

Submission

No 24

DRIVER AND ROAD USER DISTRACTION

Organisation: NRMA Motoring and Services

Name: Ms Wendy Machin

Position: President

Date Received: 1/05/2012

27 April 2012

Mr Greg Aplin MP
Chair
Staysafe (Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety)
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Level 1
9a York Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia

Mail to: PO Box 1026
Strathfield NSW 2135
Australia

T 02 9276 7210
F 02 9276 7224
E president@
mynrma.com.au

Dear Mr Aplin

Inquiry into Driver and Road User Distraction

Thank you for your letter inviting NRMA Motoring & Services (NRMA) to make a submission to Staysafe's Inquiry into Driver and Road User Distraction.

NRMA has more than 2.4 million Members in NSW and the ACT. For more than 90 years, NRMA has represented the interests of motorists in relation to road funding, road safety, driver education and other related public policy issues.

Throughout the years, NRMA has advocated for safety improvements for road users focusing on the three key themes of safer drivers, safer roads, and safer vehicles. In particular, NRMA has an interest in driver distraction.

NRMA believes that distractions are a normal part of life, including in the road environment. In some cases distractions can have drastic consequences. Some drivers, particularly older and novice drivers may be more susceptible to the effects of distraction than others.

However, distractions are an issue not only for drivers but for other road users. A pedestrian crossing the road while talking on a mobile phone or wearing headphones can be just as dangerous.

In NSW there are laws that prohibit driving while completing some distracting and dangerous tasks such as hand-held mobile phone use. NRMA believes that the current legislation is sufficient but in some situations monitoring is required. For example, the current prohibition on display screens visible to the driver being active while moving is useful, but the growth of screens inside vehicles should be monitored for early warning of devices that might exacerbate distraction issues.

NRMA also believes that increased enforcement of the current driver distraction laws is needed. More police on our roads means that drivers engaging in distracting behaviours can be detected and stopped. NRMA believes that this can be funded by hypothecating traffic fine revenue to road safety initiatives.

Recommendation

NRMA recommends that the NSW Government should undertake regular education campaigns to provide road users with information about the dangers of distractions such as hand-held mobile phone use.

Vehicle Technology

Technology plays an important role of road safety. The introduction of vehicle technologies such as the variety of airbags and electronic stability control has resulted in a significant reduction of fatalities and injuries.


The most effective technologies currently available to assist drivers in managing dangerous situations resulting from distraction are probably:


- Lane Departure Warning – sounds an alarm if the driver crosses a lane line without operating the indicators and some systems act on the steering to nudge the vehicle back towards the centre of the lane.
- Blind spot warning.
- Automatic braking – a sensor detects a vehicle in front closing at a dangerous speed.
- Pedestrian detection - brings a vehicle to a stop or reduces impact speed when a pedestrian is in front of the vehicle.

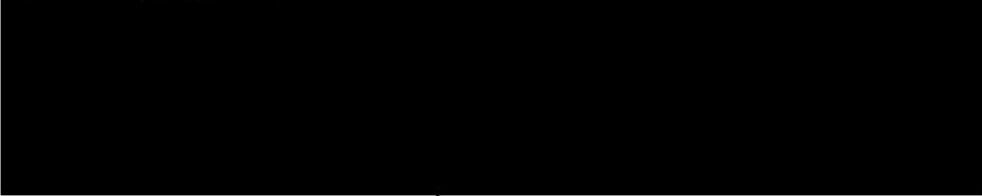
Using technologies such as external airbags can also provide protection in cases of pedestrian impact caused by distraction or other factors.

Recommendation

NRMA believes that the information on the future take-up of electronic devices would be better addressed by the vehicle manufacturers and electronic equipment distributors, as the range of equipment available changes rapidly over time. In addition, other systems may be developed which would be effective in addressing road safety issues associated with distraction.

Should you require any additional information about our submission I encourage you to contact 

Yours sincerely 


Wendy Machin 