops.**
- 7.24 Mr David Leech, in his submission to the Committee, identified leakage of coolant, oil and exhaust fumes into truck cabins which could be a cause of fatigue.<sup>24</sup>
- 7.25 The Committee is of the opinion that more research is needed into the issue of fume ingress to the cabin area of trucks. The Committee therefore recommends that the Australian Transport Council start a program of research into leakage of coolant, oil and exhaust fumes into truck cabins, the affects this may have on drivers and possible solutions to the problem.

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<sup>23</sup> *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> Mr David Leech, Submission no, p. 3.



## Recommendation 32

- 7.26 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government request the Australian Transport Council to:**
- **start a program of research into leakage of fumes from coolant, oil and exhaust into truck cabins;**
  - **report on the effects this leakage has on drivers;**
  - **incorporate this issue and any solutions into the National Heavy Vehicle Safety Plan 2006 – 2008;**
  - **develop maintenance schedules that incorporate checks for leakage of fumes into cabins; and**
  - **assess the feasibility of installing carbon monoxide detectors into truck cabins.**

## Driver Competence

- 7.27 The expected doubling of the national road transport freight task over the next two decades<sup>25</sup> has the potential to impact on road safety through a shortage of competent drivers. In his submission, Mr Leech noted:

The government needs to address the professional driver shortage as this has the potential to allow inexperienced or poor drivers to do a job they are not qualified enough for as there are no alternatives.<sup>26</sup>

- 7.28 In his evidence before the Committee, Mr Althaus expressed similar concerns stating:

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.<sup>27</sup>

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25 ATC, *National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy, 2003–2010*, p. 7.

26 Mr David Leech, Submission no. 42.

27 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 99.

- 7.29 The Committee shares this concern. A large influx of inexperienced drivers in the road transport sector carries considerable potential to undermine road safety. The Committee urges the Australian Government, in consultation with industry, to plan strategies for remedying personnel shortages in the road transport industry, through apprenticeship schemes or via some other mechanism.

### **Recommendation 33**

- 7.30 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government liaise with the National Transport Commission and industry bodies to establish and implement training strategies for the road transport industry.**

## **Buses**

- 7.31 Statistically, buses are the safest form of motorised road transport available. Between 1990 and 1998, bus passengers represented 0.6 per cent of all road fatalities. Of the 300 bus-related fatalities to occur during this period, one third were pedestrians, one third bus occupants and one third occupants of other vehicles.<sup>28</sup>
- 7.32 With regard to bus safety, the significant issues identified in the submission of the Bus Industry Confederation (BIC), were:
- Bus awareness, especially amongst young and aged pedestrians;
  - The age of the bus fleet—new buses being safer than older buses;
  - Seatbelts;
  - Seat design;
  - Driver Health
  - Regulation; and
  - Accreditation.

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28 Bus Industry Confederation, Submission no. 34.

- 7.33 The age of the fleet was identified by the BIC as important mainly because newer buses incorporated better safety features than older buses. In his evidence before the Committee, Mr Michael Apps, Executive Director of the BIC, stated:

The age of the Australian bus fleet is a real 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 tax benefits.

- 7.34 In its submission, the BIC proposed ‘a five year effective life depreciation’ and a ban on the importation of buses and coaches 15 years of age or over.
- 7.35 The mandatory fitting of seat belts on new coaches is supported by the BIC, but not the retro-fitting of older buses, nor the fitting of seat belts in urban buses. Better seat design, with higher backs and more padding on seat tops and stanchions is regarded as a more effective measure. There should be no exemption for smaller buses from the requirement to fit seat belts.
- 7.36 The BIC also suggested annual health checks for all bus drivers. It recommended a uniform system of compliance, regulation and accreditation, including the ‘informal’ passenger transport industry.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Bus Industry Confederation, Submission no. 34; *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 63–5.

- 7.37 The Committee is sympathetic to the bus industry's request for a nationally consistent system of regulation and accreditation and believes this is something the National Transport Commission should look into. The Committee also believes that given the safety record of buses, and high safety standards of modern buses and coaches, there is a strong case for encouraging the retirement of older buses and the rapid and continual modernisation of the bus fleet.

#### **Recommendation 34**

- 7.38 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ask the National Transport Commission to develop a nationally consistent system of regulation and accreditation for the road passenger transport industry with a view to its implementation by the States and Territories.**

#### **Recommendation 35**

- 7.39 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government take steps to reduce the age of the bus fleet by:**
- **restricting the age of buses that can be imported for other than collectable or vintage purposes to under 15 years of age, unless substantially rebuilt or modified vehicles comply with agreed accreditation safety standards; and**
  - **providing tax incentives to replace older buses in the form of a five year effective life depreciation rate.**

## **Vulnerable Road Users**

- 7.40 Motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians are classed as vulnerable road users because of their inherent lack of protection, and hence vulnerability, compared with occupants of cars and other motor vehicles. This vulnerability demands special consideration in terms of road safety planning.

