DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY

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Submission

PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES STAYSAFE (JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY)

Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety

Prepared by:

Background

Every six seconds someone is killed or seriously injured on the world's roads.

Of all the systems with which people have to deal every day, road traffic systems are the most complex and the most dangerous. Road Trauma places enormous social and emotional costs on the community.

The Facts:
- Last year around 1300 deaths occurred on Australian roads;
- Annual Global Road Fatalities equal 1.3 million people;
- Land transport accidents accounted for 0.7% of all hospitalisations and 9.8% of hospitalisations due to injury in Australia during 2008/09;
- The mean length of stay in hospital for persons seriously injured in road vehicle traffic crashes was 4.9 days;
- Nationally, an in each jurisdiction, the age-specific rates of serious injury due to land transport accidents were highest at ages 15 – 24 years;
- The annual economic cost of road crashes in Australia has been estimated to be more than $26 Billion;
- This is in addition to the social and community cost

The Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) is a not for profit organisation dedicated to reducing road fatalities and injuries. It achieves this through innovative road safety awareness programs, driver education, advocacy and research assistance.

Possessing more than 27 years of road safety experience, Russell White created the Foundation in 2010 and in this time the ARSF has established a well-known national presence and reputation with strong support from the private sector, State governments and the Police for its initiatives, programs and events across Australia.

The ARSF's Vision is to drive the safety of every road user, every day, to achieve a significant year-on-year reduction in road deaths and injuries nationally.

The ARSF operates across a number of key channels, including:
- Expansion of our road safety advocacy position via media operations;
- Implementation of a national road safety education program for school students and lobby for its integration into the curriculum in each State;
- Provision of additional support for various community road safety activities
- Provision of training resources for both school students and parents;
- Identification for new road safety research opportunities, both nationally and internationally;
- Further development of the Australian Road Safety Awards Program;
- Further expansion of the Fatality Free Friday national road safety initiative.

With this in mind, the ARSF is in a unique position to offer recommendations and perspective on the points raised in this submission.

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1.0 Introduction

Of all the systems that people have to deal with on a daily basis, road transport is the most complex and the most dangerous.

The World Health Organization has stated that road traffic injuries constitute a major public health epidemic and international development crisis. It has also stated that current efforts to address road safety are minimal when compared to the magnitude of the issue.

The full scope of the problem was documented in 2002 when the World Bank and World Health Organisation jointly launched the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention.

This document outlined the global magnitude of the issue and stressed the urgent need for action to help prevent road traffic injuries around the world.

Overall, Australia has performed well with its approach to reducing road trauma. As has been noted previously, the number of road fatalities has been substantially reduced from 30 per 100,000 in 1970 to around 8 per 100,000 – In 2014, the national road toll was 1153. Whilst this was our lowest since 1945 our rate of improvement has plateaued over the past decade.

The reason for the successful reduction of the road toll over the past 30 years has been the adoption of ADR rules – compulsory wearing of seatbelts, the overall improvement of vehicle reliability and safety, enhanced road law enforcement, better trauma response and treatment and policing as well as improved road engineering and design.

However, despite all these advancements it is clear that a critical piece of the puzzle is still missing because the deaths and injuries from road crashes continue.

The only area that has not significantly improved relates to the biological component in the road safety puzzle...The Road User.

Currently, despite the graduated licencing systems introduced by the States, these licensing systems fail to address areas such as the higher order skills and human factors that can contribute to vehicle crashes. There is also no incentive to undertake additional learning and little opportunity for professional development.

Obtaining a license is recognized as the minimal level of competency. Generally speaking, most drivers are taught how to pass a test, not how to drive. This means that drivers take to the road in a totally under prepared state. As a result, road crashes are a daily occurrence, some of which have fatal consequences.

This approach has also established a set of cultural paradigms that determine how road safety is viewed by the general population.

Safety on our roads should be a significant priority for everyone. However, these current paradigms tend to create the view that governments, police and other road authorities are the only groups responsible for addressing road safety.

Ultimately, there needs to be a shift from this belief to a new paradigm of community ownership of the issue. This will help to foster a new road safety culture.

The incidence of road trauma impacts negatively, both socially and economically on our society.

Every serious vehicle incident has a number of undesirable outcomes:

- The physical, psychological and economic toll on those who are injured in road crashes
- The physical and psychological toll on families dealing with the death and/or serious injury of loved ones
- The financial toll on families dealing with the death and serious injuries of loved ones.
- The psychological and potential physical toll on first responders, emergency services personnel and medical staff who treat the injured and deal with their families
- The economic effect on the state due to factors such as delays to the transport industry, worker's compensation, tax revenues, demands on hospitals and emergency service staffing

The fundamental aspect of road safety which has not been adequately addressed is 'the human factor'. Whilst this area is possibly the most difficult to address, it is also the area that can potentially provide the greatest gains.

