

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**STAYSAFE (JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD
SAFETY)**

DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY

At McKell Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Monday, 29 May 2017

The Committee met at 9:00

PRESENT

Mr G. Aplin (Chair)

Mr A. Crouch

The Hon. S. Farlow

Mr N. Lulich

The Hon. D. Mookhey

Ms E. Petinos

The CHAIR: Good morning and thank you for attending this public hearing of the Staysafe Committee. My name is Greg Aplin and I am the member for Albury and Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, better known as the Staysafe Committee. The other members of the Committee are the Hon. Scott Farlow, MLC, who is Deputy Chair; Adam Crouch, the member for Terrigal; Nick Lalich, the member for Cabramatta; and we are expecting to be joined shortly by the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, and Eleni Petinos, the member for Miranda. Mr Thomas George, the Deputy Speaker, has given an apology, as has Dr Mehreen Faruqi.

Today we are hearing further evidence in our inquiry into driver education, training and road safety. Last Monday we held our first public hearing. We heard valuable evidence from a range of stakeholders including advocates from Indigenous drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, the insurance industry, driver trainers, and community mentors, educators and researchers. Today we will hear from professional drivers and trainers, advocates for aged and disabled drivers, motorists and motorcyclists, and State and local government. I remind everyone present to switch off their mobile phones.

MICK SAVAGE, Manager, Roads and Transport Directorate, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our first witness, Mr Savage.

Mr SAVAGE: I am representing IPWEA New South Wales branch at this hearing.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. Do you have any questions about the information you have been sent and our processes today?

Mr SAVAGE: No, I do not.

The CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr SAVAGE: Yes.

The CHAIR: Please go ahead.

Mr SAVAGE: The written submission that we have made is fairly comprehensive and covers a lot of areas. No doubt the Committee has some questions in relation to that. In summary, our view is that local government in particular roads authorities need to adopt the Safe System approach. That covers vehicles, roads, speed and drivers. I suppose the latter is one of the main issues that the Committee is looking into at present. Part of our submission suggests that there needs to be better targeting of the collection and reporting of statistics. It is an issue that we have raised with this Committee previously. A simple example is that we have been trying to ascertain the correlation between fatalities and unsealed roads. I am not sure whether the data is collected. We would like to know, because that information would give us a better handle on where we should be targeting local government resources in particular.

To put that into context—and there is a section at the end of our report about it—local government in New South Wales is responsible for, as best we can ascertain, 163,000 kilometres of road. About half of that is sealed and half of it unsealed. The State road network, managed by Roads and Maritime Services [RMS], is about 18,500 kilometres. They have something in the order of 3,000 kilometres of unsealed road. In looking at implementing a Safe System approach, the extent and I suppose the condition of that local and regional road network is a major consideration.

Another issue with which I have personal experience is initial driver training. Eighteen months ago my wife and I provided learner driver training for our youngest daughter. Our eldest has elected not to drive—I am not sure whether that might be part of the solution. Having been through that process, I came out the other end and wondered whether our daughter had picked up two sets of poor driving habits or whether, through the two of us and from some professional driver training, she had a good start as a driver on our roads. I suppose some of the issues that are raised in our submission relate to that particular set of circumstances. As a final comment on that, from this morning's *Sydney Morning Herald*, Bernard Carlon from Transport for NSW has raised the issue specifically in relation to Indigenous communities. That is certainly also something that we have an interest in.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Savage. Your submission raised the possibility of a greater role for local government road safety officers [RSOs] in the delivery of driver education and training. How can those RSOs more effectively support Transport for NSW and RMS road safety education, training and licence testing activities?

Mr SAVAGE: I think that is the question we raised also. The Local Government Road Safety Program run by Transport for NSW and administered by RMS is a resource that is available to deal with road safety issues on a broad scale. It seems to us that if suitable training were available, developed with delivery at that level in mind, there is an avenue at the local level for delivery of training, retraining and ongoing training, particularly in regional areas.

The CHAIR: I am trying to pick up on the point that you raised on regional roads, therefore local knowledge, and local road safety officers responding to local needs. In that context, can you see a value for computer-based training and do you have a view on the use of simulators for both driver training and competency assessment of licensed drivers?

Mr SAVAGE: I refer again to my youngest daughter. She has just graduated from red Ps to green Ps. The process for taking that step involves an assessment by computer simulation. It is not something that I have hands-on experience with, but I questioned her about that. She had done some work in the lead-up to going and

being tested. Through that and the actual testing she came away having learnt a couple of things that she did not know before. So in answer to your question I think that there is a place for it. I do not think you can adequately do driver training remotely or by simulation. There is nothing like actually being on the road and experiencing it. That is particularly true on local and regional roads. It is one thing to sit in a simulator for half an hour. It is another thing to drive for two, three and four hours between A and B on a country road.

The CHAIR: You mentioned that your daughter learnt a couple of things. Is it possible to introduce regional and local scenarios in rural areas into that simulation and do you see a role here for the road safety officers [RSO] to have some input into Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] as to what those scenarios should be?

Mr SAVAGE: Yes to both those questions. There is a reciprocal issue. People in the metropolitan area get their licence and they understand traffic and congestion. They have had no real experience driving long distances on regional roads of probably variable quality. Likewise, people who get their licence in regional areas are shocked and horrified coming to and driving in the city for the first time. For both of those things there can be an element of training provided by simulation and other means with input from local road safety officers through RMS and Transport for NSW.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you for coming here this morning, Mr Savage. In your submission you cited the need for learners to have access to subsidised professional instruction. What other incentives could be provided to encourage learners to seek professional instruction, as an example, extending the three-to-one discount program?

Mr SAVAGE: Yes. I see there being value in that. There are two aspects to that. One of the attractive things in getting professional training is the three to one and not having to spend another 20 hours with mum and dad. That is attractive, provided that the training is of good quality. I think there is an opportunity to ensure that bad habits are not picked up. People who have driven for a long period of time do not realise some of the habits they have got and it is an opportunity through an independent element to that process. How much is enough? I do not know the answer to that question. One of the things we have suggested is that it would be useful to collect a bit more information on the effectiveness of that sort of training, particularly against deaths and serious injuries in that early driver cohort.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: On the Central Coast we have had a number of fatal accidents in the last 12 months involving younger drivers unfortunately and in one case a pedestrian being struck. Some of the schools on the Central Coast already engage in additional driver education. Do you see that as something that could be beneficial as part of the school curriculum? We heard evidence last week of driver education beginning as early as grades 8 and 9 potentially. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr SAVAGE: Absolutely, and in some respects I suppose we are going back to the future. I can remember when I was at school having the local police come and address year 6/7 classes in relation to some of the basic road safety issues. There is no reason why that cannot be extended to the principles behind driving the road safety issues, some of the statistics—like everything else that happens in our education system—to get students ready for when they are eventually going to go and undergo driver education.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Good morning, Mr Savage. I would like to ask you about overseas licence holders. Your submission was one of several that expressed concern about overseas licence holders. In particular, I understand you suggested the need to identify overseas licence holders in crash statistics and to include overseas licence holders as a target for road safety initiatives. Are you saying that drivers from countries with reciprocal arrangements with Australia should be tested to ensure that they understand the road rules and conditions in New South Wales?

Mr SAVAGE: Our submission suggests that there is no data available one way or the other. We have raised it as an issue that if there was data recorded that showed that a higher than average percentage of serious injury-fatalities involved such drivers, then we are suggesting that is a group that should be targeted. We have not suggested that there is data that supports that or not. I think our recommendation concludes with the words "if necessary".

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Do you have a view on whether there should be additional requirements for learners from non-English speaking backgrounds?

Mr SAVAGE: Not really an issue that we had specifically thought about but the underlying issue is understanding and if driver training is being delivered in English to candidates with limited English that should not suggest they are poor drivers. It might suggest that they are not getting the full range of information necessary to make sure that they are good drivers.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Your submission also raised the need to develop a suite of standards of delivery and assessment for use by driving instructors to ensure quality and consistency of training. Does this mean you see the need for an accreditation system for courses and teachers?

Mr SAVAGE: The simple answer is yes. The information that we saw reported in our research suggests that as with most things there is a range of quality and our suggestion is that there needs to be a levelling of that to ensure a minimum quality of driver training.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Does the minimum quality then extend to mentors and volunteers assisting learner drivers?

Mr SAVAGE: I think there needs to be an overall view of that, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I just want to return to the RSOs as I am not all that familiar with them. Can you explain what RSOs do?

Mr SAVAGE: There has been a longstanding program funded by the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] originally, now funded by Transport for NSW and administered by RMS. What it does is part-fund—up to 50 per cent in most cases—a specialist person within a council responsible for delivery of road safety programs. The road safety programs have, in the past, been developed on a statewide basis, generally, or on a regional basis. Resources have been provided through that program to support those people. They have delivered that road safety program. There has been some local development to meet specific local issues, but largely it has been a statewide program delivered at the local level.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How do they deliver it? Do they hold forums, locally, with interested people, do they go to schools—or what?

Mr SAVAGE: Yes, meetings, forums—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: All of the above?

Mr SAVAGE: Yes. In fact, I am going to a heavy vehicle forum next week in Forbes. A road safety officer looks after three councils in that area. She has developed this program—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So it is often shared amongst councils, is it?

Mr SAVAGE: In this case it is. That is not unusual. She is getting the local trucking industry together with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, ourselves, and others with an interest to talk about local heavy vehicle freight issues: What are the issues, what can we do about it, and what can we do about it at the local and regional level?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You were talking about the statewide campaigns that are effectively localised through this role. How much of it feeds back into Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] or Transport for NSW, as well? When they hold these forums about local issues how much do they feed back to RMS in terms of their planning and campaigns?

