

**Submission
No 23**

DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY

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17-02-17 Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Staysafe Committee into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety

Personal Introduction

My name is Charles Lowe. I have been a single operator driving school proprietor since 1993 trading under the names 'Dynamic Defensive Driving School' (1993 – 2004) and 'Professional Driving Consultancy' (2004 ->). I am based in Lismore and have also served clients in Ballina and Casino – some 3,000 clients in total. I had previously (1987-1992) helped another 500-odd clients deepen their driving skills in the Clarence Valley as the Grafton-based Manager of the then ABC Driving School, Coffs Harbour.

I have been able to help clients learn to drive (in both manual and automatic cars) - from scratch or with varied experience - assess their driving skills, provide Keys2Drive lessons and RMS Older Driver Assessments since 1993 or since programs became available.

I hold the qualifications of B. A. (Melb.) (Psychosociology), Cert. IV T & L (Car Driving Instruction) and Cert. IV TAE and have been a member of the NSW Driver Trainers Association for many years.

Now aged 65 it is open to me to retire. I have no such intention. I wish to try to pass on what skills and experience I've been fortunate enough to accrue to trainee potential successors (possible franchisees). I initiated that confronting process last November.

It may lend me enough time (now that I will have enough assured income from the aged pension alone) to complete a research M. Ed. into optimizing learn-to-drive curricula.

Please let me note also that, in light of the advent of guaranteedly safe driverless cars over the next ten years or so, I have become very optimistic about my industry's future. Driverless cars will be absolutely safe – unlike their humanly-driven cars. It is therefore completely foreseeable that those who come (and those who continue) to hold drivers licences will need to meet the ferociously difficult and most confronting requirement to deepen their existing skills considerably. Numbers of new – and perhaps radically different – methodologies will need to be implemented.

As the Committee seems to be foreshadowing, one such measure will have to be periodic retesting of drivers' practical skills. Another measure is a sufficient comprehensiveness of 'learn-to-drive' curricula. A third is an appropriate curriculum structure. A further consideration is the practicability of reform.

This submission will address these and other matters.

Terms of Reference

a) Trends in road safety research and crash statistics

I confess I have not consciously updated my knowledge of recent trends in either research or crash statistics. Nevertheless my longstanding and professional interest in road safety generally has led me to believe that, since 2007:

- i) Pedestrians' crash involvement has increased;
- ii) Cyclists' crash involvement has increased;
- iii) Motorcyclists' crash involvement has increased, principally within in the age cohort of 45 – 65;
- iv) Apart from the last two years, vehicle crash involvement has been significantly declining;
- v) The proportion of younger driver crash involvement has been decreasing;
- vi) The proportion of “middle-age” driver crash involvement has been increasing;
- vii) Bus crash involvement has decreased;
- viii) Truck crash involvement has increased slightly but with more far-reaching consequences per crash.

b) Evaluating current driver training, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and adaptation to changing vehicle technology

I wish to make the following observations in relation to current driver training:

1. The RMS has limited, for up to **ten hours only**, of accreditation of 3 hours for every 1 hour of professional (and accountable) driving instruction in learners' log books since this program's inception in October 2010. I think there is scope to increase this limit of 10 hours – at least in some cases. For example, learning to drive in a manual car usually takes several hours longer to obtain the same depth of proficiency as one might in an automatic car.
2. Most NSW driving instructors hold qualifications which are not up-to-date (e. g. Cert III T & L (Car Driving Instruction) and even the Commercial Driving Instructor's Course (CDIC)).
3. There is a relative lack of deep (and up-to-date) **teaching** qualifications (e. g. Certificate IV in Training and Education) amongst NSW driving instructors.
It seems to me that, although NSW RMS Older Driver Assessors are required to hold the three assessor units of the Cert IV TAE, relatively few instructors hold the full Cert IV TAE. They therefore do not have an effective academic basis to appreciate and apply “dimensional” learning (a version of which is advocated actively by, for example, the national Keys2Drive program).

4. Most importantly, driving instructors face the sheer commercial pressure of minimising clients' financial outlays in learning to drive – and generating a reputation for doing so without sacrificing an appropriate depth of driving skill.

As far as I am aware the bigger and reputable driving schools put this proposition to the payer: “If you wish to better assure your (/relative/friend’s) continued road safety as well as the safety of other road users surrounding you(/them), you may need to pay (us) more money.”

So: the rich remain safe, the poor are threatened (and threaten us) and the gulf between the two widens further. That is, quite simply, unfair - and unsafe.

I wish to suggest a proposition which the RMS has, in another guise, expressed reservations about: insurance premium reductions for those accredited with an assessment of curriculum-based driving skills.

The insurer AAMI offers premium discounts to those who've completed the AAMI driving skills course. I understand that the RMS' reservations are not so much concerned with the concept of “assessment of curriculum-based driving skills” but rather the perspective represented by the AAMI curriculum. This still relies upon the (presumed) efficacy on the long-outmoded concept of “advanced driving” (i. e. witches hats and skid pans) (and has been better referred to as ‘emergency services driving’).

I agree with the RMS. To have, particularly, young drivers resting their innocence of faith in their ability to react to hazards **in the immediate** is just plain bloody stupid (and always has been!)