This approach will need to focus on a number of key areas. This will include issues such as:

1. Exploring opportunities to create community engagement
2. Establishing principles for a new road safety culture
3. Marketing and promoting to drive community awareness
4. Working with community and business leaders to promote road safety
5. Activity to increase the awareness of "Work Related Road Safety" and compliance under the Chain of Responsibility legislation
6. Treat road safety as a national public health issue
7. Review how pre and post-license training is conducted nationally
8. Establish a national school based road safety program
9. Redefining the overall approach to driver training and road safety education
10. Embedding a greater focus on driver bio-mechanics, situational awareness and human factors training into the licencing system

2.0 Summary Position

Many discussions have taken place and papers written which all examine the options for reducing the road toll and ensuring that people using Australian roads do so safely and efficiently.

While vehicles and road design has become safer, with evidence of a lower death rate as a result, concerns have been rightly raised about the skill levels of new drivers which are over represented in the road toll.

Many laudable ideas have been raised and some of these are now being implemented, but it is clear that a completely new way of thinking is needed if we are to achieve the aim of reducing the road toll by 30% by 2020.

Although this submission touches on four different areas that could be improved, perhaps the one of the greatest opportunities for facilitating a broader cultural change rests within the areas of Work Related Road Safety and Higher Order Driver Training.

The impact work related traffic crashes have on the community is considerable. As an example, in Queensland alone, crashes involving fleet vehicles account for 25% of road fatalities, 43% of all work-related deaths. (ATSB 2003)

By using legislative OHS mechanisms already in place, in addition to a commitment to nationwide workplace driver safety we can achieve the target reduction nationally.

Addressing road safety as a workplace health and safety issue in the first instance will create a standard of better driver training and driver ability. This will filter down to the general public as a whole.

This starts by acknowledging that any vehicle use at work – whether it is a liveried fleet vehicle or a private car used for business purposes – requires induction and relevant on-going training to satisfy workplace chain of responsibility requirements.

Education is another issue that the ARSF believes could be easily improved with only a few minor changes. Programs that are in place now should not be replaced, but merely improved upon and introduced to the entire country.

It's been suggested that driving a motor vehicle is potentially the most technically challenging and dangerous activity that the average person will undertake.

Yet it could be argued that the preparation given to new drivers is a little like giving people a preschool level of education yet expecting them to perform at university level with no ongoing education in between. Another analogy is learning to play golf by only focusing on the rules of the game.

Anyone who has ever played any kind of sport knows all too well that coaching and ongoing practice is required to even begin to master the more technical and intricate facets of their chosen sport.

Therefore, the ARSF is advocating the development of a more integrated and holistic approach to Road Safety Education and Training.

This system should include the following:

- Development and integration of a co-ordinated earlier childhood road safety program
- Development of a new early high school road safety education program for years 7 onwards
- Development of new multi-media tools to further enhance the driver education experience
- Explore new systems to assist drivers that may have limited opportunities to achieve the number of log book driving hours
- Explore the integration of higher order, human factors and driver bio-mechanics training into the licencing system
- Review current learner driver training standards
- Review current licence levels and explore the opportunity introducing an additional higher licence level to encourage drivers to upgrade their driving capability beyond the current base standard
- Explore opportunities to provide incentives for drivers looking to improve their awareness capabilities and reward sustained good driving behaviours
- Explore opportunities to use work place safety compliance standards to provide ongoing road safety training and professional development

3.0 Recommendations

This submission covers a number of recommendations including further education for both new drivers and work place driver education.

We understand that The Committee will inquire into, and report on, the role of whole-of-life driver education and training in supporting improved road safety outcomes in New South Wales, with particular reference to:

a) Trends in road safety research and crash statistics
b) Evaluating current driver training, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and adaptation to changing vehicle technology
c) The needs of any particular driver groups
d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional
e) The needs of metropolitan, rural and regional drivers
f) The needs and expectations of passengers and other road users
g) The cost of driver training standards and how the costs should be allocated
h) The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues
i) Other related matters.

The ARSF is supportive of all current road safety activities and are of the view that these activities, such as better vehicle safety standards, improved roads and increased policing must continue in order to keep the road toll at a minimum. However, in order to keep improving,

additional activities and programs need to be implemented to work cohesively and collaboratively with the current system.

This means exploring new ways of training and educating road users across their driving life. There is a need to develop new training content, enhance delivery systems and potential incentives to provide multiple "touch points" to ensure a continued process of education across an individual's lifetime.