Mr SAVAGE: There is a reporting process built into it. What impact that has, I am not sure.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But there is no formalised, structural—

Mr SAVAGE: I think there is an annual report required from each of the road safety officers about what they have done.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But you have not necessarily seen them?

Mr SAVAGE: Not outside that, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The funding for that ends on 30 June 2017. Is that still the case?

Mr SAVAGE: It is a question that we have raised on behalf of road safety officers. It is an ongoing funding program, through Transport for NSW, but the confirmation of the next three-year funding had not, at the time of our submission, been notified to councils. I understand that that is now being done by RMS.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Okay. So that program is continuing.

Mr SAVAGE: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Fantastic. Now, in terms of some of the issues with driver training, you were talking about the hours that you had gone through with your daughter. Mr Crouch raised some of the issues about getting the three for one. One of the other issues that has been raised before this Committee has

been the variability in that driver training—for instance, people in the city being trained on country roads or vice versa, and different situations. What are your thoughts about the ability to simulate some of those scenarios?

Mr SAVAGE: I think that that would help. Anything that readies some of these younger drivers for conditions they have not experienced has to be a good thing, but to rely on that as a measure of competency is a problem. I would hope that such a program would reduce some of the accidents with respect to city-trained drivers getting into trouble on country roads, and country-trained drivers getting into trouble in congested city roads. It could not do any harm.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Your submission has called for the expansion of training to include changing road conditions, especially at work sites, navigating rural unsealed roads, and safety precautions on flooded roads. Would such a measure be adequate to address the over-representation of rural and regional areas in crash statistics?

Mr SAVAGE: I do not think so. I think there are a lot more issues involved. Certainly, every year, a number of people try to drive through flooded creeks and come to grief. We could do a fair bit through education to overcome that, but with respect to some of the other issues, such as the distances that are being driven and fatigue, certainly education can warn people but until they experience it I am not sure that you can convey the whole of that knowledge. The other thing is the varying quality of local and regional roads, and the inadequate funding—potholes; broken edges; narrow seals, where they exist; no centre lines. The fact that some of those things exist can be conveyed by other means, but, again, the effect of having a wheel drop off a broken edge, and the problems that that can create, is pretty difficult to do, either by simulation or by means other than experiencing it.

Mr NICK LALICH: Do we need—I think we should change the wording to "we do need"—to collect crash statistics on other topics to better understand the cause of crashes—for example, more details on road type, gender, local, time, driving history, health statistics, whether solo or accompanied, speed and weather conditions? Should we collect these to better understand what causes certain crashes and, from then provide education or attune our knowledge to cover those conditions?

Mr SAVAGE: Yes. Many of those statistics are currently collected and available through the NSW Centre for Road Safety, but not all of them. I mentioned earlier that we would like to see some statistics linking deaths and serious injuries with unsealed roads, and maybe correlate that with vehicle volumes. That would indicate to us that we need to seal more roads or that we do not need to seal more roads, we need to concentrate on our currently sealed roads and improve the quality. Yes, we need to continue to collect that data, but we need to collect more specific data, as well, to allow us to target the resources we have better, with a view to reducing the road toll.

Mr NICK LALICH: Also with respect to the training between country road and city road drivers—people from the country and people from the city—do you think that would be worthwhile? If you only go into the country from the city once every couple of years do you feel that you would still remember what you were taught two years down the track—or, vice versa, coming from the country into the city every couple of years? How often do you think the training should happen—the education and keeping up with the latest rule changes?

Mr SAVAGE: I think there are two separate questions. One is with respect to a different set of conditions. If it only happens occasionally I am not sure how you deal with that. For things that happen all the time I see there being a need there. I have been driving for a number of years, and over the period that I have held a licence there have been significant changes to various laws. I have never gone back to do any training on any systematic basis. I have been fortunate to have been involved in the industry, and I have picked up the changes as they have occurred. But that is not true of a large number of drivers. Occasionally there are reports on things such as drivers generally not knowing who has right of way at roundabouts. There is a pretty simple answer, but if the majority of drivers do not have that knowledge we need to look at how they should have acquired that knowledge and how they should now acquire that knowledge, because that is creating issues for us.

The CHAIR: I would like to follow through with that question. You touched on refresher courses or the fact that you—in common with most other drivers—would not have had any other training since the early stages of acquiring your licence. Is there evidence to support some form of periodic intervention, say a licence renewal, which requires drivers to be assessed on their driving knowledge—you indicated the roundabout issue—capacity or their attitude without necessarily resulting in a pass or fail? Do you see an opportunity to enhance knowledge and understanding in order to cope with changing technology, possibly changing rules, the greater number of vehicles on the road, anything you have encountered over the course of your driving career? How do we approach that knowledge gap that exists?

Mr SAVAGE: I think there needs to be some sort of systematic approach to that, whether it be some sort of, maybe online test—I agree it should not be a pass/fail, but there should be a presentation of new knowledge and some sort of assessment as to whether that has been picked up. Whether that happens annually or every five years, there is obviously cost involved in that as well. But I do not think drivers can have too much information, particularly given the circumstances most of us drive in today.

The CHAIR: Can we move, in a related sense, to communication with drivers? I would like to get some comment from you on how effective current campaigns are, those that communicate with drivers about their responsibilities, the needs of other road users, those changing road rules we spoke of, et cetera. How can communication campaigns be enhanced and should we rely solely on mass media?

Mr SAVAGE: I think back to some of the campaigns that have run over the last few years. There is one that I recall on fatigue. Just drivers behaving erratically and ending up in a serious accident. That certainly had an impact on me. Whether or not that would have been the case as a 20-year-old, I am not sure. And so I suppose I am suggesting yes, there is a need for targeted campaigns but I do not think there is such a thing as a one size fits all either. Again, collecting statistics is likely to allow us to better target some of those issues and to build specific campaigns to address specific issues.

The CHAIR: I like that idea and thank you for raising those concepts in your submission: the relationship between the gathering of those statistics and the questions I have just asked about driver training through one's life or the communication of issues. Do the public education campaigns undertaken by Transport for NSW adequately address the overrepresentation of rural and regional areas in crash statistics? Here I am looking for the relationship that you have already alluded to between rural and country roads, the statistics, and the means of, I suppose, educating people about those risks and therefore reducing, as is our mission, the statistics in the fatalities and serious injuries.

Mr SAVAGE: I do not think the current statistics allow us to target to that extent. One of the pieces of information that I am aware of is that, I do not know, somewhere around about 60 per cent of fatal and serious crashes are happening on local and regional roads. Thirty per cent of those are run off road, a single vehicle run off road, hit an object. I do not think there is sufficient information available to say, "This is what is causing these accidents." Is it fatigue? Have those drivers driven for three, four, six hours before that? I have also heard that—and I have seen no published data—a large percentage of suicides. Now, if that is the case, no amount of training in terms of controlling a vehicle is going to deal with that. That is a health issue. But if we knew that for sure then we could start using some of those health issues as well as targeting fatigue in those areas if that is what is the cause. But I have not seen statistics that clearly indicate those sorts of issues, so in local and regional roads, I think we need to get a better handle on the specifics so that we can start to concentrate on eradicating some of those issues. Having said that, I saw some statistics from Transport for NSW last week suggesting there are still, I think, 11 per cent of accidents occurring with no seat belts. And again, I would like to know whether that is largely in rural areas because, you know, I understand farmers going from one paddock to another, having to open and close gates—"I have only got 200 metres to drive. I am not going to put the seatbelt on". You know, the same outcomes if you are involved in an accident. So in answer to your question, I think there is some basic information available, but we need to target it much better if we can.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I was attempting to draw out from your submission and thank you for those insights. Regrettably, our time has drawn to a close. We may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, and your reply would then form part of your evidence and be published. Would you be happy to answer any additional questions?

Mr SAVAGE: I certainly would.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much and thank you for appearing before the Committee this morning.

Mr SAVAGE: Thank you for the opportunity.

NICK McINTOSH, Assistant State Secretary, Transport Workers Union, sworn and examined

LOUISE de PLATER, Legal Officer, Transport Workers Union, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Good morning and thank you for appearing before the Committee today. Do you have any questions about the information you have been sent and the processes today?

Mr McINTOSH: No. The only thing I was going to do was to propose to make a two-minute opening address.

The CHAIR: Absolutely, please go ahead.

Mr McINTOSH: Firstly, thanks to the Committee for giving us this opportunity to appear. The Transport Workers Union [TWU] of New South Wales, by way of background, represents over 20,000 employees and owner-drivers in industries including general freight, dangerous goods, waste, car carrying passenger vehicles and construction. Our submission speaks for itself, but there are a couple of things I should highlight and briefly expand on. Firstly, Australia's freight carriers are set to double in the next 15 years, and between 2015 and 2016 alone there was a 3½ per cent increase in heavy vehicle registrations. The heavy vehicle industry tragically has the highest number of fatalities and serious injuries of any industry in Australia. In the 10 years to 2015, nearly 2,500 people, both heavy vehicle drivers and members of the general public, died as a result of heavy vehicle crashes across the country. In New South Wales alone 64 people lost their lives as a result of heavy vehicle crashes in the 12 months leading up to September 2016, a 28 per cent increase in deaths over the previous 12 months. In January this year alone there were 18 fatalities on New South Wales roads as a result of heavy vehicle crashes.

I note all of these tragic statistics simply to make the point that there is a safety crisis in the transport industry. The initial point we need to make to this inquiry is that changes to driver education and training are only a part of the answer to greater road safety. The biggest cause of heavy vehicle accidents remains poor remuneration and payment methods that lead to drivers being forced to work unsafely by skipping rest breaks and driving fatigued to meet unrealistic deadlines or not properly maintaining their vehicles in order to put food on the table. Having made that point, there is certainly a role for increased levels of driver education and training to play in road safety. The transport industry has low barriers to entry, is highly competitive and is a price-taking industry. This alone places a disincentive on smaller operators on already tight margins to put any extra time or money into further education and training.