- 7.41 Many of the issues of concern to all these groups involve the safety of the road environment—the safety standard of the road and the roadside—speeding and public awareness. A considerable proportion of the evidence relating to these issues was raised in evidence from representatives of these groups, and has been dealt with in earlier chapters.
- 7.42 Nonetheless, in the Committee’s view, the needs of each of these groups must be addressed not only within the context of the broader National Road Safety Strategy, but also within specific strategies designed to cater for these groups.
- 7.43 The need for a separate motorcycle strategy was noted in the submission of the Ulysses Club, which also called for government funding for motorcycle organisations to conduct their own road safety activities.<sup>30</sup>
- 7.44 In the introduction to its own road safety plan, the Motorcycle Council of New South Wales identified the need for a separate motorcycle strategy in these terms:
- Each year there are approximately 2200 reported crashes in NSW involving motorcyclists. They represent only a small proportion (4%) of all motor vehicle crashes, but are more likely to result in injury (90%) compared to other crashes (40%). Despite such figures, motorcyclists are rarely singled out by road safety agencies for research or targeted road safety campaigns. It has been assumed that motorcyclists are adequately covered by road safety programs directed at motorists in general, however, there is no evidence to establish whether this is indeed the case.<sup>31</sup>
- 7.45 The Motorcycle Council’s strategic plan identifies a range of strategic objectives and specific measures to improve road safety amongst motorcycle users. The essential point of all of them is that almost every aspect of road safety—road design, road safety auditing, licensing, training, safety design and public awareness—can and must be considered from the specific point of view of the motorcyclist.

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30 Ulysses Club Incorporated, Submission no. 17, p. 6.

31 Motorcycle Council of New South Wales, *Positioned for Safety: Road Safety Strategic Plan 2002–2005*, p. 1. Exhibit no. 6.

7.46 While there is not as yet a separate motorcycle strategy, a separate strategy for pushbikes, *Australia Cycling: the National Strategy 1999–2003*, was formulated by Austroads to encourage cycling as a community activity and as a means of transport. Its objectives include:

- Australia Cycling is implemented and reviewed in a coordinated and collaborative manner.
- Policy and planning integrates cycling as a valued element.
- Facilities exist that support increased cycling.
- Safety for cyclists, on and off road, is continuously improved.
- The benefits of cycling are recognised by decision makers and the Australian community.
- Cycling is incorporated into all appropriate areas of education, training and professional development.<sup>32</sup>

7.47 Safety strategies include:

- Developing and implementing a national public communication strategy to improve the awareness of all road users as to how they can better share our roads;
- Developing and implementing a national public communication strategy to improve the awareness of path users as to how they can best share our paths;
- Ensuring that safety initiatives such as safety audits and identification of blackspots include consideration of cycling;
- Researching and trialling measures to improve the safety of cyclists;
- Developing and implementing behavioural programs/initiatives relating to all road users which improve cyclist safety in areas such as motor vehicle speeds and helmets; and
- Establishing and monitoring the casualty rate for cyclists.<sup>33</sup>

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32 Austroads, *Australia Cycling: the National Strategy 1999–2003*, pp. 6–7.

33 Austroads, *Australia Cycling: the National Strategy 1999–2003*, p. 11.

- 7.48 It is the Committee's view that the Austroads cycling strategy would provide a useful template for a national pedestrian strategy. It is also of the view that a national motorcycle safety strategy should be developed along the lines of the National Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy. Each of these strategies should be designed to tie in with the broader framework of the National Road Safety Strategy, and each should be accompanied by National Action Plans.

### Recommendation 36

- 7.49 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ask the Australian Transport Council to develop and implement national strategies for:**
- **Motorcycle safety;**
  - **Cyclists; and**
  - **Pedestrians.**

## Youth

- 7.50 Probably the group at greatest risk on the road are young male drivers, who are over represented in road fatality statistics. Evidence presented by Mr Iain Cameron, Executive Director of the Office of Road Safety, Department of the Premier and Cabinet Western Australia, indicated that one reason for this was attitudinal.

- 7.51 With regard to excessive speed, Mr Cameron noted:

The difficult group ... 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.'<sup>34</sup>

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34 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 14.