That is not to say, however, that the NSW State Government can't consider how best to approach, say, the Insurance Council of Australia with a view to building an effective and applicable consensus as to which learn-to-drive curricula might warrant assessed students of it to receive what degree of discount on their insurance premiums.

I therefore recommend that the Staysafe Committee incorporates this recommendation in its Report:

“That the NSW Government, in concert with other State and Territory Governments, initiate consultation with the Insurance Council of Australia with a view to establishing an effective and accountable basis, comprising an approved set of learn-to-drive curricula and associated assessments of driving skills, upon which its Member companies can viably and sustainably offer substantial third party and comprehensive

insurance premium discounts to those of their clients who thereby qualify.”

Refresher Training/Skills Updating

I have found the effectiveness of “refresher” training depends on motivation, depth of “rust”, fundamental depth of skill and psycho-social context.

Regional drivers are often highly motivated to undertake “refresher” training – public transport is often unavailable and/or inconvenient and/or expensive and family members (or even close friends) may not always be conveniently available.

Depth of “rust” (in other words, the apparent erosion of a driver’s skill base) depends on both the length of time since last driving (or driving regularly), on the depth of former skill base and on the relevance of that skill base to a contemporary driving environment. Clearly, the longer the time since last driving regularly and/or the shallower the former skill base and/or the more dated that skill base is, the deeper the rust.

Fundamental depth of skill tends to depend upon both the quality of initial teaching (hence learning) and the dimensionality of subsequent experience. In other words, a driver who took, say, 20 one hour lessons from a reputable driving school and who then drove in city, inner city suburban, suburban and country driving environments in rain, hail and shine for several years is much more likely to have a greater fundamental depth of driving skill than a driver without such dimensional experience.

Such a depth of skill might be camouflaged by “rust”. Competent driving instructors can quickly tell if that’s the case. For example, if the driver uses push-pull steering, if their gear changes become smooth quite quickly, if their slowing is graduated, if their indication is timely and if their observational skills are comprehensive, it is very likely that their driving skill is at least quite deep, even if that is not apparent just after they get behind the wheel again.

“Psycho-social context” is more challenging. Not least because it brings “dysfunction” (‘difficulty of doing’) into close account.

Perhaps it would be helpful for me to use several examples to illustrate constants and variables.

Example 1: A younger (say 23 - 24 y. o.) inner-city person, partnered/single working for relatively high pay in the CBD.

What possible reason does such a person have for learning to drive? Public transport is easier and quicker, they continue to avoid the bureaucratic impost of RMS logbooks, they don't (except, perhaps, very occasionally) have to **depend** on friends /relatives to drive them anywhere and they can choose their recreational poisons unhindered.

Example 2: A 30 - 40 y. o. Mum or Dad renting in the 'burbs with one working full-time & one working part time.

Each of these guys needs an unrestricted licence. Each risks their time being wasted by peak-hour traffic but their use of hands-free voice-input technology offers some efficiency. Nonetheless, the less time spent travelling to work, the better. They're oriented to take several relatively short driving holidays each year to coastal spots and to interesting rural towns. Were work to be available and family and friend commitments to permit, they could happily resettle in a coastal spot or rural town.

Example 3: A 50 - 60 y. o. single / partnered "empty nester" house owner in the 'burbs / country town.

At least one of these people needs an unrestricted licence. If the other doesn't have one, they may be dependent on the one who does. Depending on their location each would be likely to drive to work and to their social commitments – they may also enjoy driving to holiday destinations. They're likely to be able to choose their transport mode – depending on circumstance (e. g. air travel interstate (+ hire car) or taxi to a local restaurant).

Example 4: A 70 - 80 y. o. single / partnered pensioner in the 'burbs / country town.

This is perhaps the most difficult example under current conditions.

Firstly, if at least one of the partners were licenced, life would be much more choiceful, particularly for those on a limited income (the pension itself).

Secondly, if at least one of the partners had even a small emolument, taxis and/or community transport would then appear to be a viable option.

Thirdly, possessing (particularly) an unrestricted licence (or even a conditional licence) so contributes to a person's self-esteem as to amplify their chances of living significantly longer. This is particularly true within this age cohort. And, even were only one partner to hold a conditional licence, dependency would not be likely to be a significant distortion.

I wish to note here that the present RMS condition (offered to older drivers as an option to avoid an Older Driver Assessment or an Older Driver Test every two years) of a 15km radius around one's home is impractical to Regional drivers. Many Regional drivers need to access those medical facilities that are only available in sizeable country towns (e. g. Lismore). Frequently the distances they need to cover are up to 100 km (or even more). I note that this observation is against my own commercial interest!

Yes – these examples run the risk of being simplistic. People's situations vary widely. These examples strongly suggest, under current conditions, a case-by-case approach (which indeed is presently the case!). Nevertheless, they already suggest some consistent themes of licence need.

1. The more income, the more choice.
2. The more onerous the licence requirement, the less likely the licence possession.
3. The busier the person, the greater the need for an unrestricted licence.
4. The older the potential licence holder, the greater the choice of transport mode but (usually) the closer the intended destination.
5. The older the licence holder, the less is (potential) dependency negative.