Even for the largest players in the transport industry, the costs associated with training are becoming prohibitively expensive. By way of example, one large operator in the transport industry employs driver trainers, pays them to complete a certificate IV in training and assessment and then employs them full-time to train new employees and regularly go out on the road to assess all drivers, many of whom have years of experience, in order to ensure that their performance levels are as high as possible. However, this is an expensive and time-consuming process, and a large financial investment in this area could mean the difference between winning or losing a tender. As such, we are starting to see a move away from the role of permanent driver trainers, even at the largest transport operators. TWU therefore submits that there needs to be an industry-wide approach to driver education and training involving clients, governments, organisations and all road users in order to both spread the cost and realise the benefits.

The CHAIR: Your opening statement is along the lines of my first question. Your submission cited the need for formal lifelong tertiary training post licensing. In your submission you said that only 44 per cent of drivers had done so. Did they pay for the training themselves? What further incentives might be given to heavy vehicle drivers to undertake post-licence training?

Mr McINTOSH: In answer to the first part of your question, it is very reliant on who you are working for and whether or not you are an owner-driver or an employee. You will find that at some of the larger transport operators, particularly where we have TWU agreements in place, there is often a clause that says that if a driver wants to, for argument's sake, start driving a B-double and so get the next version of a licence, the company will pay for that driver to do the training and any costs associated with the training so long as the driver remains at the company for an amount of time that is fair for the company to realise some benefit of the training. That does not happen everywhere; mostly at smaller operators that would not happen unless the employer is happy enough to pay that money and put the time into it. Certainly, with owner-drivers most of the time that would not occur, because it just comes out of their bottom line. Generally an owner-driver cannot pass

on the cost of extra training to any principal contractor or any client they are working for. What was the second part of your question?

The CHAIR: Incentives given to heavy vehicle drivers to undertake post-licence training.

Mr McINTOSH: I suppose the main incentive for an employee would be that you would move up a grade in terms of what you are driving. Most of the transport industry's payments are based on whether you are a grade 1 to 8, or it might be grade 1 to 10. Obviously, the bigger the vehicle is, the more money you generally get paid. That would be your incentive, but there is not necessarily an incentive to put in the time and money initially. Of course, you could put in the time and money and then your employer or whoever you are working for says, "I am sorry, there is no position available now to drive that vehicle and you are just going to have to wait." You might be overqualified and unable to pay for the training and then you are left in no-man's land. There is no real incentive other than that at this particular point in time.

The CHAIR: Do you see a bigger role for TAFE in training drivers? For instance, is there any value in the heavy vehicle induction and refresher course offered by TAFE?

Mr McINTOSH: TAFE may be an option. We are open to different suggestions. The main point we keep coming back to is that the incentive just is not there, and most of the time it is coming out of drivers' pockets when there is not necessarily a way for them to recover that cost. We are open to suggestions about different things, but there is an underlying problem that it is not really in a lot of drivers' financial interest, certainly in the short term, to undertake that with the time and money that it takes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Am I right in saying that on the whole, apart from the vehicle classes that you mentioned, there is no relationship between training and remuneration in the heavy vehicle industry?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: As such, should a driver undertake to do any further skills development, they are essentially having to self-finance it with no certainty that there will be any additional rewards either to pay for the course of education or otherwise enhance their skills and productivity?

Mr McINTOSH: I would say that in 95 per cent of cases that is correct, unless you are in a very large operator that says it desperately needs an extra grade 8 driver, for example, and will pay for the training and time to do that. But 95 per cent of the time that would be correct, yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Am I also right in saying that in addition to the basic skill set required to operate a heavy vehicle, drivers are subject to weight-mass requirements under the Road Transport (General) Act?

Mr McINTOSH: That is correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: And the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator fatigue laws?

Mr McINTOSH: That is correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Both of which require specific training as well?

Mr McINTOSH: That is correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How do drivers pay for that training?

Mr McINTOSH: It is a very similar answer to what I have given already, unfortunately. In the case of employees, unless you have an employer who is willing to do that either while you are employed or before you are employed to get you to that point, but most employees would not get that because they would be operating for too small an operator to do that. Most small operators are operating on tight margins and would rather have someone who is ready-made and has already done that training, probably paid for it themselves or by a different person on their behalf. About 95 per cent of owner-drivers just would not be able to recover that cost. If that job required certain fatigue management, and there is basic fatigue and advanced fatigue and all the rest of it, they would have to pay for that off their own bat and hope that they could find the work to compensate for it. But there is no guarantee most of the time that that would happen.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: This training is notionally meant to teach you how to drive safely for 14 hours a day?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes, that is right.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You make the point of the difference between large operators and small operators. Am I correct in saying that the two largest operators have a market share between them of roughly 8 per cent?

Mr McINTOSH: Broadly speaking that would be correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Therefore the majority of work is performed by people who operate one to three vehicles?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Generally they are all price takers?

Mr McINTOSH: It is a price-taking industry, so that is correct, yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Unless the major clients like Woolworths, Coles and Myer are to insist on this as a requirement of a contract change and undertake remuneration on a supply chain basis, there is no real ability to disperse or otherwise create the economics in a way that is favourable to the dispersion of training. Is that correct?

Mr McINTOSH: That is correct. In the transport industry a major problem is the supply chain. Really we would like to see an approach throughout the industry where the top of the supply chain is responsible for terms and conditions to ensure that the whole thing is safe. We do not care who is transporting the goods, as long as they are doing so in a safe manner and they are earning something for it. Unfortunately, like most things, this cost gets pushed down the chain. So the poor bugger at the bottom of the chain will be told, "You pay for that training that you need to perform, or you will not have a job anymore." There is a horrible choice to be made right down the bottom of the line if you are the poor person running and paying for your vehicle and paying your mortgage off. You either pay the extra money to undertake the training to keep the job or you have to give up the job. It is a bad choice, whichever way you go. We would like to see a model where the people at the top, whether it is some of those clients that have been named, actually have training built into their costs so that whoever is doing it, they can ensure there is proper training and proper rates of remuneration. Then it does not matter who is doing the training because everyone has to be on the same, safe playing field.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: This is a point of consensus with the employers in your industry, is it not? It is not a case of labour versus capital. It has been this way for a while. Others say the transport industry should recover costs from their clients?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes, that is correct. Most of the major transport employer bodies are in support of the supply chain approach, because they see that they are basically cutting each other's throats. It could be the two largest operators with 80 per cent of the market, but it is still not enough. It is certainly not a monopolistic or duopolistic situation. Large employer bodies are in favour of something like this because it levels the playing field and it means that they can compete on other things, not people's take-home pay and safety. They can compete on how efficiently they can do other things, how they can organise their work—things that we are fully in support of and always have been at the TWU, but it is a real problem if people are cutting each other's throats on safety and driver training, because that is what it comes down to.

The CHAIR: Do you know if in the field of professional development self-education—in this case—would qualify for a tax deduction?

Mr McINTOSH: I think it probably would.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: As a general matter because they are not paying personal tax, it does not qualify as a deduction. They pay business tax.

The CHAIR: As continued professional development.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: If you are an employee.

Mr McINTOSH: Sorry, I should have clarified that. If you are an employee, obviously you get employee deductions. If you are an owner-driver, you are running a business and are not employed by anybody. I believe that is right, you would not necessarily get that as a tax deduction.

The CHAIR: I wanted to clarify that because we meet many people in the fields of building and other areas where it does.

Mr NICK LALICH: Do fleet and heavy vehicle drivers receive training and driver safety education from the manufacturers of those heavy vehicles? Do they have any responsibility or do you feel they should

have some responsibility in training drivers about their vehicles and on the technology that is in those vehicles so they understand what the technology does?

Mr McINTOSH: Unfortunately, once again, most of the time I think your question is alluding to the top of the supply chain or someone who is doing the work. Unfortunately, once again, most of the time these companies will say, "We want the cheapest possible alternative and we are outsourcing it to somebody else." Once that it is done, you will find that they will say, "Whatever happens from that point on is not our business anymore because we have employed somebody else" or "We have contracted it out to somebody else." They have probably subcontracted it out all the way down the line. So if the person fifth down the line has an accident and you go back to the manufacturer, or the client, they will say, "That it is not our problem. We do not employ them; it has nothing to do with us."

Whenever there is a fatality or an incident in the heavy vehicle industry, we find time and again that even though you could be driving—I will use Aldi as an example—Aldi might turn around and say, "It is not our supply chain. We contract that out to someone", and then they contract it out and then they contract it out. "It has nothing to do with it us." It is five links down the chain, and that is the issue. There is no incentive at the moment for the companies at the top to fund the driver training requirements and use the best technology because they say, "We want the cheapest possible cost. We know transport is a price taking industry. We can get the cheapest possible cost and we will outsource it." If they outsource it five times down the chain they will say, "It has nothing to do with us anymore."

Mr NICK LALICH: Do you think those companies should have the responsibility to drug test drivers when they are on and off the road? Should they be drug-tested for the uppers and downers that they take?

Mr McINTOSH: Most of the transport companies that the TWU has a strong union presence in have stringent drug policies for drug testing and all the rest of it. I would make the point that the TWU represents companies both large and small and they would have drug policies, fatigue management policies, and things we can check transparently. Most of the time, the incidents that occur at those companies that we have arrangements with are not related to drug-taking, fatigue management or anything like that. It might be human error or the normal run-of-the-mill accident. The issues come when you have the poor guy at the bottom who was basically told, "Mate, you have to get the freight from Sydney to Melbourne in 14 hours. We do not care how you do it, you just have to get it there. If you don't, then you will not get paid." With most union companies—what I call a union company—that would not occur because we have things in place to ensure it does not, but the problem is those companies are competing with the companies that are happy to cut any corner in order to win work and save a buck. That is where this issue comes in.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I turn to your submission. The number of road fatalities for heavy vehicle drivers in the State is quite concerning. How do those figures compare over the past 20 years or so? Has it been like other road fatality statistics where we have seen a recent spike, or is it consistently a large proportion of heavy vehicle drivers?

