

Chair's Foreword

I am very pleased to present this report on driver education, training and road safety in New South Wales.

Background

The Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe) resolved to conduct this inquiry into driver education, training and road safety in November 2016.

The Staysafe Committee, as it is better known, was the first Joint Standing Committee appointed by the New South Wales Parliament, and has been meeting since 1982.

The Committee has eight members; five appointed by the Legislative Assembly and three appointed by the Legislative Council.

In their resolutions appointing the Committee the two houses have delegated to the Committee as its ongoing tasks to:

- Monitor, investigate, review and report on the road safety situation in New South Wales; and
- Review and report on countermeasures aimed at reducing road deaths, injuries, and the social and economic costs to the community arising from road accidents.

The Staysafe Committee's inquiries have been influential and well received. Many of its recommendations have been implemented by government including:

- The introduction and continued use of random breath testing;
- The introduction of a revised graduated driver licensing scheme for new drivers; and
- The immediate suspension of licences for drivers with high-range prescribed concentration of alcohol.

Since 1999 the Staysafe Committee has undertaken 24 separate inquiries and this is the third inquiry undertaken in the 56th Parliament.

The role of driver education and training has always been integral to Staysafe's examination of road safety. The Committee has directly examined driver education and training on a number of occasions, most notably in its 2007 inquiry into young driver safety and education programs.

Whole-of-life driver education and training

This inquiry is unique, however, in that we have sought to examine the role of driver education and training in delivering better road safety outcomes for all drivers across their whole driving lives.

Driver training

Driver training is commonly viewed as a matter for novice or inexperienced drivers, usually young learner and provisional drivers. Yet in evidence to this and previous inquiries we have heard much about driver training offered to and undertaken by experienced drivers. This training may be undertaken by traffic offenders who are directed to attend training to correct their driving skills and behaviour. It is also undertaken voluntarily by many drivers who may wish to update their skills or expand their experiences, who may be returning to driving after time away from the road, or who may view driving as a challenge, pastime or entertainment.

Driver education

Driver education is something we all accept as an integral part of getting behind the wheel. Road rules change from time to time, new technologies are introduced and old ones phased out, the road toll rises and falls numerically and in the collective consciousness. We are all familiar with public campaigns which draw our attention to various aspects of road safety, road user behaviour, and driving attitudes.

Road safety performance

New South Wales has been a standout road safety performer in recent years, recording historically low crashes and fatalities. This makes the recent spike in road fatalities all the more concerning, both in raw numbers and for the over-representation of certain age groups, including some experienced drivers, in the statistics.

The terms of reference we adopted for this inquiry were necessarily broad. This ensured the terms covered drivers of all ages and levels of experience, as well as drivers and road users across the state however they choose to use the roads and their vehicles.

The evidence

We heard evidence from road users of all ages and types. These included older drivers, disabled drivers and indigenous drivers, and vulnerable road users including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. We heard from educators and researchers, professional and volunteer driver trainers, road engineers, motoring and driver advocates, the NSW Government, and many private citizens. The Committee members and I are grateful for the time, effort and interest committed to this inquiry by everyone who made a submission or gave evidence in person.

Broad as the terms were, not everything we heard came within them. We noted in particular the evidence of the significant impact of the justice system on indigenous drivers. The responsibility for addressing these matters is not within the remit of the Committee or the road safety authorities, and we have referred this evidence to the Justice portfolio.

Radical versus gradual change

Many of our findings and recommendations reflect the incremental nature of road safety regulation and performance generally. The evolution of roads and vehicle technology, the

changes in driving behaviour and attitude, and the decline in road fatalities are gradual. Where there are radical or transformative steps, like the installation of seat belts, they can and should be taken in order to reduce road deaths. There are trade-offs to be identified and understood with all change and particularly radical change, notably around the costs of change and who pays for it.