3.1 Trends in road safety research and crash statistics

It is well established that Australia has progressively lowered its annual road toll since it peaked in the 1970. That year 3798 people were killed on the nation's roads. This figure equated to 30.4 fatalities per 100,000 of population.

Since this "high water' mark, many ongoing safety countermeasures have been introduced including Australian Design Rules, lowering blood alcohol levels and random breath testing, compulsory wearing of seatbelts, improved vehicle design, greater enforcement, improved road design and construction, awareness campaigns and enhanced vehicle safety technology.

Whilst these countermeasures have resulted in the road toll trending downwards, there has been an increase in fatalities since 2015.

Performance Against the National Road Safety Strategy Target
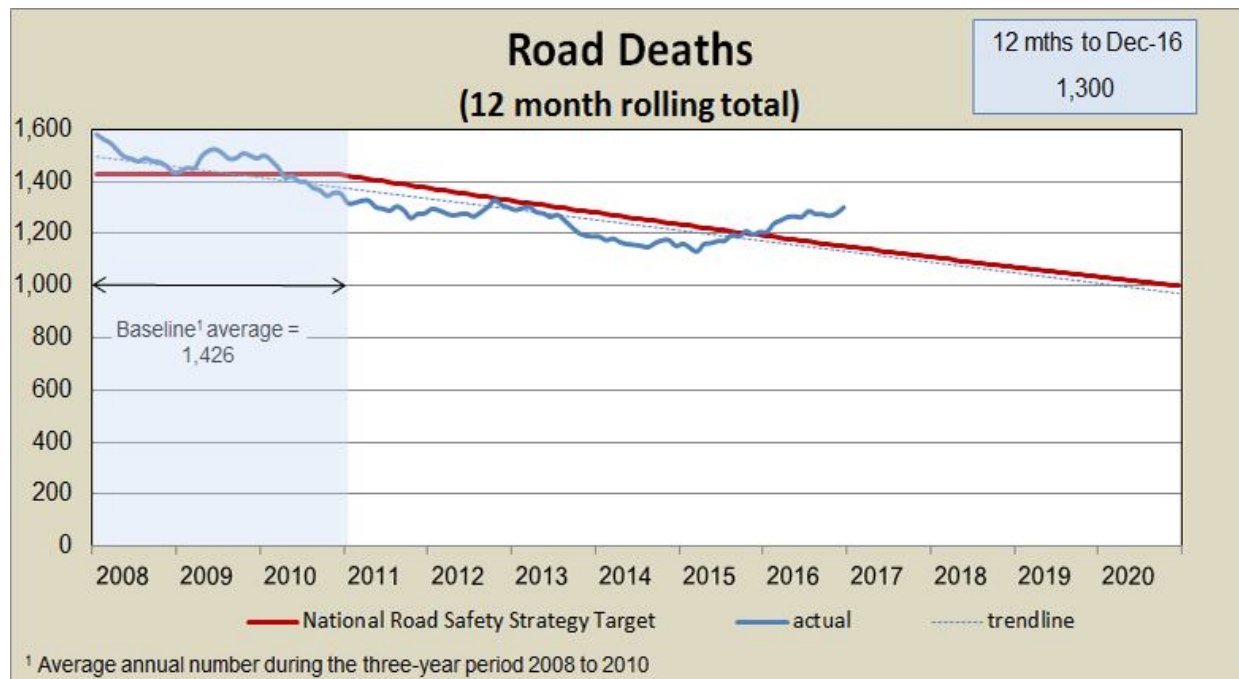
Road Deaths by State

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
2008	374	303	328	99	205	39	75	14	1,437
2009	454	290	331	119	191	63	31	12	1,491
2010	405	288	249	118	193	31	50	19	1,353
Baseline average1	**411**	**294**	**303**	**112**	**196**	**44**	**52**	**15**	**1,427**
2011	364	287	269	103	179	24	45	6	1,277
2012	369	282	280	94	183	31	49	12	1,300
2013	333	243	271	98	162	36	37	7	1,187
2014	307	248	223	107	183	33	39	10	1,150
2015	350	252	243	102	160	34	49	15	1,205
12 months to Dec-2016	*384*	*292*	*250*	*89*	*193*	*38*	*45*	*9*	*1,300*
Dec-2016 % change to baseline	**-6.6%**	**-0.7%**	**-17.5%**	**-20.5%**	**-1.5%**	**-13.6%**	**-13.5%**	**-40.0%**	**-8.9%**

Source: Australian Road Deaths database as at 13-Jan-2017

The number of road deaths per 100,000 population in NSW has dropped over the past four decades, from 28.9 in 1970 to 4.1 in 2014. The latest figures are the lowest since records began early last century, when in 1908 there were 7.6 deaths per 100,000 population.