Adaptation to changing vehicle technology

Let me firstly make an obvious observation. It is absolutely and unconditionally in the interests of vehicle manufacturers and retailers to ensure that changes to vehicle technology are able to be used by drivers and their passengers to enhance their comfort, safety and driving efficiency.

Secondly, let's now name the "elephant in the room": **driverless cars**.

Thirdly, let's state the obvious.

- a. Driverless cars will not be permitted on our roads unless they have proved themselves beyond any doubt (not just a "reasonable" doubt) to be absolutely failsafe.
- b. Given, particularly, the ongoing and deep nature of driver frustration in metropolitan peak-hour traffic, many present drivers will willingly choose to use (guaranteedly safe) driverless cars. The estimate I find most credible is that traffic density will reduce (overall) to one third of what it is presently – a density last reached in the early '80's.
- c. Driverless cars will enable their inhabitants to consume more alcohol and drugs than are good for anyone – without the need for commercial TV programs such as "RBT" to vicariously scare their audience. Many, many otherwise proud licence holders will use driverless cars for that reason alone.

- d. Those who will most wish to remain their own (human) driver will be those who are proudest of their driving skill – mistakenly or otherwise.

Fourthly, what do these precepts imply?

- a. Human drivers will be significantly less safe than driverless cars.
- b. Given that the Police will be able to distinguish driverless cars from human driven cars (via registration details), they will target human driven cars.
- c. Same number of Police enforcers addressing one third of the number of human drivers = three times the number of road law offence convictions.
- d. Public outcry – “Police victimisation” – therefore reduction in the number of Police enforcers.
- e. Governmental strategic response: introduce measures to better ensure a due depth of driving skill across the driving population.
- f. Which means:
 - i) “Recognition of Prior Skill” (an essential, central TAFE criterion). Which translates into an initial assessment. A comprehensive and deep assessment. Conducted by those who’ve proven themselves to be competent in that function. E. g. RMS Older Driver Assessors. Particularly those who hold the full Cert. IV TAE.
 - ii) Like South Australia (see p. 18 below), a recommendation by qualified driving instructors to the RMS that those who’ve “passed” their initial assessment continue to be unconditionally licenced.
 - iii) As demonstrated by the initial assessment, those who had not passed would be invited to undertake a driving skills restructure programme. The primary structure of this programme would have been objectively derived. Therefore the relative performances in different skills areas would mean a tailored emphasis on those skills most deficient.
 - iv) However, deficiency in say, reversing (or lane changing or hazard perception and avoidance) skills, is best addressed by starting from the simple and moving to the complex. There is a duality. On the one hand, a graduated, layered and optimised interconnected wholistic learning program/curriculum. On the other, diffuse and relative driving skill deficiencies. To obtain a due depth of skill, the curriculum is the redress. It therefore becomes a question of how to best enable an application of the curriculum.
 - v) The more credible the curriculum, the more enabled its application. It therefore becomes a question of proving why any given curriculum is the single most credible. One might anticipate that the modern driving test would be an appropriate arbiter. The argument which proves that this thesis is impractical is inferential. The Knowledge test which driving instructors are required to pass is four times as difficult as that applying to learner driver licence applicants. But the practical driving test driving instructors are required to pass is only twice as difficult as that for intending provisional licence holders. Therefore the practical driving test needs to arbitrate competently by a factor of two in relation to depth of driving skill.

- vi) There are presently several means of duly applying a deeper skills curriculum, chief amongst which is a greatly increased emphasis on the subtle skills of slow-speed exercises.
- The contemporary NSW driving test requires applicants merely to start-off (from a kerbside stop) in moderate traffic on a flat road surface. This is grossly insufficient. Applicants need to demonstrate coordination between all four limbs – and under pressure. Therefore applicants need to be required to start-off on a significant upward slope – even if that has to be provided artificially.
- The contemporary NSW driving test merely requires applicants, in undertaking three-point turns, to pull over to the side of the road, try doing a ‘U’ turn, then start reversing (and steering left), stopping and then taking off.
- This, too, is grossly insufficient. What if they’re renting a house or unit on a busy street? Aren’t they going to be taught that the best place to be after reversing (say out of their driveway) is on the side of the road that they’ve reversed into? The contemporary NSW Driving Test does not credit that skill – and, as past driving test structures did, it should too.

There should be two versions of the reverse parallel park, one harder than the other. Each would retain the structural criteria of the contemporary test. But the more difficult version would involve parking, within one manoeuvre, in a single car space on a busy CBD street. (Presently, the test simply requires that, within 4 manoeuvres, one parks behind a car within a reversing distance of 5 meters behind it.) If an applicant chooses the harder option and successfully executes it, that skill should be creditable to an “Honours” licence (see h) below).

Following closely behind is the subtlety of skill of selecting “first safe gaps” at both marked intersections and roundabouts.

The contemporary NSW driving test is so obsessively and myopically concerned to incorporate every last emphasis of “defensive” driving (that style of driving which stringently avoids other people’s collisions as well as one’s own) that it runs some risk of ridicule. It needs to much more accurately reflect the realities of on-road driving. Foremost among which is the subtle art of using a gap in the immediately available lane on a multi-laned road without actually causing anyone in the adjacent lane to slow.