Generally speaking, however, much that has been and can be achieved in road safety takes time. Driving ability, in New South Wales at least, is learned over 120 hours of supervised driving. Driving experience comes with time, which hopefully also develops safe driving attitudes. Many of our recommendations call for investigations and research, and for liaison and discussion. Some come with costs if enacted, or the potential for costs, especially where regulation is anticipated or greater professional involvement is foreshadowed. How these costs should be allocated must be part of these investigations and discussions.

Some recommendations are designed to break down barriers to people gaining a driver licence. Others have the potential to place limits on who can drive. In both these scenarios we have been conscious that any change can create winners and losers, and that these outcomes should only be considered appropriate where road safety benefits accrue or no deterioration in road safety outcomes will result.

The report structure

This report is divided into eight chapters.

Chapter One discusses road safety reporting and research. It examines the way crash data is collected and reported in New South Wales. It also considers how this data is used by government and non-government agencies to achieve road safety improvements.

Chapter Two discusses driver training and testing for learner and provisional drivers. It examines the Graduated Licensing Scheme which underpins the phased licence structure in New South Wales to reflect and address the abilities and needs of novice drivers. It considers the training of drivers according to their passage through the early stages of licensing and what changes can be made to address drivers at this high risk stage.

Chapter Three discusses driver training and testing for licensed drivers. It takes a whole-of-life perspective on the needs and abilities of drivers throughout their driving lives. It looks particularly at older drivers and drivers with ill-health, as well as driving offenders, and considers the question of mandatory testing of all drivers at regular intervals.

Chapter Four discusses the support available for disadvantaged learner drivers. It identifies four groups: indigenous drivers, disabled drivers, socio-economically disadvantaged drivers, and rural and regional drivers, and considers how to make support more accessible and effective.

Chapter Five discusses driver education mostly through media campaigning. It examines current campaigning and feedback from various road users regarding their needs, including

pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, disadvantaged drivers and older drivers. It also briefly considers other forms of driver education delivered as sanctions or incentives.

Chapter Six discusses the regulation of driver trainers. It examines the current regulation of the professional driver training industry and suggested improvements. It also examines the reliance on non-professional volunteers and mentors for the bulk of driver training and considers whether regulation of non-professional training will achieve road safety benefits.

Chapter Seven discusses how road safety education is taught in schools. It examines the ages at which road safety education is introduced, and some of the teaching methods and resources used.

Chapter Eight discusses how road safety education is delivered in vocational training, and at work. It examines how road safety is introduced in trade training, and in health and safety training in the workplace, including to heavy vehicle operators.

Important issues

Many submissions called for the **mandatory retesting** of all drivers at regular intervals throughout their driving lives. This proposal was described as analogous to the skills updating required in many professions where people perform complex technical and intellectual tasks. We also noted the contributions of road safety researchers and regulators to the effect that while mandatory testing would involve significant costs and administrative changes, they could point to no research which showed that it was likely to reduce road deaths. This evidence made the distinction between driving skills and attitude. It noted that teaching someone to drive at the beginning of their driving life was not the same as encouraging that driver to develop safe driving attitudes and then to drive safely for the rest of their driving life. Safe driving, this evidence said, came with experience and not with retraining and retesting. We found this evidence persuasive.

Some submissions queried whether the **value of professional driver training** is understated. They noted that this value was recognised by the awarding of a logbook discount to learner drivers who undertook professional driver training. The limiting of this discount, however, was said to encourage learner drivers to view the limit as a recommended maximum number of professional training hours. We also heard that the regulation of the professional driver training industry may not be sufficiently developed to ensure that all professional driver training meets expected standards. We believe that both the better regulation of professional driver training and opportunities to expand the discount should be investigated, including whether some professional driver training should be mandated for all learner drivers.