Road safety research has continued to evolve of the past few decades. But it could be argued that the research community has, to date has never been able to completely explore all the combinative facets involved with enhancing driver safety performance or define the precise formula for delivering a complete driver technique.

Studies have traditionally focused on single areas of human performance or specific road user risk factors in isolation.

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

There is continuing public debate in Australia and overseas about the value of training for car drivers as a means of improving driver behaviour and reducing road crash involvement. This includes driver training for:

- Learner drivers,
- Young/recently licensed drivers, and
- Experienced drivers.

While driver training and driver education are not the same, these terms are often used synonymously and this has meant that evaluating the effectiveness and content of training programs is been difficult to access. Many previous studies have also been impacted by research limitations such as longevity, sample size and recording methods.

Therefore, there is limited or out dated research data on the effectiveness of driver education. Worse still, these outdated or flawed studies have meant that driver training is not considered or totally dismissed as an effective countermeasure for reducing road trauma.

It could be argued that the driver education industry has been discriminated against because of these older studies.

It appears that many researchers have a "fixed position" on this issue. This "science is settled" approach has effectively ruled out the possibility of almost all forms of driver training being an effective road safety counter measure. It could also be argued that any attempt to alter this view or offer any new view point, has been dismissed by the general academic community.

There are a few researchers that are willing to explore more naturalistic driver studies and areas such as driver bio-mechanics, driving technique and human factors. These areas represent a paradigm shift in the current norms around driver education and greater focus needs to be placed on developing higher order training programs that address perception and human motor skills.

While there is a strong community perception that specialised driver training is an effective road safety countermeasure, there is currently no clear evidence that it produces safer drivers compared to less formalised approaches to learning. A number of factors have been suggested to account for this apparent lack of effectiveness. In particular, it has been suggested that conventional approaches to driver training do not systematically address the perceptual and cognitive skills required for safe driving, or the motivational or attitudinal factors which can exert a powerful influence on driver judgement and decision-making.

Hence, it is possible that with further research and development that more effective driver training programs could be developed. With this prospect in mind, this paper identifies three main priorities for future research in the area. (Watson 2003)

New driver assistance systems are also continuing to be developed by the automotive industry. These systems now include anti-lock braking systems, traction support systems, adaptive cruise control, lane departure assist, autonomous braking and blind spot warning systems.

Interestingly, it appears that there is very limited incorporation of these new technologies in the driver training.

As a result, the vast majority of the public has little or no real understanding of these new systems and how to utilise them. For example, experience with post-licence training has revealed that the vast majority of participants don't know what an ABS system does even though this system has been around for a number of decades and is now fitted on the majority of vehicles.

There is a need to undertake more research into the process of driver development and develop a more holistic approach to driver education as a life-long process. There is also a need to look at incorporating a stronger focus on overall vehicle dynamics and the benefits of modern driver assistance systems into the training of all drivers.

Watson again suggested three key areas needed to be considered when researching driver training and education.

1. *While assessing the crash outcomes achieved by driver training should remain a priority, there is a need for evaluations to focus on a broader range of outcomes and on the processes involved in training.*

2. *There is a need to focus more research attention on improving current driver training practices, particularly in relation to the development of hazard perception and decision-making skills, self-monitoring processes, and strategies to reduce the impact of risky attitudes and motivations on driving.*

3. *There is a need for more theory-driven approaches to the development and evaluation of innovative training programs. This is required to ensure that training practices are based on sound principles of behaviour change, rather than on expert opinion.*

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3.3 The needs of any particular driver groups

Clearly, road safety is a challenging and complex issue.

This complexity means that whilst everyone is a road user, there are a wide range of sub groups including pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and drivers.

The driver groups can be further divided into new drivers, experienced and senior drivers.

Whilst most of the current training programs focus on new and young drivers relatively little is done for experienced and older drivers.

Demographic and economic changes in Australia are disproportionately impacting road safety fatality outcomes for older people. While the growth in population and numbers of licence-holders exceeds the growth in fatalities for all ages, there have been consistent reductions in

deaths of younger people but flat trends and recent increases in deaths of older people. These recent increases appear mainly in driver and motorcyclist fatalities. Hospitalisation statistics (to 2009) show increasing trends for all age groups. The types of fatal crashes involving an older operator differ from fatal crashes which do not. The aggregated data presented here confirm previous findings that intersections are over-represented, as are multiple vehicle crashes. Source: *BITRE Road safety of older Australians: recent statistics fact sheet 2014*In 2016, the ARSF undertook a regional senior driver awareness program. This pilot program was funded under the New South Wales Road Safety Grant Program and incorporated a series of road safety awareness sessions being delivered in retirement villages in the northern part of the state.