Ms De PLATER: In respect of the past 20 years, I am not sure. In the last year, certainly the percentage of fatalities involving heavy vehicles has increased and that may be in line with the number of registrations of those vehicles increasing. It is a trend that is going upwards. Over the past 20 years, I am not sure.

Mr McINTOSH: We would say that the troubling part of all of this is—let us talk about the past 10 years—we have increased speed cameras and fatigue management regulations, there is more police presence in respect of drug testing, checking logbooks and all the rest, but you will not look at a graph over the past 10 or 20 years and suddenly see there is a big drop when something like that is introduced, because, unfortunately, you are not getting to the cause of the problem. You are saying we will put a few more police on the road or speed cameras or have someone check the logbooks. The underlying problem will still be there. We have not seen any marked reduction in fatalities over the past 20 years and there are times when it will spike up and at other times it is a "good" year, if such a thing exists, when there are fewer deaths. But with all of these things that have been implemented, we would not say there has been any great change in fatalities. In fact, as Ms De Plater just said, they have gone up over the last year, which is very troubling.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In comparison to the rest of the road users, there has been a decline over the past 20 years and a relatively steady decline, but in the heavy vehicle user group it has been consistent and, as you say, in the last year it has gone up?

Ms De PLATER: That is correct.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In your submission you have outlined some of the submissions for registered training organisations [RTOs] in the country, in particular, and the concentration is much larger for

city-based RTOs. What are your views as to why that is occurring and what are the possible solutions to address that issue?

Ms De PLATER: That was in regard to the new requirement that was brought in in the past couple of years whereby the heavy vehicle competency-based assessment now requires a different trainer to undertake the assessment for licensing and a different trainer to undertake the training, essentially. So the RTOs in regional areas may only employ one trainer who then is only able to do either the training or the assessment, whereas the city-based RTOs have numerous staff members and can still keep that business within themselves because they can have one staff member doing the training and one doing the assessment.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In your submission you mentioned TEACHO, the Transport Education Audit Compliance Health Organisation, which is run by the TWU. What sort of training and education does TEACHO provide?

Mr McINTOSH: The first thing I should say about TEACHO is that the TWU has representatives that sit on the board of TEACHO but they might make up half at the most. We also have directors who come from Toll, Linfox—I cannot remember off the top of my head—and a couple of academics who sit on that board. The head of TEACHO, Daryll Hull, is an academic as well. It is a relatively independent board in that there are employer representatives, union representatives and academic representatives. TEACHO administers what is called the Bluecard program. Bluecard is essentially another set of training that people in the transport industry can do. We say that you should have a Bluecard because it means that you are up to date in all the up-to-date training in transport. It just goes into more detail as a good training mechanism for transport operators. We like to see that people have a Bluecard because we believe that it means they have done that extra level of training and it makes them a lot safer.

There are also other programs TEACHO is working on, which are things like transition to retirement programs. The transport industry is an ageing industry. We have an issue where the average age, predominantly in men, is over 50. We have heavy vehicle registrations that the task force said will double in 15 years, so we are running into a bit of an issue with who is actually going to be driving these vehicles in the next 15 years. They are looking at saying, "Right: A lot of people think that they want to retire at age 65, but why don't we see if we can keep people working a couple of days a week while they can, just to help ease the burden?" TEACHO is always looking at what other issues we can deal with. Mental health is one that we have started to launch. It is also an issue particularly with men, and TEACHO is trying to launch some programs to help deal with that in the transport industry. That is just an example of a body that we support that is trying to add extra training and safety mechanisms into the industry.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I return to some of the comments made earlier by the Deputy Chair, Mr Farlow, in relation to the increased number of fatalities of operators of heavy vehicles over the last year. I agree with Mr Farlow that that statistic is alarming. What are your thoughts on public campaigns that have been focused on and directed to the heavy vehicle industry via public or corporate education over the last year?

Mr McINTOSH: I will let Ms de Plater start and I will supplement her answer.

Ms De PLATER: I am not aware of any public campaigns that I can think of off the top of my head.

Mr McINTOSH: What I would say to that question is that the issue once again—I do not want to sound like a broken record but if you are running a campaign about heavy vehicle safety and you are really simply focusing on "We need truck drivers to slow down, and you need to take your breaks, and you need to not take drugs, and we are going to have extra police on the roads", that is all well and good but it just does not deal with any of the underlying problems in the industry. This is possibly going to territory that this Committee is not necessarily looking into but the real issues in the industry are that the poor bugger at the bottom of the chain gets told, "You've got to get from here to here in this time. If you don't do it, you don't get paid." You can put any public safety campaign out there and you can talk about all these different things, but if that problem is not resolved, either that guy has to make a choice, "Am I going to do the job and take the risks so I can get some money? Or I do not do the job—but then I don't get any money?" While I fully support public safety campaigns and anything that can raise awareness of some of these issues, I do not think you are ever going to resolve it.

It is not like the issue that was raised that heavy vehicle fatalities and incidents are sort of stable—"stable" is a bad word—and that road user fatalities are going down. I think public campaigns can actually deal with a lot of those issues for general road users because when there are public holidays, when you say, "There are double demerits. Don't speed because you're going to get this. Make sure you have a plan B" and all the rest, because the underlying issue is not necessarily the same as for heavy vehicle users, these campaigns actually do work because they turns people's minds to that and they think, "Oh, well, I'll leave 10 minutes earlier", "It doesn't matter if I'm a bit late and caught in traffic", or "I shouldn't have that extra drink at the pub". I think that

turns people's minds. The problem with the heavy vehicle industry is that it does not deal with the underlying problem. You can say to a heavy vehicle driver, "Look, mate, you've got to stop every however many hours and not speed," but if they are told, "You have to get from A to B in this amount of time or you don't get paid", it does not really matter what you say. They are going to have to do that job. That is probably the difference between me driving in my car and the heavy vehicle driver, basically.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Whilst I completely understand what you are saying, I think you will find that the death toll amongst ordinary drivers actually spiked over the last calendar year as well. It is not an experience in your industry that is not mirrored by the rest of the road safety statistics, which is why I put the question to you in the same way as I would to Bernard Carlon, who will be appearing before this Committee later. I was going to ask whether or not you see any value in heavy vehicle induction and refresher courses offered by TAFE, and I am happy for you to comment on it, but it seems as if you are saying that education is not really part of the solution.

Mr McINTOSH: No, as I said right at the start, it plays a part but you still need to be able to say to people—the problem at the moment is that it is a low-entry industry. It is very easy for people to get into the transport industry. The problem is that what happens after the minute they get in and they get their licence is very company specific. For a large operator who can pay for it, they might have driver trainers that go out with you for a day and, while you are in your first six months, follow you up every second week—and even after 10 years you have a day where you are driving them. But some companies might say, "You've got your licence now. Off you go. See you later!", and suddenly you are driving a B-double from Sydney to Melbourne and have not really had the experience.

It is certainly a part of it. I am not saying that every heavy vehicle fatality is caused because of poor remuneration and those underlying issues. Some certainly are caused because people are not experienced and need better training and education. I am saying that even if this Committee came up with the best solution ever with driver education training, it is not going to resolve every problem in the heavy transport industry. But there is certainly work to do, so it is still an important part of the solution.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Some of the witnesses at last Monday's hearing spoke to the Committee about the need to change attitudes in this area. Do you think that that is part of the problem in your industry?

Mr McINTOSH: Culture is the hardest thing to change, but I must say that I believe in my time as a union official over the last 10-plus years there has been a big cultural shift in these things. Certainly there is a lot more awareness of behaviour on the road and what people should and should not do, and there is a lot of cracking down on employees as well—if people test positive or have an accident because they have been speeding, they generally are probably not going to last much longer in that job. That has changed a lot of the culture of the industry. I am sure there are still things that could be done with some cultural change and attitude change, but I do think that even in the last 10 years since I have been the union official, we have come a long way in that respect.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Maybe I missed it, but I did not quite hear the answer to a question Mr Lulich asked earlier, which was: Do fleet or heavy vehicle drivers receive training on road safety education from manufacturers? The question was quite specific. Whether it be a large fleet of trucks owned by, say, Linfox or the guy you said was at the bottom of the totem pole, working for himself, do they receive any education as part of the purchase of a truck or heavy vehicle?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Do you mean vehicle manufacturers?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: If that was what Mr Lulich asked earlier. I did not hear an answer to that question.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I thought it was manufacturers of goods.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: No.

Mr McINTOSH: Sorry, I did as well. Just before I answer that, when you asked that question I thought I had referred to the owner-driver, I kept saying the guy at the bottom of the supply chain. I do not mean that in any disparaging term. We represent thousands of owner-drivers—I should make that point. I am just saying a lot of them have got a very hard deal, that is all. I do not know the exact answer to that question, to be honest with you. I would suspect that the people, so if it is a Linfox, and they say we want a whole fleet of Scania or something coming in, I suspect that somebody, whoever is buying it from Linfox would do all the research to say what does this do, we want to put this technology in it, does that work, does that work, does that work. And you may well get when they first come in someone come out to a transport yard and say, all right guys, well, you know, the camera is here, and the alarm will go off if you do this, and here is the basic way to

manoeuvre the vehicle, and all the rest. I am sure that probably happens. I just do not think anything past that point would happen unless there was an issue with the fleet or the vehicle that was purchased.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Obviously the biggest capital expenditure for a fleet company or an individual would be the vehicle itself. You can take this question on notice. You mentioned before only 44 per cent of drivers have undertaken lifelong tertiary education. I assume that is 44 per cent of members of your union?