7.52 Similar attitudes were encountered with regard to the wearing of seatbelts:

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.’<sup>35</sup>

7.53 The need to address the problems of young drivers have long been recognised. Every jurisdiction has developed strategies for novice drivers. In 2000, Austroads compiled a *Youth Road Strategy* report which outlined a range of strategies and objectives to address youth road safety. These included:

- Youth involvement and ownership.
  - ⇒ To involve and collaborate with youth to communicate better with younger drivers.
- Family, community and industry responsibility.
  - ⇒ To ensure young drivers have support within the community, from family and from the driver training industry.
- Public education.
  - ⇒ To change attitudes to young drivers and driver education by publicising the benefits of developing skills prior to obtaining a provisional/probationary licence.
- Driver education, training and licensing.
  - ⇒ To develop programs that benefit new drivers and reduce their risk of crash involvement.
- Enforcement support.
  - ⇒ To ensure young drivers are aware of the risks and legal consequences of their driving behaviour.
- Legislation.
  - ⇒ To achieve consistency in legislation across jurisdictions.



- Research and evaluation.
  - ⇒ To improve the evaluation of young driver programs and develop a better understanding of what can be done to reduce the over-representation of young drivers in crashes.
- Coordination and integration.
  - ⇒ To ensure that all agencies and jurisdictions share information and program evaluations to maximise benefits for all Australian and New Zealand youth.<sup>36</sup>

7.54 While the Committee is satisfied that the *Youth Road Safety* report represents a useful statement of principles, it believes that like other vulnerable road users youth requires its own national strategy and action plan.

### Recommendation 37

7.55 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ask the Australian Transport Council to develop and implement a national youth road safety strategy and action plan.**

## Changing culture

7.56 The Committee also believes that this strategy must incorporate new thinking on the best way to encourage young people to use roads safely. New approaches must be found that engage young people on their own terms.

7.57 In their evidence before the Committee, Dr Zoe Sofoulis and Dr Sarah Redshaw of the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney, questioned the value of current road safety campaigns, especially with regard to young people. The dominant road safety paradigm, Dr Sofoulis argued, cast drivers 'as rational, though occasionally disobedient or drug affected, individuals whose feelings are irrelevant to their conscious command of machines'. It defined driving as the 'domain of technical rationality in which individuals learn knowledge and road rules

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36 Austroads, *Youth Road Safety*, 2000, pp. 15–18.

and practice skills and acquire expertise that will allow them to predictably control their vehicles'.<sup>37</sup>

7.58 The result was that road safety campaigns typically made 'authoritarian and sometimes traumatic appeals to audiences who, they address a generic citizens in need of informing, reminding and threatening ... The general message is basically: obey the law or suffer'.<sup>38</sup>

7.59 According to Dr Sofoulis, such 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'. Rather, these messages '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'.<sup>39</sup>

7.60 This ambivalence has profound consequences with regard to young people:

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.<sup>40</sup>

7.61 Dr Sofoulis argued for a shift in road safety campaigns 'away from this morally weak emphasis on enforcement and consequences and towards an ethic of care and responsibility'. She continued:

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.<sup>41</sup>

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37 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 56.

38 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 56.

39 *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 56–7.

40 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 57.

41 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 57.

7.62 Both Dr Sofoulis and Dr Redshaw emphasised the need to look at ‘the broader social environment that the car exists within’.<sup>42</sup> Driving was 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’.<sup>43</sup>

7.63 With that in view, youth needed to be specifically targeted in road safety campaigns, messages conveyed in mediums and contexts relevant to youth:

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.<sup>44</sup>

7.64 Just as importantly, youth need to be involved in the design of campaigns, ‘creating road safety or other harm minimisation messages for their peers’.<sup>45</sup>

7.65 Another facet of this approach is getting young people to talk and think about driving. Dr Redshaw outlined the program she had devised in *Driving With A Difference*, a new workshop based approach to young driver education centred on critical group discussion of the personal and cultural meanings of driving:

The approach 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 license, 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

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42 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 59.

43 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 59.

44 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 57.

45 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 58.

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 are doing in cars. It was successful in producing that result ... they really had to look at what they were actually doing in cars, not what they thought they were doing.<sup>46</sup>

- 7.66 The Committee agrees with the evidence presented by Drs Sofoulis and Redshaw on the need for new and innovative approaches to developing a culture of road safety amongst young people. This evidence accords with other views expressed in Chapter 5 on the need for targeted and sustained national public education programs and a more holistic approach to driver training. The Committee endorses the work done under the Driving With A Difference program, and would like to see government investigate it with a view to national implementation.

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**Recommendation 38**

- 7.67 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ask the Australian Transport Council to evaluate the Driving With A Difference Program at the University of Western Sydney, with a view to its implementation nationwide.**

Paul Neville

Committee Chair

2 June 2004

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46 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 60.