Consequently, the contemporary NSW driving test needs to demand a greater depth of skill – in using first safe gaps, in changing lanes, in maintaining speed and lane position, in searching for the first safe gap at intersections and at roundabouts, defending against hazards and in slow-speed manoeuvring. Applicants’ appreciation of these greater demands would itself normally generate the sort of pressure which would more readily reveal deficiency in their depth of skill. And it is precisely this indicator of depth of skill that our driverless car society is going to have to demand of its human drivers.

- vii) A principal consequence of a declaredly more formidable driving test is that applicants would prepare for it more deeply, avidly and honestly (given the consistency with which they have wished to pass first time). Another – parallel – consequence would be that those licenced drivers who did not pass their assessment would have all the more reason to re-demonstrate their effective depth of skill against these more formidable – but more realistic – criteria.
 - viii) So, two purposes would be met by this one resolution. Both existing licenced drivers who possessed significant deficiency of depth of driving skill and, on the other hand, upcoming cohorts of novice learner drivers would each be subject to more stringent, more demanding and more formidable driving skill criteria than ever before. Strict enough to meet the inference that, were it not for this community requirement, their depth of skill, in an ultra-safe driverless car streetscape, would have been completely open to question.
- g. What about those (formerly?) licenced drivers who cannot pass this more stringent driving test (say after 3 attempts)?
- i) If they're going to get their licence restored, they're going to have to be deeply motivated.
 - ii) They are going to have to undertake a radical restructuring of their driving skills. Which is to say that any driving instructor who encounters them must be able to be personally resolute, honourable and empathic. And such driving instructors **must** be able to credibly communicate those personal qualities to their potential clients.
 - iii) These dysfunctional applicants need massive and multi-dimensional educative and training exposure. Usually they will not be able to pay for such restitution themselves. Our community needs to help them.
 - iv) So, our community invites those driving instructors who honestly think they can effectively and efficiently meet that challenge, to submit their candidacy for comparison. And assures them, credibly, that they will be properly recompensed for their specialised efforts.
 - v) The auditable criteria for the provision of such assistance must pass the "pub test".
 - vi) Like Older Driver Assessments, the number of assessments shall not be limited.
- h. What happens to those who cannot pass, even via this thick method?
- They are invited - properly, informedly and empathically - to believe that they can use driverless cars at much less cost to them than their previous use of human driven cars – and with the additional huge benefit of much more relaxed and choiceful travelling.

c) The needs of any particular driver groups

I have, to a large extent, addressed the needs of particular driver groups in the examples cited above (at pp 4 – 5).

I would urge a survey of various cohorts of driver groups delineated in terms of location (CBD, inner city suburbs, suburbs, regional towns, and regional villages and places), and age (18 – 25, 26 – 45, 46 – 65, 66 - 85 and 85+). It seems to me that just these two matrices would be enough to map out likely specific driver group needs.

d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional

The **first** need of a **professional** driver trainer is a sufficiency of income.

After deducting business expenses, a professional (Cert IV T & L car) driving instructor should reasonably anticipate earning a taxable income of at least between \$1,200 and \$1,500 per week. This is significantly less than either primary or secondary teachers (who, with experience, earn more than \$100K per year). Assuming such income would be generated by up to 6 face-to-face training hours per day for 5.5 days per week (i. e. up to 33 face-to-face hours per week for, say, \$1,500)), each face to face training hour should generate \$45.45. Assuming total business expenses of \$1,000 per week, the hourly fee would have to be at least \$75.75. (For reference and comparison, the Keys 2 Drive payment is \$75.00 per hour plus GST).

Most driving instructors cannot commercially earn anything like an income-taxable \$45.45 per hour. There is too much competition - including some of the most temporary in nature ('fly-by-nighters') - and not enough objective comparative bases for consumers to make a properly informed choice.

Pay peanuts – feed monkeys!

The **second** need of a professional driver trainer is to be able to objectively believe – on the experience and on the results and feedback – that they are making a sufficient individualised difference to their clients and to their community.

This need is itself reinforced by the continuing need for professional driving instructors to (functionally) maintain their own right-brain activity – to exercise creativity, to estimate and act on risk and to exercise empathy and intuition. Given the endemically right-brain nature of driving and of (already structured) driver training, it would be deeply dysfunctional (not to mention hypocritical) were professional driving instructors not to maintain their personal right-brain activity.

It is this fundamental need, underwritten by the strikingly and clearly consistently demonstrable independent nature of driving instructors, which contradicts any easy recipe to establish and/or embed a few competing large corporations (e. g. NRMA Safer Driving, LTrent Driving School, ABC Driving School, No Yelling Driving School).

Indeed, talented driving instructors need positive encouragement to risk surviving in this particular commercial jungle. If they do survive and prosper, it's because their application of their creativity was – and was able to be seen to have been - realistic, timely and positive for both their clients and their community.

Given these two imperatives, the **third** need of a professional driver trainer is to be able to operate as a deeply qualified and, preferably, a deeply experienced individual. Certainly driving school proprietors could require of their driving instructor team that each needs at least a Cert IV T & L (Car Driving Instruction). But as far as even holding the additional (three) assessment units of the Cert IV TAE to be able to be appointed as RMS Older Driver Assessors, driving school proprietors would have to limit the number of their instructors who could undertake that function – because there are not enough such sessions to go around.