Conversely, the **cost of driver training**, especially for disadvantaged people, was the focus of many submissions. We heard that many people are discouraged or excluded from driver training because they do not have access to reliable vehicles, or trainers and supervisors. Many are said to be reliant on piecemeal, inaccessible and under-funded programs for their training. Other evidence suggested that support for disadvantaged people was adequately funded and widely available. Importantly, it was often delivered as an adjunct to education and trade

training so that driver training was part of a broad personal and community upskilling program. We are conscious that meeting demands for driver training support will always be in focus, but that significant progress in the identification of demand and the delivery of support across the state is being made. A single, accessible information hub for disadvantaged people seeking support will, in our view, make it easier to identify support and meet this demand.

Many submissions queried the **content of the learner driver program**. We received calls for a range of issues to be given more prominence in the program including training in 'real-world' conditions, road sharing, cognitive training, and advanced driver training. Advocates for vulnerable road users including pedestrians and cyclists gave detailed evidence on this subject. We also noted support for the NSW Safer Driver Course, and for the expanded use of computer-based training including driving simulators. We have recommended further investigations in these areas, including whether the Safer Driver Course should be mandated for all learner drivers.

Early on in this inquiry the media gave attention to the New South Wales **older driver assessment** regime and whether it discriminated against older drivers. We heard conflicting evidence on this matter. On balance we believe that the current arrangements are a reasonable balance between mobility and safety risk, especially given the availability of restricted licensing for older drivers.

A number of submissions promoted **advanced and defensive driver training** as a way to improve driving skills. The nexus between skills training and driver attitude is discussed above. We believe the same argument must apply to advanced and defensive driver training. Indeed, the research evidence presented to us held that advanced and defensive training could not be shown to improve road safety outcomes and that for some driver groups, may have negative outcomes. We view advanced and defensive driver training as akin to professional driver training and are concerned, therefore, that what it offers and for whom should be better understood.

While the contribution of professional driver training was widely discussed, the overall **reliance on non-professional driver training** arguably received less attention. We noted the importance of volunteer supervision in order for learner drivers to meet the 120 hours log book requirement, as well as the relative lack of regulation of and training for these volunteers. We also heard about organised mentoring programs which assist learner drivers, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, not only to comply with the 120 hours requirement, but also to be made aware of the importance of developing and exhibiting safe driving attitudes. We have made several recommendations which address non-professional driver training.

New South Wales road users are familiar with driver education programs, mostly via **media campaigns**. We received evidence that the number, scope and cost of campaigning are extensive. We also heard calls for campaigns on various subjects to be conducted in the future, notably in areas like driver distraction, road sharing and the needs of vulnerable road users, poorly understood road rules, and safe driving on country roads. Further, we heard calls for

greater transparency in evaluating campaigns and inviting stakeholder input to campaign design. We have made several recommendations which address future campaigning.

The role and content of **road safety education in schools** was the subject of several submissions we received. We are satisfied that New South Wales is a leading proponent of school education, and have recommended the investigation of several aspects of current and proposed programs. In particular, the evidence we heard regarding the value of fear-based education for school students was mixed and would merit study. Similarly, we heard that resilience training for students around managing risk-taking behaviour may help develop safe driving attitudes. We have recommended that the evidence for resilience training be examined.

Conclusion

This inquiry has been an important opportunity for us to take stock after 35 years and so many inquiries across the gamut of road safety. By undertaking such a broad inquiry I hope we have brought together the widest possible range of views, experiences and proposals in a way which allows road safety regulators and stakeholders also to take stock and perhaps examine the drivers of better road safety performance in a more holistic and less sectional way.

One outcome of this inquiry may be to identify areas for future inquiry. These will be all the more fruitful should we have the benefit of the outcomes of some of the investigations recommended in this report.

Otherwise I hope that our recommendations point the way towards valuable work for road safety regulators and researchers, and opportunities for greater engagement between stakeholders and regulators.

I am grateful for the input we received from everyone who made a submission or appeared to give evidence. We call upon road safety stakeholders repeatedly to make submissions to Staysafe inquiries. Our stakeholders are committed and well informed. Their input is reliable. I trust that they are not fatigued by our program.

