

Submission

No 2

DRIVER AND ROAD USER DISTRACTION

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Date Received: 23/03/2012

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23 March 2012

Mr Greg Aplin MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir

INQUIRY INTO DRIVER AND ROAD USER DISTRACTION

I strongly suggest that to reduce/minimise crash casualties increased driver concentration is essential combined with more stringent policing of the existing driving rules and appropriate enforcement.

Concentration: My observations and experience over nearly 60 years of driving confirm that most accidents are due to lack of driver concentration due to distractions either self inflicted (mobile phones, eating, eyeing off extraneous matters, intensive conversation etc) or external (happenings outside the car beyond driver's control).

Based on my experience, I believe most (but certainly not all) accidents caused by external factors are avoidable if the driver is concentrating hard and reacts immediately.

The question is how to induce drivers to concentrate constantly. I have taught my children to be aware that they are responsible for conducting a virtual death machine and not simply a conveyance. As no really serious accidents have been caused by them I believe this awareness has been beneficial. On a personal basis I am forever grateful for having spent five months as a trainee pilot with the RAAF flying light aeroplanes during my national service. I was brain washed and became very well aware that any lapse of concentration could result in death for me and possibly others. I believe that experience has had a significant effect on my driving patterns with a resultant good safety record.

Unfortunately I do not pretend to know how to ensure drivers concentrate. Perhaps a psychologist could suggest a method and/or greater emphasis should be placed on this issue by driving instructors and testing authorities. Certainly more stringent policing would assist in concentrating the mind.

Policing: My observations are that many road rules and regulations are not enforced or are inadequately policed. In my younger days I recall a certain fear of being booked for one's car wheels (even) touching the double lines, failing to fully stop at an HALT sign, passing through amber lights etc. These transgressions seem now to be unimportant and then tend to lead to more relaxed approaches to other rules such as sneaking though red lights (when there seems to be a lot of amber in them!), quickly changing lanes if there is "adequate space" meaning anything greater than a tailgating space, parking in clearways and other no parking spaces. To my astonishment I followed a police patrol car with a police driver and passenger cruising around gentle "S" bends in my neighbourhood where double lines were painted and in a distance of about 1/2km the car passed over the double lines at least on seven occasions. Even with power steering the effort to move the steering wheel seems to be too great and this example appears to set a precedent for the public! It is my opinion that such misdemeanours should result in large disincentives possibly in very heavy fines but also suspension of driving licences. Of course action needs to be taken to identify these delinquent activities which suggests that special personnel are engaged (as clearly the police seem to have insufficient time nor interest) or photographic equipment is employed on a much larger scale. Such solutions, which hit the hip pocket nerve and potential mobility, should tend to concentrate the mind and generally assist in elevating the requisite concentration levels.

My apologies for the ramblings of a near geriatric but it does seem that the respect for the law and some self discipline has vanished and the solution may well be mental (concentration) and the real challenge is how this can be put into effect.

Yours faithfully

B M G REMOND