Overall, the information sessions can be judged as successful and useful in informing older road users about current and updated road rules and vehicle safety features; in providing practical tips for dealing with road conditions, especially the user demand to know about roundabouts, and other drivers' unpredictable or inconsiderate behaviours, such as tail gating, road rage, and merging; and in raising awareness of their changing physical and mental capacities with respect to their driving practice, particularly alertness, tiredness, reflexes, vision and driving position.

The greatest challenges facing road users aged over 50 can be grouped into four themes, centred on (1) changing road rules, (2) new vehicle safety features, (3) the physical effects of ageing on the body, and (4) coping with the practices and behaviours of other drivers, including perceptions that problems are caused by aggressive drivers or younger road users, which potentially reflects age related biases.

The information sessions confirmed that most older drivers have not undertaken driving assessments since they obtained their licence nor have they maintained their knowledge of the current road rules and vehicle safety features. The few older drivers who had completed post-licence training or assessments did so many years ago. Older drivers had either detailed awareness of modern safety features if they owned a new car or a complete lack of knowledge about new cars if they drove an older vehicle.

The changing experience of driving is not reflected in this lack of ongoing attention to maintaining skills and knowledge. Some older drivers recognised this and suggested the introduction of more regular testing and training for road users aged over 50.

One issue of the changing experience of driving that was largely avoided by respondents in their responses and which might be addressed directly in future information sessions is driver confidence. Particularly, future sessions might deal with shame, embarrassment and stigma that appear to be attached to remedial or corrective driver training.

While the issue is challenging, addressing it may be less so. Most respondents indicated a preference for relying on driving training assessors – and notably not a family member – for assessments. Formal sessions may remedy issues of confidence associated with the changing experience of driving, such as driver training programs comprising hands-on practice with an instructor. Additionally, reviews to licensing, advanced skills training, and information sessions

on updated road rules and refresher programs on current road rules that update older drivers' knowledge might also assist in addressing issues of confidence.

It is widely known that older road users have reported difficulties with:

- Changes in road rules
- The use of technology
- Other driver's attitudes
- Traversing roundabouts
- Judging distances and speeds
- Fatigue (especially on long trips)
- Night driving and bright lights
- Reversing and parking
- Tailgating by other drivers
- Dealing with busy intersections

The majority of these issues have been covered thoroughly in the information sessions, as reported by respondents.

It can be concluded that the information sessions met the aims of the program as stated in the project brief and several issues noted herein might be incorporated into future information sessions to enhance the quality of the program and improve the benefit for the participants.

3.4 The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional

To a large degree, the driver training industry remains a cottage industry.

There is relatively little integration between academic research, pre-licence and post licence providers. As a result, there is an opportunity to foster greater collaboration and cohesion between these sectors.

There is also limited on-going professional development or national accreditation for the driver training industry. This means that content delivery, training philosophies and overall standards are fragmented.

The ARSF is of the view a national road safety accreditation system would provide a staircase of industry benchmarks.

The training industry is also under represented in advisory positions for state based road safety panels. Often these positions are heavily weighted to academic representation. It would be worthwhile to consider the value that that could be provided from a greater level of engagement with driver trainer practitioners when selecting advisory panels.

3.5 The needs of metropolitan, rural and regional drivers

The challenge facing governments and the road safety industry is the complexity of the road safety issue in general.

Dealing with the social norms and the general community beliefs, providing consistent systems across the state and dealing with the needs of the individual are just some of these factors.

Clearly, there are also significant differences between road users in metropolitan and regional areas.

But given the fact that having a licence to drive is about mobility, it's unlikely that a metro driver will only ever drive in a metro area and that rural drivers will only ever drive in a rural area.

Therefore, there is a need to look at a holistic training and education system that addresses all of these areas.

Metropolitan drivers have to deal with a more confined environment. Whilst speed limits are generally lower, metro drivers have to deal with denser traffic flows, pedestrians, cyclists and a greater amount of start/stop traffic.

Rural drivers generally operate in areas with higher speed limits, travel on roads a potentially lower level of roadside maintenance in terms of general road condition, location of roadside obstacles such as trees etc and the potential for animal strikes. Many main stream interventions adopted in metro areas have not been effective due to a lack of direct community relevance and involvement in their design. Interestingly, rural road crashes are not decreasing at the same rate as urban trends. (CARRS-Q rural and remote driving fact sheet)

There are also potentially some significant differences in social and cultural views between these two groups as well.

Rural drivers may have slightly improved visual scanning habits and a better understanding of general vehicle dynamics compared to metro drivers.

However, rural drivers may also have different risk levels around drink driving, speeding and seatbelt use.