It would be remiss of me not to comment on the value of the submission made by Transport for NSW to this inquiry. The agency's submission was thorough, detailed and authoritative. It was highly valued by all Committee members and stakeholders alike. I commend the Transport for NSW submission as a model for other agencies charged with making submissions to parliamentary inquiries.

I also wish to thank my fellow Committee members for their contributions to our inquiry. As always members brought to the table their detailed analyses of the submissions and practical experience of road safety in the community. It is my pleasure to work with such a well-informed Committee so passionate about road safety.

Finally I wish to acknowledge the Committee staff. This was a broad inquiry and not unexpectedly, it has resulted in a long and complex report. I thank the staff for their effort and support throughout the inquiry.

As I said above, New South Wales has been a standout performer in road safety. Road crashes and fatalities are at or near historical lows. At the time of writing road deaths are ten fewer than at this time last year, and serious injuries are ten greater. Every fatality and every injury is not just a number, however, but a person. It is the ultimate goal of New South Wales road safety campaigning to achieve zero road safety deaths. Zero deaths may seem a high bar to set, but in 1970 when we reached a peak of 28.9 road deaths per 100,000 population, the notion of 4.1 road deaths per 100,000 population, which we achieved in 2014, would have been challenging to say the least.

I look forward to continuing road safety improvements in New South Wales.



Greg Aplin MP

Chair

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1 _____ 6

We find that the crash data collected and reported by Transport for NSW is comprehensive, thorough and robust, but can be improved by the collection of additional data, and better integration of data collection and data sharing across government and non-government agencies.

Recommendation 1 _____ 8

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW expand crash data collection and reporting to include crashes:

- Where the at-fault driver is unlicensed
- Where the at-fault driver is overseas licensed
- Which occur on unsealed roads
- Which do not generate a police report.

Recommendation 2 _____ 8

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW establish a working party comprised of representatives of the transport, police and health portfolios, local government, road safety researchers and the insurance industry, to report in one year on how to identify, capture and integrate all crash data and improve crash data analysis.

Finding 2 _____ 13

We find that cross border issues affecting some drivers are confusing and may result in harsh outcomes.

Finding 3 _____ 14

We find that the Safer Driver Course is an effective road safety tool.

Recommendation 3 _____ 15

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW:

- publish the findings of its current review of the Safer Driver Course
- conduct a further review, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and the community, to determine whether road safety benefits can be achieved by making the Safer Driver Course compulsory for all learner drivers.

Finding 4 _____ 20

We find that the '3 for 1' discount scheme could be more effective in encouraging learner drivers to undertake professional training.

Finding 5 _____ 20

We find that in the absence of any mandated professional training for learner drivers, the value of professional training may be understated.

Recommendation 4 _____ 20

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW review the current logbook discounts offered to learner drivers for undertaking professional driver training and the Safer Driver Course, to identify opportunities to extend the logbook discount without compromising road safety outcomes.

Recommendation 5 _____ 21

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW examine whether road safety benefits can be achieved by:

- mandating a minimum number of hours of professional driver training for all learner drivers
- mandating a minimum number of hours of professional driver training for learner and provisional drivers who fail to meet certain criteria such as failing any test prescribed under the Graduated Licensing Scheme multiple times
- mandating that professional driver training hours must be undertaken before any volunteer-supervised training hours are undertaken.

Recommendation 6 _____ 22

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW conduct and publish an audit of the integrity of the current learner log book system.

Recommendation 7 _____ 22

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services investigate the effectiveness of computer-based learning on long term road user behaviour and the road toll.

Recommendation 8 _____ 23

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW investigate what road safety benefits can be achieved by expanding the content of the learner driver program.

Recommendation 9 _____ 27

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW review and publicly report on the value of simulators to supplement current driver training, testing and assessment with particular reference to the use of simulators to:

- Expose learner drivers to unfamiliar driving conditions such as a metropolitan learner to country conditions and vice versa
- Substitute for on-road training for disadvantaged learners where access to a simulator can be arranged
- Be employed in hazard perception testing and in aged driver assessment.