Ms De PLATER: That was from a study done by Macquarie University, so I am not sure. It was not confined to our members, it was across the sample of drivers that they surveyed but that includes employee drivers.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: As you represent the peak body, the Transport Workers Union, could you take the question on notice and find out those statistics of how many drivers, be it small or fleet, actually do receive vehicle education when they purchase a very large vehicle worth a lot of money? Last week we asked an insurance company a question about statistics, and we are finding there is a lack of statistics. There are vehicles involved in small accidents which are not reported to the police. Do you as a union work with, say, the insurance industry to look at the statistics and the data with regards to heavy vehicle incidents? It is hard to imagine a fender bender with a very large truck involved, but if the accident does not involve a fatality it may not be reported. Is that something you could come back to us with data on? The Committee is finding that the constant evidence is there is inconsistent data in relation to accidents involving motor vehicles as well as heavy vehicles. You can take the question on notice. I would be keen to find out how the numbers compare. You mentioned TEACHO. My understanding is TEACHO works independently from any vehicle training that is done by TAFE at the moment, is that correct?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: There is no link between the two?

Mr McINTOSH: No, I do not think so, no

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Could you see a benefit of there being some sort of harmonisation with heavy vehicle training with organisations such as TAFE or other registered training organisations [RTOs] working with TEACHO to have a standardised education system for heavy vehicle drivers?

Mr McINTOSH: Look, I would not see an issue with it. I suppose the issue with TEACHO—I guess a lot of these organisations—is probably funding more than anything. TEACHO at the end of the day is funded by the people that I guess are represented on it, so the TWU and some of the other operators I mentioned earlier. I do not think there would be an issue with us working with other bodies to produce things. I suppose it is just like the old story, you have got to get—TEACHO might say, this is a real important part of the industry, and the TAFE might say no, we do not think so, we want this. And I guess it is a matter of, as you said, harmonising these outcomes. I do not think there is an issue with anyone working together with each other.

I suppose what we keep saying here is that it depends where the funding comes from. We would not really want the Government just to have to foot the bill over all of this, as I imagine would have to happen in a TAFE situation. And the other solution to that is we would not want the driver funding the whole thing. What we would be saying is whatever the solution is, and if it is harmonisation and people working with people, it should be the clients that are paying for this, not government, not the individual truck driver. Maybe there is a role for all of these people to fund something but there should be at the end of the day the responsibility on the major client to actually fund some of this training. Because at the end of the day it is their supply chain that these things are happening on.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I do not dispute the supply chain scenario, but again we are talking about major pieces of capital equipment. You mentioned the TWU sits on the board of TEACHO, plus, I think you said Linfox.

Mr McINTOSH: Toll.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Have they not had discussions with the manufacturers as well, potentially, rather than pushing this back to the customer? As I said, purchasing a truck is a major capital investment. The idea is to go from A to B as safely as possible in a timely manner. Driving outside the safety boundaries to deliver a product effectively risks the non-delivery of that product. If there is an accident the product does not get to where it has to go. Could you expand the funding of TEACHO effectively to the suppliers of the vehicles as well? Has that been examined?

Mr McINTOSH: Well, I could not tell you whether or not it has been examined. But I am wondering whether—and maybe I am missing something—you are suggesting that a lot of these accidents are caused

because people do not know how to work the vehicle, there is a manufacturing issue with the vehicle or something? Because I suppose what I am saying is that, for me, manufacturing, I do not know what the statistics are, and you made that point earlier, but I would highly doubt that that would be the cause of a large percentage of these heavy vehicle fatalities, is anything to do with the manufacturer.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: No, I am not saying it is anything to do with the manufacturer. There is a lack of ongoing training for heavy vehicle drivers. One of the issues of fact that has been identified is that there is a concern that there is a lack of education. Only 44 per cent of heavy vehicle drivers have taken on additional education, less than half the industry. If TEACHO and TAFE, for instance, were to work together would you not want to say to manufacturers it is in their interest to also come on board with this education program? They are providing the hardware, effectively, being the truck itself. As a whole-of-industry approach, instead of saying to the customer—be it Aldi, or whoever it is—you have to pay for this, would not the industry be better to self-educate or self-regulate involving the manufacturers, the TWU and the drivers themselves rather than going back on to the customer all the time?

Mr McINTOSH: Well, look, there may be some role for manufacturers but I suppose where we potentially differ here is that our view is that most of these heavy vehicle fatalities are caused because of client pressures. That is our view on a lot of this stuff. So, we are saying the problem is most of the time the clients push this issue just further and further down the chain, and then the minute the person, the fifth link down the chain, has the accident, they say "It is not our problem because we outsourced it, and that is their issue, it is not our fault". What we are saying is clients have got to take greater responsibility and part of that is cost. Now, I am not saying there is no role for manufacturers, maybe there is, but the major role here has to be for clients, we say.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: But there has been no discussion with manufacturers as part of the ongoing costs-to-coverage ratio.

Mr McINTOSH: I would have to take that on notice. I do not know.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I am curious about TEACHO and who else is involved in that. You mentioned some before but one of the issues that stands out—and we have been focusing on smaller vehicles—is the ongoing education component, be it younger drivers, older drivers or professional drivers. It seems that someone can get their licence and then not have any additional training, if they so choose, for the rest of their driving career. That is a concern, especially if you are driving a vehicle which weighs in excess of 30 tonnes. The lack of ongoing driver education with people not being aware of what safety regulations are in place and not doing any testing or follow up, just getting on with the job and filing the papers away is a concern. I am curious to find out how that can be expanded.

Mr McINTOSH: Sure, I understand that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Following on from Mr Crouch's line of questioning, am I right in saying that the majority of owner-drivers purchase their vehicles second-hand?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes, and some would potentially lease it as well.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Am I right in also saying the average age of the fleet in the owner-driver proportion of the market is roughly 10 years plus?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes, I suppose as Mr Crouch pointed out, it is probably the largest capital cost, so people will hold on to it as long as they possibly can while it is still viable to do so, so yes.

The CHAIR: Ms Petinos asked a question earlier about public education campaigns and as a regular driver in regional areas on the major highways I am interested in what input you might have into road safety advertisements, whether they be billboards, radio, commercial television or what other form that might take. I would be interested in what forms you think they should take, concentrating on the interaction between the general population driving standard motor vehicles and the trucking industry?

Mr McINTOSH: That is a good question. I have not turned my mind to exactly what should or should not be on it. The main point is that, as far as I am aware, the Transport Workers Union [TWU] of New South Wales has had no real input into or consultation about these types of advertisements.

The CHAIR: Would you like to? Have you tried?

Mr McINTOSH: I do not even know if I could find out whether we have ever tried. We would certainly welcome the opportunity if it were available.

The CHAIR: You would have to agree that many accidents are as a result of interaction between heavy vehicles and light vehicles—

Mr McINTOSH: Sure.

The CHAIR: —and the inattention of many drivers of light vehicles to the needs of the heavy vehicle industry. That certainly needs to be examined. I know it has been, but it is something we must concentrate on because it is often the cause of accidents. I am interested in your comments on the value of computer-based training. Do you have a view about the use of simulators for both driver training and competency assessment of licensed drivers? I am not thinking only about the heavy vehicle industry; I am thinking about that interaction I referred to a moment ago.

Mr McINTOSH: Putting on the heavy vehicle hat, the issue I have found with computer training is that there is sometimes a tendency to have a tick-a-box exercise with some of this stuff. It depends on the type of training you are talking about. I can think of some of our major yards where they roll out a new policy, whether it be a speeding policy or a drug and alcohol policy. They say to people, "We have three computers. You go at this time and you go 10 minutes later." The next person will use it and so on. As I said, the average age of these men is 50-plus and they are not particularly computer literate. They do not really know what they are doing. Many in the industry do not even have good reading and writing skills. You would not say that it is the most literate industry. That is fine because it does not have to be.

However, when you put people in front of a computer who are not used to using them and who have issues with reading and writing, there is a tendency to tick a box, put yes and no, and to get it done. It is pointless because no-one knows what has been said or anything else. There may be different forms of computer training that are better than that; I am not sure. It may be of more benefit to younger light vehicle drivers. I do not know about simulators because I have not had much experience with them. We would have to look at it; there may well be a role for them, but I am not sure.

The CHAIR: I am conscious of creating awareness among light vehicle drivers of the braking distance required by heavy vehicles.

Mr McINTOSH: Yes.

The CHAIR: Weaving in and out of traffic can obviously lead to disaster. That is an area in which I see simulation playing a role for the standard vehicle driver.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: One of the questions we have been asking witnesses relates to ongoing questions for drivers. For instance, if you are renewing your licence, just prior to that or when you do so, you could be asked a number of questions. It would not be a pass or fail scenario; it would be about ascertaining whether you are up to date with the road rules. Would the TWU support a measure like that being implemented for renewal of licences?

Mr McINTOSH: I have not heard that suggestion before. We would certainly look at it, but I would not want to say we would support it now. As you said, as long as it makes sense and it is not a pass or fail thing, we would not have an issue.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. Members may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, and your replies would form part of your evidence and be published. Would you be happy to answer any additional questions?

Mr McINTOSH: Yes.

The CHAIR: Again, thank you for appearing before the Committee.

(The witnesses withdrew)

PAUL VERSTEEGE, Policy Coordinator, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. Do you have any questions about the information you have been sent and the Committee's procedures?

Mr VERSTEEGE: No.

The CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I appreciate that this inquiry into driver education and training and road safety is wider than the issue we addressed in our submission; that is, old driver testing. New South Wales is the only jurisdiction in Australia that still road tests older drivers. Illinois in the United States is the only other jurisdiction in the world that does similar testing. The world has accepted the evidence, but New South Wales has not.

In New South Wales we have two effective systems of getting incompetent drivers off the road: first, medical practitioners are obliged to notify the licensing authority if they diagnose certain medical conditions incompatible with driving; and, secondly, a demerit points system ensures that those unable to drive within the rules are removed from our roads. To add to this a third system of old driver testing surely is over-design.

A further absurdity is added by the older driver licensing arrangements themselves. At 75 years of age, drivers must undergo an annual medical test specifically designed to assess their ability to drive. At 85 years of age, when any medical conditions compromising driving ability would typically be a lot more apparent than at age 75, a biannual road test is added. Clearly, New South Wales older driver testing requirements need to be scrapped.

The CHAIR: Should there be incentives to encourage aged drivers to undertake revision courses? For example, there could be some sort of discount or a rebate on their licence or course fees to motivate older drivers to improve their skills and to sharpen their awareness.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Are you referring to the licence fee?

The CHAIR: I am referring to undertaking a general driving revision course given that there is no compulsion to take a refresher course from the time one achieves one's unrestricted licence. Of course, that is the purpose of this inquiry.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Of course, that encouragement is good. However, you would still need to justify why you would start at a certain age.

The CHAIR: I am not talking about age. The inquiry is not focusing on age. Your submission did, but this inquiry is not.

Mr VERSTEEGE: In that case, I do not know the answer to the question.

The CHAIR: Unfortunately, that was one of the omissions in your submission; you chose not to answer those particular questions, which the Committee is obviously very interested in pursuing. I do not want to take you along this path unnecessarily, but I would like a general comment, and not particularly about older drivers. Is there evidence to support some form of periodic intervention at, for example, licence renewal requiring drivers to be assessed on their driving knowledge, their capacity, and their attitude without necessarily resulting in a pass or a fail?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not know of any evidence that would suggest that. I would suggest that, as I just mentioned, we have two very effective systems to make sure that people have the basic physical and psychological ability to drive and also a punitive system to encourage them to drive safely. Whether encouragement to undertake further driving competency training would be beneficial, it would certainly not be detrimental.

The CHAIR: Your submission points out that the cost of administering the older driver licensing system will be great considering that the aged population is accelerating significantly. Is this a reason for abolishing the aged assessment or could it not also be seen as a necessary investment in promoting safer roads and reducing trauma in the future?

Mr VERSTEEGE: It could be seen as such. But of course the evidence demonstrates that older drivers are not more unsafe than younger drivers. For that reason that is not necessary.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Mr Versteege, I think you were present when I asked the Transport Workers Union about the number of questions which are asked of a person at licence renewal. They may relate to changes in the road traffic laws. Do you see that as a beneficial system? Should it be that a number of questions are asked of anybody applying to pay for their licence renewal?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes, that would be good.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: That being said, bearing in mind that most licences are for five years or 10 years, the gap between those questions being asked can be quite significant. The evidence you gave earlier was that you believe the test for 75 year olds should be abolished. Do you realise that at the moment, from the day a person graduates with their P plates to the day they turn 75, there is literally no examination or further assessment of drivers in New South Wales?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes, of course I realise that.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Do you think that that lack of assessment may contribute to the road toll that we are currently seeing? And we have seen a spike in the last 12 months.

Mr VERSTEEGE: I am no road safety expert. I am giving evidence here from the perspective of age discrimination, so I cannot really answer your question. I just want to point out that the road testing of older people starts at 85, not at 75. There is a medical test at 75.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Sorry—they effectively have to have a medical test. I suppose the other point when we are talking about age discrimination is that young drivers these days have to undergo 120 hours of driving assessment, effectively, before they can obtain their licence. I put it to you that nobody in this room has had to do 120 hours of driving assessment—not even Mr Mookhey is of the age where he had to do 120 hours. There are older drivers—including myself, at 45—who have not had to undergo the same rigorous testing that younger drivers have to go through these days. Do you not think that it could be beneficial for older drivers, including us, to have to undertake a similar sort of evaluation as the younger drivers do right now? They could say that they are being discriminated against because they are doing 120 hours which we never had to do.

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not think that the licensing system should be used to even up differences between how generations were treated. I do not think that is what it is for.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I would put it to you that it is actually more about the education of the driver rather than about how they are being treated.

Mr VERSTEEGE: I think the safety records speak for themselves. Older drivers are not more unsafe than younger drivers. You might even say that the very young drivers that undergo 120 hours of training are a lot less safe than drivers your age, a bit younger and a bit older. I do not really see the need for extra training. But having said that, I am not a road safety expert. I have simply taken cognisance of the evidence as it relates to older drivers and whether they should be put through testing.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I find it a little confusing that we have talked about whole-of-life education and driver attitude during this hearing. Driver attitude is one of the key factors in accidents. Representing your body, are you basically saying that you are happy for them to continue unassessed for, effectively, almost 60 years and that the status quo is how it should be?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I guess what we are saying is that the over 75s and the over 85s should not be treated any differently from the rest of the population. That is what we are saying. We are not referring to the efficiency or the justification of letting people drive for 60 years without being called in for further training. If that is required, if the evidence suggests that, then we accept that that should apply to the over 75s and over 85s as well.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I am also a little confused. I return to your opening statement, if that is okay. Maybe you can help me understand what you were saying. If memory serves, you made a remark to the effect of, "New South Wales is one of two jurisdictions that has not received the evidence from the rest of the world," or that we are not understanding the evidence—something to that effect. Is that correct?

Mr VERSTEEGE: No. We certainly have received the evidence. The licensing authority has been well aware of the evidence but it has always opted to continue with older driver testing in one form or another.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Okay. But you used the word "evidence", did you not?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: And then you went on and made a statement about demerit points and medical assessments. Am I to say that you seem to think that an absence of a loss of demerit points means that you are a good driver?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Well, it means, one, that you have not been caught and, two, that you possibly are not such a bad driver—yes.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I tend to err on the side of the caution of the first statement you made, which is that you have not been caught. Your own submission says that older drivers are self-regulating—that is, they gradually reduce their driving distance and the times when they are on the road. By inference, it also probably means that you are less likely to be caught displaying bad driver behaviour—do you agree with that statement?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes. Statistically you are right.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: For example, one person may do 100 hours of driving a week and another may do one or two hours a week. My own grandmother literally goes from her house to the shops and back—that is it; she will not go any further than that. I think you need to broaden the circumstances that you are considering that demerit points might actually reflect the nature of your driving record.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes, okay. We are not talking about offences like speeding or other offences. We are talking about running into other cars.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: There are a lot more offences than speeding and running into cars.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Sure, but we cannot mention them all here. But we can mention—

Ms ELENI PETINOS: But the inquiry is into driver safety and I would just like it on the record that driver safety does extend beyond crashing into another vehicle or speeding. You can actually be an unsafe driver even if you do not exhibit one of those two patterns you have outlined.

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not know. I do not really accept that if you have no accidents and nothing happens to anybody that you are an unsafe driver. You might be an unconventional driver or you might be an unusual driver, but you are not an unsafe driver if nothing happens.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Okay. So you do not think, for argument's sake, that potentially if you go and scrape your car against a pole, you have not had an accident with another vehicle so it is not going to get reported, is that behaviour that you consider to be safe?

Mr VERSTEEGE: It depends on the circumstances, but if it happens repeatedly, it is not safe.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Is that something that might be experienced amongst older drivers?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Sure. My point was not that the demerit points system picks up everything. We have two systems. If you go to the doctor—older people typically go to the doctor more often than younger people—any medical conditions that make people unsafe drivers would be picked up by a doctor.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Let us have a look at some of the medical points that you have just raised. Your submission comments that health or medical assessments are more effective than age-based assessments. However, diseases such as Alzheimer's syndrome appear to be linked to age factors, and symptoms may not be readily detected unless a driver is required to be assessed at a particular stage of life. Last week I said that my grandmother has macular degeneration, as well. I would say that that is also a disease that is more likely to be experienced by the older population than it is by someone who is likely to be a learner driver. Can the need for age-based intervention be justified accordingly, based on the medical data which I have just provided you?

Mr VERSTEEGE: We are not rigorously opposed to medical assessment. As an example, Finland, which is very much part of the developed world, starts medical testing at the age of 45. This is for driving proficiency. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is a bad thing to use the road testing of over-85-year-olds, after they have been tested annually by a medical practitioner. That is really a form of harassment. You could only explain it in medical terms that the licensing authority is attempting to carry out a test of cognitive ability by road testing people. I do not think that that is appropriate.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you, Mr Versteegen, for your submission. I found it very informative—in particular with respect to some of the points you raised about the percentage of serious injuries compared to the population growth, for instance. It is important for us to keep that in mind. From those statistics—percentage of serious injuries; the second table—you would agree that there has been a slight increase from 0.16 per cent in 2005 to 0.17 per cent in 2015.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Which page are we on?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Page 6 of your submission. There was a slight increase of 0.16 per cent to 0.17 per cent when you consider the New South Wales population and the serious injuries data.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is interesting because, if you look at the raw figures it looks as if there has been a significant increase but when compared to the increase in the aged population you see that it is relatively stable.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes, that is the point we have made. I would like to expand a little bit on this. The injuries and death statistics were from the NSW licensing authority but we had to get the population figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. I would suggest that the licensing authority, in its reporting, should take into account population increases and possibly refine the data by saying how many people in each age group drive.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is a good point, as well. You do not have that data in terms of how many people are drivers within that age group?

Mr VERSTEEGE: No.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You only have the population number to go on.