Finally, rural drivers may also have limitations in accessing driver training and education programs compared to metro drivers. This could be due to issues such as remoteness and general access to resources.

Any approach to enhancing driver education across the state needs to address these factors and issues around access and equity.

This may mean looking for new methods and technology to enhance training delivery and greater community engagement. Certainly, the current approach of engaging with the local TAFE network to deliver road safety education around New South Wales should be further expanded.

Greater assistance may also need to be provided to assistant individuals that face challenges in completing the number of required log book hours.

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

Any road safety activity needs to be viewed not only in the context of its overall safety outcome but also against benefits in productivity and reductions in other road trauma costs.

Road trauma is reported to cost the nation 27 billion dollars a year. Therefore, any assessment of costs also needs to be considered with an "across government" approach and a sustainable method of funding.

Whilst some costs may be carried or subsidised by one government department, other cost savings could be realised in other areas such as public health. Equally, the costs need to be shared between the government, the driver training industry, community and individuals.

There is also an opportunity for commercial industry to self-fund the training for drivers to undertake road safety programs as part of an expanded focus on work related road safety.

Government may need to fund specific areas such as research and consultancy to design a set of delivery standards, develop content, establish industry benchmarks and oversee levels of accreditation.

The driver training industry, both pre and post licence should also contribute to their own professional development.

Finally, the individual would also need to contribute to funding the training.

3.7 The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues - Standardised Licencing Systems

All Australian States and Territories have slightly differing rules when it comes to learner and provisional licencing.

These differences range from the age at which a person can obtain a learner and provisional licence, the required driving hours to be eligible to go for a provisional licence, night driving and passenger restrictions just to name a few.

The fundamental issue with these differences is there is no standardised licencing program and therefore new drivers are not on the same level as their State and Territory counterparts.

For national consistency, this issue needs to be dealt with on a national level, however licencing should still be run through the States and Territories. The only difference to how it is being run

at the moment would be the fact that Australia has a base level of standards in regards to graduated licencing.

Currently we are close to obtaining a national standard of road rules, and therefore there should be no reason why we cannot achieve a national set of learner and provisional driver licencing rules.

3.8 Other related matters - Education for Work Related Road Safety

Work related road safety impacts on a large cross section of the community. It is well established that work related road trauma is highest single contributor to work related deaths and injuries.

There are legal requirements governing work related driving. Despite being clearly identified as a legal obligation and a growing level of corporate awareness, it appears that the level of commitment and action to work related road safety remains relatively low at this point in time. This position is even more pronounced when compared to other occupational health and safety issues. Many organizations have a low level of road safety policies in place and there is little evidence of any holistic approach. In fact it appears that organizations have adopted an "any practice is best practice" approach.

It has been estimated that two out of three vehicles on the road are making a work related trip. This highlights the real scope of the issue and the level of overall risk exposure. The impact work related traffic crashes have on the community is considerable. As an example, in Queensland alone, crashes involving fleet vehicles account for 25% of road fatalities, 43% of all work-related deaths. (ATSB 2003) Research has shown that work-related drivers are exposed to external influences, related to the nature of their job, and internal influences related to their personal dispositions and other individual characteristics which impact on their driving practices.(Newnam et al., 2002) Work related vehicle drivers are at a greater risk of accident involvement, not only through higher levels of exposure to the road environment, but also time and scheduling pressures, work relationships and other distractions (Stradling et al., 2000)

It is estimated that it costs business more than $1 billion dollars per annum. (ATSB 2003) The payout figures for works compensation are also considerable. Seljack and Maddock (2002) (cited Travelsafe 2002) suggested that almost $17 million was paid out in workers compensation claims in Queensland for injuries and illnesses sustained from work related road crashes during 1999-2000.

Driver education and training aimed at the fleet drivers will set a benchmark standard required for employment. That expectation will raise the standards new drivers are expected to achieve to not only obtain a driver's license but also enhance employability.

Driving a motor vehicle is a leading cause of death and injury in the workplace. Driving whilst commuting and during work hours is a significant workplace health and safety issue. A better-trained driver reduces associated trauma and costs and potentially reduces an employer's liability in terms of meeting workplace health and safety and chain of responsibility obligations.

The Financial Costs

Nationally road trauma has a financial impact to the community of $27 Billion. It is estimated that it costs Australian businesses billions of dollars each year.

There are a number of cost centres that need to be included when looking at the full scope of these crash related costs. Some of these may not instantly be apparent, but it has been suggested that there is an 'iceberg' (Murray et al., 2002) effect with the majority of costs being below the waterline so to speak.

Murray also suggests that the actual costs could be between 8 and 36 times the vehicle repair cost.