Finding 6 _____	31
We find that good behaviour schemes for provisional drivers may have merit in improving provisional driver behaviour and attitude.	
Recommendation 10 _____	32
The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW investigate the benefits of offering provisional drivers who commit low range driving offences access to a good behaviour period, similar to that offered to unrestricted licence holders, where road safety outcomes are not compromised.	
Recommendation 11 _____	32
The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW review the conditions of provisional driver licences to identify any opportunities to remove the confusion reported in cross border areas without compromising road safety.	
Finding 7 _____	36
We find that the mandatory periodic retesting and retraining of all licensed drivers between the age of first achieving a licence and the age of older driver assessment would be expensive, disruptive and administratively complex, and unlikely to improve road safety outcomes.	
Finding 8 _____	36
We find that targeting unlicensed drivers is likely to be more effective in improving road safety outcomes than mandatory retesting and retraining of licensed drivers.	
Finding 9 _____	39
We find that licence renewal may be an opportunity to reinforce safe driving messages and evaluate the success of driver education.	
Recommendation 12 _____	40
The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW examine and report on the contribution of unlicensed drivers to road fatalities and formulate a program for targeting unlicensed drivers.	
Recommendation 13 _____	40
The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services investigate whether licence renewal presents opportunities to test the success of driver education programs by engaging with drivers online or in person.	
Finding 10 _____	43
We find that the current aged driver assessment regime in New South Wales is a reasonable balance between the rights of individual drivers and the community, and assists the state to achieve above average performance in fatalities for drivers aged 75 years or more.	
Finding 11 _____	45
We find that current reporting arrangements for dementia and other medical conditions which may diminish driving capacity are inadequate, and the role of doctors and other health professionals in contributing to road safety is unclear.	

Recommendation 14 _____ 45

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW introduce measures to make the reporting of dementia and any other medical conditions which may diminish driving capacity mandatory for medical and health practitioners.

Finding 12 _____ 50

We find a lack of clarity regarding the definitions, content, and target markets of advanced and defensive driving training.

Recommendation 15 _____ 51

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW undertake a review of the advanced and defensive driver training currently offered in New South Wales, in consultation with training providers and road safety researchers, in order to:

- Clarify terminology such as ‘advanced’ and ‘defensive’
- Assess the suitability of such training for licensed, provisional and learner drivers
- Ensure that courses are clearly identified as suitable or not suitable for particular classes of driver
- Identify best practice post-licence driver education which can be marketed safely to drivers with varying levels of competence, experience and need;

and publishes the results of its review within 6 months.

Recommendation 16 _____ 53

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW review current arrangements for delivering the Traffic Offenders Intervention Program to ensure that course content and delivery between providers is consistent and achieves the best possible road safety outcomes.

Finding 13 _____ 61

We find that the impact of the justice system on indigenous driving offenders is serious, but falls within the Justice portfolio and outside the terms of reference of this particular inquiry.

Recommendation 17 _____ 62

The Committee recommends that the NSW Government examine above average offence and incarceration rates for indigenous drivers. The Committee recommends that this examination be undertaken within the Justice portfolio and that it report in one year.

Finding 14 _____ 66

We find that the NSW Government’s measures to address socio-economic and educational barriers to driver licensing are adequately funded and available across wide areas of the state. We also find that as the program continues to expand as planned, that program coordination, availability and integration with community organisations will continue to improve.

Recommendation 18 _____ 67

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services review funding for programs that reduce barriers to disadvantaged young people, including indigenous people, obtaining and retaining driver licences.

Recommendation 19 _____ 67

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW investigate how the aims, objectives and achievements of the Literacy for Life Program can better inform the Driver Licensing Access Program and the way it is delivered in the future.