On the other hand, possession of the full Cert IV TAE turbocharges instructors' use of "multi-dimensional" learning techniques. It thereby both provides deeper and more efficient learning. Possessors of this qualification should be able to expect adequate financial recompense. Ideally, 50% more (in income-taxable terms): not \$45.45 but \$68.20 per hour. Which would raise the fee payable from \$82.50 per hour (by \$22.75) to \$105.25.

No instructor nor professional instructor association could sell a 25% industry price hike to the current NSW market.

If, however, the nature, the character of the current NSW market were to be changed – not simply to afford a greater justice of income from dedicated professional driving instructors but to best afford the community a more credible skill resource – then the more aspirant driving instructors would be more motivated to deepen their professional qualifications.

Turning now to **non-professional** driver trainers (parents, spouses, relatives and friends): their **first** need is to remain as comfortable and relaxed as possible whilst being driven by their novice driver.

It is that need, more than any other reality, which should dictate when novice drivers should start taking professional driving lessons: namely: at the very beginning of their 'learn-to-drive'.

The RMS has never indicated its attitude as to when it is wisest to start using a driving instructor, although its accreditation of 10 hours for 30 log-book-recordable is an indication as to a reasonable period for which one could expect to pay. It should. It should point out the merely obvious – that a novice driver's skills are going to deepen much more quickly and effectively in a comfortable (as well as a safe) driving environment. And the obvious inference: that using a professional driving instructor at the very start of their learning curve is an effective basis for establishing a consistently comfortable and safe learn-to-drive environment.

So the RMS should provide a further incentive. That the additional accreditable number of hours be increased from 20 to 40 if and only if novice drivers commence their public road driving within the guidance and help of a professional driving instructor.

That would then reduce the actual driving hours from 80 (assuming 10 hours of professional driving instruction and 5 hours of the RMS 'Safer Drivers Course' – each earning a credit of 20 hours) to 60 (giving equal weight to using professional driving instruction at the start of their learn to drive as to using a professional driving instructor at all).

Since 50 of those 60 hours would be 'private', it is essential to assure as effectively as possible clients' sponsors' (parents, spouses, relatives, friends) comfort and safety (and, hopefully, a little efficiency in there too!). One way to do so would be to require that driving instructors who wished to be accredited for this doubling of instructor credit had earned their Cert IV TAE. That is then to also observe that such instructors would reasonably expect at least \$100 per hour.

Yet it seems contradictory to ask for an additional \$225 for learning proper driving skills first up.

Not necessarily so. The client gains an additional credit of a (further) 20 hours. At an additional cost of \$225 (\$11.25 per hour). Compared with \$140/20 (\$7 per hour: two thirds of \$11.25) for the Safer Drivers Course and \$825/20 (\$41.25) for commercial driving instruction. A 23% increase in cost (to \$52.50) for a 100% increase in accreditable hours.

Parents, spouses, relatives and friends will stampede for this accreditation. Precisely what the industry needs.

Additionally, bad habits will not form.

e) The needs of metropolitan, rural and regional drivers

Again, I've already remarked on this topic at pp 4 - 5 (and at the bottom of p. 9) above.

Just a comment on rural drivers (e. g. farmers): firstly, my observations suggest that most are competent both in terms of motor coordination and in terms of estimating the safety of gaps in traffic flows and cruising speed. Secondly, there is still a significant incidence of rural drivers aged 50+ who have not have been wearing seatbelts. I suggest a thick, open, informative and factual RMS advertising campaign to meet this need. Thirdly, some of them are inaccurate in positioning themselves for turns. Fourthly, older rural drivers do not endemically defend themselves from others' potential collisions – they're not used to high-density traffic (and many willingly confess they could not easily drive in Sydney).

And a quick comment on regional drivers: Lismore is one of the ten biggest regional centres in NSW and its public transport (buses and taxis only) is absolutely minimal and inconvenient (if not expensive). Older drivers particularly often point out to me how valuable for their continued and contenting lifestyle their retention of a non-restricted licence is. Older drivers normally self-censor their driving to daylight hours, they

deliberately avoid peak-hour traffic (and busy roads) and they know their normal routes intimately.

f) The needs and expectations of passengers and other road users

The first need of both passengers and other road users is for drivers to drive **safely**.

The standard by which drivers will be judged will be set by driverless cars.

A pre-requisite for drivers to drive safely is that they must be feeling comfortable – relaxed. If they're not, they're going to have to use, consistently, their willpower to fake calmness, patience and forbearance.

Another pre-requisite is that drivers' driving habits, taken as a whole as well as individually, reflect a 'low risk driving' perspective.

The extent to which drivers are dysfunctional – psychologically, psycho-socially or sociologically - profoundly influences the degree to which they may act (and drive) unsafely. Dysfunction is the Western World's most formidable disease. It costs Australians alone hundreds of billions of dollars each year. It causes cancers, heart attacks, strokes, obesity, addictions and mental illness. It spares no-one. Doctors, lawyers, politicians and bureaucrats - as well as vagrants and vagabonds - all suffer from it (in varying degrees) (as, yes, do at least some driving instructors!). Dysfunction reproduces itself from generation to generation (because the behaviours modelled to young people by their 'significant others' are endemically (via right-brain process) adopted, locked in and then again reproduced). Deep dysfunction can – and usually does - take years of acute and intensive expert psychotherapy to ameliorate.