These costs can include:
- Costs to repair the vehicle
- Increased insurance costs and premiums
- Lost productivity
- Increased operational costs
- Property damage
- Medical expenses
- Rehabilitation costs
- Additional compensation expenses

The payout figures for workers compensation are also considerable. Seljack and Maddock (2002) (cited Travelsafe 2002) suggested that almost $17 million was paid out in workers compensation claims in Queensland for injuries and illnesses sustained from work related road crashes during 1999-2000.

Of course there are additional social and emotional costs resulting from road trauma that cannot be measured simply in dollars.

There is an increased level of accountability from corporate organisations under both the Work Place Health and Safety laws as well as the Chain of Responsibility Legislation. Despite this fact fleet safety is not treated with the same level of "buy in" as other OH&S issues.

There is a wide range of social, business, legal and financial problems associated with poor fleet safety, however there is relative research on the full scope of the issue.

Significant benefits are possible by reducing work-related road crashes. These can include improved productivity, enhanced work quality, improved employee relations and reduced operational costs.

Improving fleet safety does represent a significant opportunity to reduce road trauma across the community and a strong platform for future research studies. If effective countermeasures can be found it would clearly offer huge financial savings to industry. (Wishart and Davey 2004)

Why Address Fleet Drivers

Data obtained from the New South Wales Road and Traffic Authority suggests that, between 50% to 60% of all new vehicles are sold to business organizations or corporate fleets.

It has also been estimated that two out of three vehicles on the road are making a work related trip. This highlights the real scope of the issue and the level of overall risk exposure.

Research has shown that work-related drivers are exposed to external influences, related to the nature of their job, and internal influences related to their personal dispositions and other individual characteristics which impact on their driving practices. (Newnam et al., 2002)

Work related vehicle drivers are at a greater risk of accident involvement, not only through higher levels of exposure to the road environment, but also time and scheduling pressures, work relationships and other distractions. (Stradling et al., 2000)

Current Industry Fleet Safety Practices

Despite these points, work related road safety is still in its early stages compared to other areas of work place health and safety.

'Overall, from a societal point of view, and despite the limitations in available data, there is growing evidence that work-related road safety is an important issue which to date has suffered from a 'scandal of tolerance'. (ATSB 2003). Murray, Newnam, Watson, Davey and Schonfeld)

However this situation will not be allowed to continue into the future: *"Changes in industrial accountability, business processes, occupational health & safety, Chain of responsibility, workers compensation, insurance & third party coverage and a generally more litigious environment require industry to address and subsequently develop more comprehensive programs to improve fleet safety".* (Rowland, Wishart & Davey 2006)

The National Road Safety Partnership Program (NRSPP) offers a collaborative network to support Australian Businesses in developing a positive road safety culture and is about saving lives without the red tape. The Government needs to collaborate with programs such as NRSPP to focus on reducing road trauma.

Government entities such as the Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology, NSW Transport, SA Government, Vic Roads, the Australian Local Government Association and the City of Sydney have all partnered with NRSPP, however this needs to be increased with all State and Territory governments along with the Federal Government pledging support for this program as well as other beneficial programs such as the Australian Road Safety Foundation.

Obligations Under the Workplace Health and Safety Act

Employers are legally required to demonstrate a structured approach to the management of workplace health and safety. The following hierarchy is applied to this and includes:

- Identify the hazards
- Assess the risks potential
- Decide on countermeasures
- Monitor and review outcomes

Once a hazard is identified an employer must manage the risk by either: eliminating the hazard, isolating the hazard, implementing an engineering solution, administration measures or provide person protection equipment. (Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995)

This process is clearly stated under the legislation and in practice is often highly visible. Signs warning people of potential risks, processes for risk reduction and incident forms for spills and falls as well as incident investigations are just some of these.

Yet a road safety incident is rarely addressed with the same level of scrutiny.

Significant benefits are possible by reducing work-related road crashes. These can include improved productivity, enhanced work quality, improved employee relations and reduced operational costs. This also benefits the community by reducing injury and hospitalisations resulting from road crashes.

Improving fleet safety does represent a significant opportunity to reduce road trauma across the community and a strong platform for future research studies. If effective countermeasures can be found it would clearly offer huge financial savings to industry, government and the community. (Wishart and Davey 2004)

Promote 'phone-off' policies in all government and private sector fleets, and consider particular risks posed by mobile phone use among drivers, and plan solutions

There is a significant body of evidence to suggest that mobile phones are a significant distraction.

As was the case in the United States, the federal government should take a leadership role in this regard and implement a "no phone" policy to all government vehicles. An engine on/phone off policy is standard in many large companies and the success of these policies can and should be promoted as part of a standard workplace health and safety policy.

Banning the use of mobile phones when operating a government vehicle would send a strong message to corporate Australia and the community in general.