Recommendation 20 _____ 68

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services create a single information hub which can be accessed by and on behalf of any disadvantaged learner driver as a resource for locating all available and necessary material and advice.

Recommendation 21 _____ 83

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW publish evaluations of the effectiveness of driver education campaigns in order to better inform and engage the community in the formulation of future campaigns.

Recommendation 22 _____ 83

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW conduct future driver education campaigns with an emphasis on the development and demonstration of safe driving attitudes, which address the following topics:

- New vehicle technology and the need for drivers to be educated about its road safety benefits and how to use it to achieve these benefits
- Driver and other road user distraction, with particular emphasis on the dangers for vulnerable road users
- Road sharing and pedestrian, motorcycle, bicycle and heavy vehicle awareness
- New and poorly understood road rules such as the minimum passing distance rule with bicycles
- Safe driving in both familiar and unfamiliar environments, with an emphasis on safe driving on country roads
- Safe driving for and around older drivers, with an emphasis on how older drivers can identify practical transport alternatives and find support to manage their retirement from driving if necessary
- Making safe driving choices including selecting safer vehicles and properly maintaining vehicles

Finding 15 _____ 84

We find that Local Government could be utilised more effectively to deliver driver education.

Recommendation 23 _____ 85

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW review, in consultation with councils and their representatives, the role of local government and particularly, the Road Safety Officer Program, in delivering road safety education.

Recommendation 24 _____ 87

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW examine and publicly report on the proposal by the NRMA for the replacement of fines for low range driving infringements with the option of road safety courses.

Finding 16 _____ 97

We find that the regulation of the professional driver training industry is under-developed.

Recommendation 25 _____ 98

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW convene a working party comprised of representatives of the professional driver training industry and road safety researchers to examine and report on the current regulation of the professional driver training industry and the legislative and regulatory reforms required:

- To ensure that qualifications, skills and practices within the New South Wales industry are equivalent to world's best practice
- To ensure that professional driver trainers with qualifications gained in other jurisdictions must demonstrate that they meet New South Wales industry standards before being licensed to operate in New South Wales
- To ensure that professional driver trainers commit to and receive timely and effective professional development regarding changing vehicle technology and road rules, and other related matters.

Finding 17 _____ 102

We find that the current regulation of non-professional driver trainers is limited, and that terms like volunteer and mentor are not well defined.

Recommendation 26 _____ 104

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW review and report publicly on opportunities to better train and regulate volunteer learner driver supervisors and mentors in order to achieve improved road safety outcomes, and that this review include an analysis of the benefits of mandating that volunteer and mentor supervisors of learner drivers receive some form of professional training.

Recommendation 27 _____ 104

The Committee recommends that subject to Recommendation 26, learner drivers instructed by appropriately trained community mentors such as those employed by Police Citizens Youth Clubs NSW Limited and Blue Datto Foundation Ltd, qualify for a learner driver log book discount, as do learner drivers trained by professional driver trainers.

Recommendation 28 _____ 105

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW work with community training organisations such as Police Citizens Youth Clubs NSW Limited and Blue Datto Foundation Ltd to ensure that young people who drop out of the education system are able to access high quality driver training by qualified volunteers and mentors.

Recommendation 29 _____ 116

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW and the NSW Department of Education, in consultation with road safety researchers and educators, review the current road safety curriculum for students of all ages to identify the road safety benefits of:

- Introducing road safety messages to students at particular ages
- Fear-based education programs
- Opportunities to tailor Technical and Further Education courses to better integrate road safety and driver education with trade and literacy training
- The value of resilience training in developing safe driving attitudes and risk management skills
- A single national road safety curriculum and national accreditation for road safety educators.

Recommendation 30 _____ 127

The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services:

- Engage with TAFE NSW to ensure road safety training is an integral part of vocational training
- Liaise with the heavy vehicle industry and fleet managers to seek an industry-wide approach to workplace road safety, including strategies which recognise emerging vehicle technologies and promote safe vehicle selection.