Dysfunctional driver behaviour is addressed by statutory penalties for road law offences in particular and is, of course, enforced by members of the NSW Police Force. Budgetary considerations plus politicians' sense and judgement as to what NSW voters will tolerate have been constraining effective road law enforcement to four items: speeding, drink/drug driving, wearing of seat belts and use of non-hands-free mobile phones when driving. It is now also foreseeable that Police will be able to more effectively enforce driving when fatigued.

Poor enforcement of driving in hazardous environments brings the law into disrepute.

The Committee may wish to further consider the introduction of "hospital zones" with a suggested speed limit of 40kmh between, say, 7.30 am and 5.30 pm.

I believe that present road law enforcement strategy is becoming increasingly outdated and ineffective. I intend to submit a discussion paper to the next Police Chief Commissioner and Head of Highway Patrol elucidating my thinking on this sensitive matter.

Passengers and road users also expect that drivers will drive as **efficiently** as the community's expenditure on their driving environment permits (consistent with proven safety regimes).

In terms of 'point-to-point' driving, that means being able to drive as close to the posted speed limit for as much of the time as safety permits, to select the most direct (or the least delayed) route, to consistently balance otherwise opposing forces (e. g. the centrifugal force inherent in driving around bends) and to respond appropriately to the potential for animals to become hazards.

In terms of 'traffic flow driving', that also means effective use of 'roadcraft' (indicators, mirrors and over-the-shoulder checking). Passengers and other road-users also need their drivers not only to remain calm and relaxed themselves but to help calm other road users. Though, for example, strategic slowing when approaching marked intersections, glancing down side streets and cross streets and smooth acceleration from stops. And by indicating left before exiting roundabouts!

I note here another matter bringing road law into disrepute – the ignorance, laziness or sheer bloody-mindedness of roadwork coordinators. Their assignation of “40 km/h” signage is, too often, risible.

g) The cost of driver training standards and how the costs should be allocated

Under “b) Evaluating current driver training, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and adaptation to changing vehicle technology” (pp 3 – 9 above) is an extensive discussion of that sub-heading.

Under “d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional” (pp 10 - 11)” is an analysis of the effective costs of driver training standards.

These increased costs may be able to be ameliorated by adoption of the recommendation I have suggested on p. 3, namely:

“That the NSW Government, in concert with other State and Territory Governments, initiate consultation with the Insurance Council of Australia with a view to establishing an effective and accountable basis, comprising an approved set of learn-to-drive curricula and associated assessments of driving skills, upon which its Member companies can viably and sustainably offer substantial third party and comprehensive insurance premium discounts to those of their clients who thereby qualify.”

Further, the suggested trade-off I've also suggested on p. 11 -12 that the RMS apply (“That the additional accreditable number of hours be increased from 20 to 40 if and only if novice drivers commence their public road driving within the guidance and help of a professional driving instructor.”) implies an offsetting cost.

I live in a relatively unaffluent Regional community. I have driven taxis for many years within it. I hope Staysafe adopts the many suggestions of this submission. But if and when the NSW Parliament begins a consideration of them, they must be practicable. And the greatest test of their practicability is their **affordability**.

h) The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues

I confess to knowing relatively little about other jurisdictions' driver education, training and road safety.

I do know, however, that in South Australia, registered driving instructors have been able to recommend to the S. A. Department of Transport that their clients be granted driver licences on the basis of successfully completing "Competency Based Training and Assessment" for some 30-odd years. Likewise, NSW's RMS adopted this methodology in respect of upgrading from car licences to bus and/or truck licences some 25 years ago. However, the predecessor to the RMS – the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) – remained resolutely opposed to introducing a similar system for car driving instructors. Given the traditional – and grossly abusive – behaviours of previous generations of commercial driving instructors in NSW, I have never been surprised by this bureaucratic reluctance.

I also confess to massive ignorance in estimating how many contemporary NSW driving instructors still practise within this abusive tradition. And I cannot easily suggest how Staysafe might best enquire into not only the net numbers but the proportion of the total number of NSW driving instructors that this number represents. The RMS may be able to offer some insight but its principal function in this regard is to keep records concerning an instructor's 'fitness and propriety' to hold a driving instructor licence. This is a relatively crude legal requirement to eradicate those driving instructors who engage in improper or disreputable behaviour, usually (but not necessarily) directed at their clients.

What I'm talking about is a perniciously persistent continuation of the seven-decade long obfuscated Army perspective. The over-authoritarian, dictatorial, crude and rude – to the point of abuse – commercial driving instructor. How Staysafe can eradicate these dinosaurs is a mighty challenge.

I have suggested better education and better pay for driving instructors. Yet the psycho-social cultural structure within which driving instructors practise needs profound address also.

So I will throw in a radical suggestion here. Abraham Maslow invented a suite of personality scales in the late 1940's. Included in it are tests for authoritarianism and fascism. Perhaps Staysafe might recommend to the RMS that it institute tests for these two factors at least – and exclude applicants for driving instructors' licences on the basis of too high a rating on them.

Just a thought.