This leadership should be accompanied by community awareness campaigns on the dangers of driver distraction.

The aim would be for the community to engage on the issue and become the driver for cultural change. Community ownership has a greater potential over legislation alone. Ultimately, the goal would be for mobile phone use to become a socially unacceptable practice.

Workplace drug testing in relation to commercial vehicle operators

While drug and alcohol use/misuse is a serious issue for operators of commercial vehicle fleets, we believe the very first step is for fleet owners to have a systematic workplace health and safety policy and put it into practice.

While major fleet owners we have worked with take their OH&S and chain of responsibility obligations seriously, many smaller fleet operators still need extensive education and awareness.

In addition to educating fleet managers and their CEOs of their responsibility to put policies and training in place, further assistance is required to provide employers with options to deal with members of staff who do have drug and alcohol problems.

Also rehabilitation and education options are required for workers whose drug and alcohol use adversely affect their abilities in the workplace.

Road Safety Education and Early Childhood Learning

The most important recommendation in this submission would be ARSF advocating for the creation of a holistic program that encompasses both pre-license and post license training.

This integration will provide drivers with not only the vital knowledge on operating a motor vehicle but also addresses the key behavioral areas such as attitude and understanding human factors

The curriculum should include:
- Driving Theory
- Driving Practice
- Performance Analysis
- Driving Techniques
- Biomechanics
- Posture
- Ergonomics
- On-going positive reinforcement

The program should hold accredited advantages for students wishing to gain extra points for their Tertiary Entrance Rank as this would create employment advantages as students entering the workforce will have a workplace health and safety background that will satisfy chain of responsibility conditions on employers.

As students are ideally engaged in some form of education and training at this time, a curriculum that delivers both theoretical and practical training over a 2-3 year period will help ensure that all students benefit equally and will successfully transition from learner to open licence holders.

The benefits of this proposed course are manifold. Not only will it assist in reducing the road toll – particularly amongst young and inexperienced drivers, but also benefit the community as a whole.

Students and new drivers need to have access to a nationally consistent and comprehensive driver education and training program which is focused on driving competence (knowledge, skills and attitude) at pre- and post-license level.

Currently there is a void in this area. There are individual States, Territories and Departments that have their own systems and programs, however it is not standardized or enforced.

A driver / road safety program that starts at an age as early as prep and going through to year 10 would be most beneficial in introducing the correct road safety ideals at a young age will produce safer drivers who have the basics of road safety already cemented in their mind even before they start to drive.

In order to get a standardized education program, a working session with those already involved in the area should be convened. This session would include discussions on what is working well and what is not in the programs already implemented throughout the different States and the process needed to merge these programs.

This collaborative approach will ensure a singular curriculum has a framework that will be successful and implemented into schools as a school based road safety program.

Program Implementation

- A program can be implemented into schools and training colleges across Australia.
- Training providers across the country can implement the program either wholly in-house or outsource components.
- The course can be delivered via the Internet using widely available technology
- The course can be included in high school curriculum, technical and training colleges, apprenticeship programs and workplace training courses.

Use of Technology

- Internet and computer-generated tutorials will expand training opportunities to new audiences
- Drivers will be able to directly compare correct and incorrect driving techniques using the Internet
- Drivers will be able to directly experience better driving technique as well as the consequences of inattention, poor skills, poor choices and lack of knowledge using a portable computer driving simulator

4.0 Conclusions

It is clear that there is significant opportunity to improve road safety and to start altering our road safety culture.

As stated in this submission, programs such as the Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety, the Australian Road Safety Foundation and the National Road Safety Partnership Program need

greater support from the Government. These programs are dedicated to the reduction of road trauma and in order for the nation to achieve the goal of zero fatalities on our roads, the Government needs to initiate discussions with these groups to formalise a plan to battle the issues of road trauma.

Education is also another major factor in reducing the road toll. Students as young as five should be introduced to the issues of road safety and the ways to become more safety conscience should be implemented.

Given the level of work related driving and the role it plays in the road toll overall, any improvements would have a significant flow on benefit to the community. Therefore addressing the role of work related road safety should be given strong consideration.

Additional benefits would also be realised by improving outcomes in this area. Reducing road trauma in the corporate fleet setting would have a significant benefit for the road toll overall.

By improving fleet and work related road safety we could potentially make significant reductions in reducing road trauma generally.

Therefore, fleet safety should be given a far greater level of priority.

Strengthening community ownership is also a vital ingredient. Increased efforts must be made in engaging greater awareness and community involvement in improving road safety outcomes.

We would like to thank the federal government for the opportunity to contribute to this Senate inquiry and we hope that many of the suggestions and recommendations we've outlined here will find practical application in future government programs.

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