Mr VERSTEEGE: That is right. Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is something that would be worthwhile investigating to have a more accurate picture in terms of what is happening with serious injuries or road deaths for any cohort.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes. Absolutely.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think you raised in your submission that New South Wales and Illinois were the only jurisdictions that required road testing of those over 85.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Was that just over 85, or was that for any senior age group?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I have forgotten what the exact age is in Illinois, but it is advanced old age.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: As Ms Petinos was picking up, in terms of medical assessment, I think you raised in your submission some concerns about the fact that medical assessment was applied at 75 but not at 85—rather that there was a road test at 85?

Mr VERSTEEGE: There is both. You continue to be medically tested but every two years you also have to front up for a road test. You know our position—to find out what?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I understand your concerns in the submission about ageism being applied here. Quite a few people have come forward to the Committee and outlined that they believe that there should be some form of testing, perhaps every five years, when you renew your licence. Would your organisation have concerns about that being applied if it was applied across the whole population, regardless of age?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not know. If the evidence supported that, sure, we would support that as well. I doubt that the evidence would. I do not know of any country that goes through a whole re-testing of its driver population every five years or every so many years. I do not know how effective that would be. As a general rule, exams do not ensure that people behave the way they are supposed to just because they have passed an exam. I think it is much more important to do continuous education of drivers so that they are aware of the road rules and the changes in the road rules and what is the right behaviour on the road.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is a very good point in terms of continuous education of changes in road rules and behaviour. Do you think that that is done effectively now, or do you think more needs to be done on that front?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not really have an opinion on that. If I go by myself, I am still confused about the changes to the left and right of way. So, it has failed in my respect.

Mr NICK LALICH: I agree with your submission that older people self-assess, and put themselves in retirement villages or nursing homes. I have noticed that with quite a few people that I know. I have asked, "What did you do that for?" They say, "I want company," or "I feel as if I cannot look after myself the way I should." So they have self assessed. Ms Petinos's grandmother has assessed herself as she says, "I'm only driving from home to the shopping centre." I am just wondering if it is mandatory, or whether it should be

mandatory for doctors to report. You are saying that at 85 there should not be testing on a regular basis but to leave that. With respect to domestic violence, teachers, doctors and police, if they see children with marks on them it is mandatory that they report that to the relevant authorities. Can doctors do that also when they see a person and think, "This person should not be driving"—a family doctor would know whether the person is driving or not—and send a letter to RMS indicating that the person should come in and have a driving test? Do you think that that would be better than the mandatory testing of people 85 and onwards?

Mr VERSTEEGE: It would certainly be better than just testing everybody. When a GP does the medical assessment of a person who is 75 or older they are looking to see whether the person has any medical conditions that would disqualify them from driving. So they would have to couch the letter to the RMS in those terms. They could not just say, "Look, I think that this guy shouldn't drive." That is not sufficient.

A lot of the road testing—perhaps exclusively—of people over 85 is motivated by the view that people over 85 have dementia, or are very likely to have dementia. Statistically that is true, but I do not think it is an appropriate use of a road test to diagnose somebody with dementia—because they weave all over the road or something. I think that that needs to be done medically. There are tests to give a good indication that somebody might have dementia and might need to be referred on to a gerontologist who can make the definitive diagnosis of the disease. I think that is the way to go. The licensing authority seems to think that there are not enough gerontologists around to do those diagnoses. That is one of the justifications for keeping the road tests.

Mr NICK LALICH: The dementia issue does not apply just to people who are 85 or 75. Dementia can set in at a very young age. Some people in their forties can get it—not as young as Mr Crouch.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you, Mr Lalich.

Mr VERSTEEGE: They can, unfortunately.

Mr NICK LALICH: Dementia can set in at any age. I had a mate who rang up another mate and said, "Can you come and pick me up; I don't know where I am." He gave the phone to some passer-by and they told him where he was. He was up on the footpath. He did not have a clue. He was only a couple of miles from home.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Certainly dementia can happen at any age, but typically it is an old person's disease. It is a degenerative disease and it goes up dramatically after the age of 85.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Following on from that, you are not suggesting that doctors use road tests as a prime means of detecting dementia, are you?

Mr VERSTEEGE: No.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am just being clear about that.

Mr VERSTEEGE: I am not suggesting that; I am not saying that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am making that abundantly clear. I just want to talk about the incidence of this requirement and just how many people it affects. What are the percentage of licence holders that are over 85?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not know.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: All right. And how many people over 85 fail the tests?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not know that either. I do not have those statistics.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: So do you know whether these statistics are collected, or—

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not know whether they—I mean, certainly the licensing authority would keep a record of it. I am not sure—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Last time I checked, which was a couple of years ago, the number of people over 85 with licences was roughly 3 or 4 per cent of the total licence holder pool. I am sure we will be corrected on that. And then in addition to that, the number of people who were failing this test was pretty minute because by that point in time they usually give up their licences which granted is your point as well. If the evidence is suggesting that A, it affects a small proportion in the life of the pool, B, that pool is heavily responsible with a whole bunch of risk factors that other people do not face, and then in addition to that, that test is effective in terms of keeping drivers off the road which are no longer performing functions adequately enough, then I just cannot see why it is such a magnitude of a problem as you suggest and therefore ought to require us to abandon the regime altogether.

Mr VERSTEEGE: First of all, there are a lot of ifs in what you just said. This is really a matter of principle to us. Why do you call somebody in who is 85 to do a road test when you do not do that to other people? Your colleague just mentioned that dementia happens at earlier ages as well. I mentioned Finland, which starts medically testing every driver at age 45.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Is your objection to the testing or is it to the fact that it applies to this cohort?

Mr VERSTEEGE: It is one and the same thing. They are road testing 85-year-olds.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Would you object if we were to make this a requirement of everybody?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I think you would—are you suggesting that the whole driver population would be tested every two years?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Yes. Is that the objection that you have got? If this were to apply to everybody, you would be fine with it, but—

Mr VERSTEEGE: I do not think that is a very realistic—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The thing is is that this is not based on age. It is based on risk and it is based on evidence, as Mr Crouch said earlier, that there is a whole bunch of evidence that suggests people in the earlier part, ages 18 to 25 and particularly males 18 to 25 have special risk factors that require a specific, strategic response to them. The same applies to the cohort for which you are speaking. All of which is my way of saying that I am not sure I share your characterisation of this being an age discrimination factor. It seems like it is more of a risk-based response.

Mr VERSTEEGE: I think the statistics that are in my submission show that there is not all that much difference between the risks that are caused by younger drivers, in the middle drivers and older drivers. I think that the risk relates to injury and to death. A person who is involved, a person over 80, 85, the older you get, if you are involved in a road accident you are far more likely to sustain a very serious injury or die than when you are young. And I think that is what the risk factors relate to. There really is academic consensus that having older drivers on the road does not make the road unsafe. It does not make it more safe, it does not make it less safe. There is simply no reason for it from a road safety perspective.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Mookhey. I know Ms Petinos has a follow-up question.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I just wanted to ask in relation to the question Mr Lalich put to you earlier about potentially looking at medical practitioners notifying the RTA of any medical conditions experienced by the driver in question. Do you not concede that that approach would have significant problems for people in rural and regional communities which are small and proximate to one another?

Mr VERSTEEGE: What sort of problems are you referring to?

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Are you familiar with the nature of rural communities and the way they interrelate and the fact that, you know, if you have got 30 people in a community you are likely to be very familiar with the nature of your neighbours and almost potentially raise a situation where the driver could feel unduly prejudiced or potentially the medical practitioner may feel like they cannot give that evaluation because they are so close to the family and the entire business for their practice relies on that intake in the community, and so they would be unwilling to almost make that assessment?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Well, what you are doing is—

Ms ELENI PETINOS: And before you start, that is evidence that was raised with this Committee last Monday.

Mr VERSTEEGE: Okay. All right. Well, if that is a problem, why is road testing an answer to that? I would suggest that a GP in any community, whether it is rural or urban, has a professional responsibility to deliver an accurate diagnosis. And if somebody comes in for a medical test, a road safety medical test, a driver medical test which is a separate item under Medicare, then that practitioner needs to do that professionally and cannot be influenced by considerations that somebody in the pub might disagree with him. If that is the case, I would suggest that the primary response would be to review the functioning of that medical practitioner. I would not say that this is a justification to keep the road test for over 85-year-olds, for example.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: The road test is there irrespective of any suggestions put forward by Committee members as potential alternatives. The idea that you are suggesting that this is a way of prejudicing the people that you speak for and suggesting that we are forcing you to go through a process is ludicrous when

the process is already in place. I was merely putting to you that do you not concede there are limitations in certain communities? And based on your answer, you do not believe that is an issue. But to link it back to a process that is already in practice in this State just seems bizarre.

Mr VERSTEEGE: That is what it seemed to me, because it seemed to me that you were doing that.

The CHAIR: That is probably incorrect in the sense that this Committee is looking into it. That is a role of government and I think there is some confusion there in the submission. But nevertheless, your point is made. Mr Crouch has a question.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Does the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association undertake any support of an education program for older drivers, as an association? What I am asking is does your association look at funding ongoing education programs in any way for older drivers?

Mr VERSTEEGE: We are not opposed to them, no.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: No. Does the Association actually contribute or undertake any at the moment?

Mr VERSTEEGE: No.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Just to follow through with education, as you are well aware the Government through Transport for NSW targets various sectors in the community with education campaigns to address particular issues as they are identified. Transport for NSW has developed that comprehensive communication education guide for older road users known as On the Road 65 Plus, and that is published in a range of languages. Has your organisation evaluated that guide? Do you have any views as to how it might be improved, promoted or more widely distributed?

Mr VERSTEEGE: I think it should certainly be more widely distributed, because I have no knowledge of that publication.