Cross-Border Issues

I'm sorry but, as a former resident of Victoria (for more than 20 years) the only sensible resolution of this potential problem is for other States to accept NSW's leadership on this broad, complex and difficult topic. Just as the Commonwealth did much good work leading up to the year 2000 in ensuring consistency of road law between the States, so too does it need to do the same in relation to this matter.

Typically, NSW does the heavy intellectual practical lifting. That's what leaders do.

As a practitioner within a Region which borders Queensland, it just could not be more obvious to me – and to many, many other local observers - just how massively and frustratingly deficient in road-user communication skills visiting Queensland-plated drivers are.

I trust Staysafe will accept the national burden of deep and thorough reform of driver behaviours which its inquiry seemingly is presaging.

h) Other related matters.

To me, one other related matter has been implied by my remark on p. 8: “that skill [of one manoeuvre parallel parking] should be accreditable to an “Honours” licence.”

Let me utter an observation which most NSW residents would not: that for about one third of the State’s history (1788 – 1857) there were essentially two classes of person: the “Whipped” (the convicts) and the “Whippers” (the convicts’ jailers – often the military).

From this has grown one of the world’s most emotionally stupid behavioural patterns: that it is NOT OK to give praise, NOT OK to affirm, NOT OK to confirm.

It is only OK to criticise, to denigrate and to damn.

Staysafe: you can change that. Forever.

Even the overtaken RTA endorsed this need (at least partly). The NSW driving test changed in the early ‘90’s from an exclusively penalising test sheet to the RTA’s then adoption of the American ‘ADOPT’ driving test into the NSW Driver Ability Road Test (‘DART’). Instead of simply marking driving deficiency items, the test sheet affirmed error-free demonstrations of driver skill. It has continued to do so ever since.

Staysafe can go one huge step further.

Staysafe can recommend to Government that it endorse and emplace not just a ‘Graduated Licencing System’ for the gaining of a full driver licence but gradations within a full driver licence which reflect the effective and measurable depth of skill of each and every car driver licence holder.

Yes - of course we have the Demerit Points system. Yes – it works effectively to remove some of our most unsafe - and dysfunctional - drivers from our streetscapes. Yes, we also (unlike any other State) have our Older Driver Tests and Assessments. Yes, that system does compel the removal of unsafe older drivers.

But why do we so bloody-mindedly refuse, as a road-using community, to give credit where it is demonstrably due?

Do we really believe that a “good driving record” is sufficient indication of the degree to which millions of ordinary car driver licence holders work, put in so much effort – particularly emotional effort – to maintain their excellence of record?

REALLY?

The Commonwealth awards Australians, twice each year, for outstanding community contributions via the Order of Australia and various Australians of the Year. Films and actors are awarded Emmys, Logies and Oscars. Nobel prizes can be won. That's the contemporary global village we delight to live within.

Yet we remain so churlish, so myopic, so bloody-minded, so presumptively resentful that we cannot affirm, confirm, declare and proclaim individuated excellence in contemporary driver ability?

Staysafe: this is ridiculous. It is stupid. And, in a contemporary Global Village approaching 9B inhabitants, it is psycho-socially dysfunctional because it is the very antithesis of emotional intelligence: it permits and encourages emotional insanity.

I therefore propose an adoption of that academic matrix of measurable excellence: Honours Licences.

- Ordinary driver licence = 'Pass'
- Creditworthy driver licence = 'Third Class Honours' (Malcolm Fraser's result in his Oxford Philosophy degree).
- Applaudatory driver licence = 'Second Class Honours'.
- Outstanding driver licence = 'First Class Honours'.

The measurement of effective driving skill will and should inevitably depend on which learn-to-drive curricula (see pp 7 – 8, paras iv, v and vi) evolve and predominate.

Yes - the RMS is not an education specialist. It is, effectively, a Government Department.

It is up to those who advance themselves as education/training specialists to set curricula. It is then up to the RMS to endorse the use of those curricula for driver licencing purposes. Essentially this reflects contemporary RMS practice (e. g. the RMS criteria for offering three loggable hours for every one undertaken with a driving instructor). As does the RMS practice of endorsing very few trainers of driving instructors.

The RMS may well seek to suggest – even to implement – a minimum set of behavioural expectations for each of these gradations. Fine. Let's have the debate. Staysafe might even choose to sponsor that debate!

And let us thereby preserve the opportunity for the 'little guy' to draft and implement a world class learn-to-drive curriculum. For the sake of right-brain learning. For the sake of peer-induced improvement. And for the sake of road-user harmony.

(And, maybe, even for the ultimate sake of both family and world peace!)

The other related issue is equally radical.

Send (with subsidy where necessary) urban (learner) drivers at the beginning of their learn-to-drive experience to Regional driving schools to properly learn the basics of “point-to-point” driving (and, therefore, of “traffic flow driving” also).

One third of all vehicular collisions (as proclaimed in the RMS “Safer Drivers Course”) are single vehicle collisions. One half of those occur on bends. The principal cause of such collisions is that the loss of “control” comes from drivers not balancing sideways forces with a forward force.

This is a matter of Year 11 physics. If one is not to lose control, one must balance opposing forces. Simple.

Urban environments do not easily offer relevant streetscapes to enable, particularly, novice drivers, to experience - to feel - the benefits, the reassurance of balancing sideways (centrifugal) forces with forward force (acceleration).

Regional streetscapes do.

And the skill can be “taught” in about half an hour (or less).

However, the lack of appreciation of this necessary skill by most members of the wider driver community means that novice drivers remain unaware of this need and that more experienced drivers may have taken quite some time to appreciate that need. So novice drivers are at significant risk of ‘losing control’ in bends.

Motorcycle riders MUST appreciate the need to balance opposing forces very early in their riding career. Otherwise they won’t have one!

The need to balance opposing forces is an absolute and unconditional foundation of effective and safe point-to-point driving. When undertaken competently, following drivers reproduce it.

One very effective way of meeting that need is to create a learn to drive structure which enables urban drivers to easily access Regional driving instructors. I am in the process of introducing ‘learn-to-drive 2 day holidays’ to the NSW commercial market.

Staysafe is capable of recommending that the RMS require novice and experienced drivers to demonstrate consistent competency in balancing opposing forces in their driving tests. If that means that urban and Regional driving instructors complement each others’ provision of experience: so be it.

I recommend that Staysafe does so.

Summary

I have been a University-qualified professional driving instructor in NSW continuously for almost 30 years. I have written a number of comprehensive submissions to Staysafe during that time.

This submission makes the following points:

The RMS needs to consider increasing the limit of 10 hours for additional logbook accreditation for those learning in manual cars.

The cohort of practising NSW driving instructors is under-educated in terms of both the contemporaneity and the depth of their qualifications.

Premiums of both third-party and comprehensive insurance policies can be reduced if holders were able to demonstrate an appropriate depth of driving skill competence.

In a context in which the prevalence of guaranteedly safe driverless cars puts the onus of safe driving onto the remaining one third of existing driver licence holders:

- Guaranteedly absolutely safe driverless cars mean that human drivers will need to deepen their driving skills
- The effectiveness of “refresher” training depends on motivation, depth of “rust”, fundamental depth of skill and psycho-social context.
- Driver testing / re-testing needs to incorporate a ‘recognition of prior skills’ (endorseable by way of a professional driving skills assessment).
- Credible and accountable learn-to-drive curricula are critical to increasing the depth of driving skill in both novice and enhabituated drivers.
- The NSW driving test needs to increase the depth of its examination of driving skills – for the safety of all road users and, particularly, both enhabituated and novice drivers.
- Many licenced drivers will need a radical restructuring of their driving skills.

Unless driving instructors’ qualifications are significantly upgraded (particularly by holding the TAFE teaching qualification), that need will not be met.

- The needs of particular driver groups are diverse and need addressing on a case-by-case basis, nonetheless incorporating two metrics – socio-geographic context and driver licence holder age.

- Professional driving instructors have three needs: to generate an adequate income, to make a sufficient individualised difference to their community and to remain able to properly operate as an individualised driving instructor.
- The needs and competence of urban, regional and rural drivers differ.
- Non-professional driving “instructors” (facilitators, “supervising drivers”) need the RMS to **reward** their choice of using, at the very start, a professional driving instructor to establish a proper basis of habit.
- The road-user community expects that car driver licence holders drive both safely and efficiently.
- The apparent increased costs to the individual driver of this more demanding regime can be largely offset.
- The single greatest enemy of the driving instructor profession is authoritarianism. The RMS can ensure that this distortion can be eradicated.
- NSW has traditionally led the other States in upgrading all aspects of road law. It is absolutely critical that Staysafe get this report right.
This is a generational game-changer. It is utterly important.
- There are numbers of ways in which the costs of driver re-training can be offset fairly. It will be critical, for political credibility, that the Government can convincingly demonstrate that it has absolutely minimised the costs of perceivable gross inconvenience.
- The RMS needs to test intending driving instructors for their inclination to authoritarianism and fascism.
- The NSW Government needs to accept and to implement legislative policy which leads the rest of the country. In relation to road law and policy, it has, consistently, to date. The contemporary need caused by the inevitable accession of driverless cars makes this a priority which is difficult, if not impossible, to trump.
- The NSW Government needs, on behalf of all of us, to finally throw off the Presbyterian-style stricture on the proclamation of individual excellence (as judged by defensible and accountable community standards) by positively affirming, in

terms of “Honours” assignation, the individualised and measurable skill of driver licence holders (initially on application).

- The NSW Government needs to underwrite the ability of urban drivers (both experienced and novice) to (re-)structure their driving skills to properly appreciate the need to balance opposing forces, preferably by enabling urban novice drivers to access Regional ones.
- And the NSW Government needs to state its acceptance that it leads the rest of Australia in prosecuting a legislative framework which optimises the reduction of streetscape casualty and injury beyond the capacity of any other State. It has done so for at least 30 years. This Staysafe consideration can and, I hope, will, ensure that NSW continues to lead the Commonwealth and, in large measure, the whole World in engineering an intelligent car driver context.

Thank you so much for your patience, your implied trust and your committed interest in reading and trying to digest these 8000+ words.

I have written each and every one of them with passion and with vocational commitment.

As you do, I seek the win-win-win.

Let's achieve that.

With my best wishes,

Charles Lowe