The CHAIR: That takes me to my next question about what forms of communication you believe would be more valuable for road safety in general. If you wish to specify just a particular target area, such as older drivers, would you have any views on how communication should take place to address communication problems? As you are aware, there is a particular campaign addressing the least understood road rules. Would you see similar campaigns being rolled out for specific sectors?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Yes, if there is evidence to suggest that particular groups need that, certainly.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. Regrettably, our time has come to an end. We may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, and your reply would then form part of your evidence and be published. Would you be happy to answer any such additional questions?

Mr VERSTEEGE: Absolutely.

(The witness withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

DIANA MARY PALMER, Executive Officer, Information on Disability, Education and Awareness Services, sworn and examined

ANITA GAE VOLKERT, National Manager: Professional Standards, Occupational Therapy Australia, sworn and examined

LYNDALL COOK, Driver Trained Occupational Therapist and Industry Adviser, Occupational Therapy Australia, sworn and examined:

The CHAIR: Thank you for joining us at the second of the public hearings for this inquiry into driver education, training and road safety. Do you have any questions about the information you sent and processes today?

Ms VOLKERT: No.

The CHAIR: Would like to make brief opening statements?

Ms PALMER: Information on Disability, Education and Awareness Services [IDEAS] is an information provider for people with disability. We support all disabilities with all types of information that people are looking for to assist people with disability to make informed decisions. People with disability need access to good information to allow them to make informed decisions. People with disability are growing in numbers and accessing driver activities or wanting to drive, as independence in private transport allows them to gain more participation in the community and also leads to greater employment.

Ms VOLKERT: Ms Cook and I will be sharing our opening statement. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. As you know, my name is Anita Volkert. I am an occupational therapist and am National Manager for Professional Standards and Representation at Occupational Therapy Australia. I am joined by Lyndall Cook, our Occupational Therapy Driving Assessor, and industry advisor for Occupational Therapy Australia. Ms Cook and I co-chair the National Driving Taskforce for Occupational Therapy Australia.

Occupational Therapy Australia is the professional association and peak representative body for occupational therapists in Australia. As of December 2016 there were more than 5,000 nationally registered occupational therapists working across the government, non-government, private and community sectors in New South Wales. Occupational therapists are allied health professionals who take a whole-person approach to enable and facilitate clients to participate in the meaningful and productive activities of everyday life, such as driving.

Occupational therapists work in a wide range of settings, including hospitals, both public and private, community-based services, private clinics and practices and schools. As the focus of the profession is on participation in occupation, we work with a wide range of people, including those with physical, cognitive, perceptual or sensory disabilities, congenital disabilities, psychiatric disorders, drug use and factors associated with ageing. We have a broad and in-depth knowledge base of both the motor and cognitive processing skills required to safely participate in specific activities or occupations, and have special expertise at assessing the environmental barriers and needs to enable participation.

Occupational therapists play a significant role in whole-of-life driver education, training and road safety, and driving a vehicle is considered to be an instrumental activity of daily living that enables community mobility, facilitates independence, and forms a key part of adult identity.

Ms COOK: Driver assessor occupational therapists are occupational therapists with advanced practice skills, who are experienced to assess the driving competence of a person with a medical condition, regardless of age; and design individualised driver rehabilitation and retraining programs. Driver assessor occupational therapists complete a comprehensive assessment of clients to ascertain their functional status, ability to drive safely and their ability to participate in driver rehabilitation and re-training. This includes both an off- and on-road assessment. The on-road assessment is conducted in collaboration with an accredited professional driving instructor. Driver assessor occupational therapists are able to assess and train both novice drivers with disabilities and drivers with age-related health declines or acquired impairment.

Occupational therapists are also ideally suited to prepare older drivers to eventually retire from driving with dignity. Research completed by Mallon, Wood and colleagues in Australia has been able to demonstrate that an occupational therapy on-road driving assessment is predictive of subsequent crash risk in older drivers living in the community as well as suitability for driver retraining. However, it can be difficult, due to a range of factors such as availability of an occupational therapy driving assessor in a client's local area, and the cost of the

assessment, which does not usually qualify for a Medicare rebate, for a client to access driving assessment and rehabilitation or retraining at present.

Ms VOLKERT: To conclude, driver trained occupational therapists provide a significant role in assessing the driving competence of a person with a health condition, disability or with age-related functional decline. Occupational therapists can design individualised, tailored retraining programs to remediate functional deficits to ensure broader community safety. Occupational Therapy Australia believes the experience and knowledge of occupational therapists in assessing and retraining functional driving abilities, along with health promotion skills, are essential components of whole-of-life driver education and training for road safety. We thank you again for the opportunity to be here today and look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you for your opening statements. I note that witnesses from Occupational Therapy Australia will also appear with the subsequent witness group. Questions in this session will focus on disabilities and, in the next session, on the aged sector. I assume that the opening statement you have made will apply to both sessions.

Ms VOLKERT: Yes.

The CHAIR: This question is to you all but I particularly note and welcome Ms Diana Palmer from Information on Disability and Awareness Services [IDEAS] and congratulate her on a most successful expo in Albury a couple of weeks ago. I was very interested to see the vehicle that had been adapted and the forms of vehicles, including the taxi and the bus. In your submission, you warned that the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] will prompt more people with a physical disability to access vehicle modification equipment or modified vehicles. To what extent will this influence the demand for learner training?

Ms PALMER: It will certainly raise the demand for learner training. I am sure my colleagues from Occupational Therapy Australia would know more of the statistics to do with that. For us as an information service, we certainly receive inquiries from parents and family members who are looking at sending their youth on that path as they are nearing the age of learning to drive so that we are connecting them with organisations, driver assessors and driving instructors that they can go to to commence that journey. We know from the NDIS that the demand for learning to drive and accessing modified vehicles is growing because people with disabilities will need access to transport to engage in employment.

The CHAIR: Does Transport for NSW need to review its service delivery in driver education in light of the NDIS? If so, what are the priorities?

Ms PALMER: Yes, I believe it does need to be looking at that, but from our perspective it is around people being able to access information to allow them to know where they can go to be able to access the services and supports.

The CHAIR: It is about communication.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You made a point about the increasing participation of disabled drivers on the road, which is a good thing. What are the structural and other barriers that are preventing participation from increasing further?

Ms PALMER: The cost of modifications of vehicles, access to modified vehicles—or access to the vehicle but then the cost of modifications—and also access to driver training and learning. Then it is also access to other than private transport—especially if we talk about rural and regional Australia, we talk about access to accessible public transport. That is very limited in a lot of areas, so there is a greater demand for access to employment and training if people have access to private transport.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: What are the reasons for the access barrier you mentioned to driver training?

Ms PALMER: Lack of suppliers to provide that service.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: So it is not an affordability issue?

Ms PALMER: It can also be an affordability issue.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How much does it cost?

Ms PALMER: I do not have those figures, I am sorry.

Mr NICK LALICH: It depends what modifications are necessary.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: No, I am talking about the driver training aspect.

Ms PALMER: Sorry, I do not have those figures at hand.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Is driver training for disabled people a specialist form of driver education?

Ms PALMER: Yes, and I am sure my colleagues could answer that better.

Ms COOK: Yes, it is.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How does it differ?

Ms COOK: There is not additional formal training for a driving instructor to train someone with a disability. We recommend that the driving instructors used by occupational therapists undertake some further training, which is generally a two-day course where they learn about different disabilities and different types of vehicle modifications so they can then help drivers to use these modifications. Driving lessons from a disability driving instructor can range from \$90 an hour upwards.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Is that currently funded from the pocket of a disabled driver?

Ms COOK: At this time, yes. NDIS is looking, and we are in the process of getting assistance through people's NDIS plans to provide specialised driver training.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You mentioned there is great variance in the accessibility of driver training for people with disabilities according to geographic place. Is there a point of hyperconcentration in the State where that access is really bad?

Ms PALMER: No, I am sorry, I cannot answer that straight off. I know we have a database of information on where assessors and trainers are located but I have not actually done the mapping exercise on that at this point of time.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Does that mean a person who is trying to access training in a rural or regional area has to wait longer?

Ms PALMER: Yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How long do they wait for, on average?

Ms PALMER: I am sorry, that is difficult for me to answer.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Does anybody keep statistics on any of this?

Ms COOK: Not statistics on time frames, no. But definitely the access to modified vehicles and driver trainers in rural areas is reduced to the point where there are people within rural areas that cannot access an occupational therapy driving assessment and use vehicle modifications to trial them. They have to come to Sydney.

Ms PALMER: That is right.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Is there any capacity for any online training to deal with the tyranny of distance here, or is it effective? Is it something you would not recommend because of the nature of the people you are teaching?

Ms COOK: Definitely not online training for use of vehicle modifications. That has to be done in the car.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Because that is customised and differs with each person.

Ms COOK: That is correct.

Mr NICK LALICH: Are you trying to get assistance from the National Disability Insurance Scheme for driver training?

Ms COOK: Yes.

Mr NICK LALICH: Is the NDIS allowed to use moneys to modify the vehicles?

Ms COOK: Yes. At the moment the NDIS do provide specialised driver training as long as it is reasonable and necessary for the client, and also vehicle modifications as long as they are reasonable and necessary.

Mr NICK LALICH: Do you think people with disabilities should be tested on simulators first to assess their suitability for driving before they undergo any driver training? If they cannot work a stimulator they

have very little chance of being able to operate a vehicle. To avoid the cost do you think attempting the simulator first would be a good idea?

Ms COOK: Simulators are quite expensive to purchase and to use. We believe that going on road in the actual driving environment itself is the best assessment of someone's capacity to drive. Simulators are used more overseas in pre-driving assessments. So yes, giving people the opportunity to try out different modifications but some people require specialised modifications that you cannot fit to a simulator.

Mr NICK LALICH: Could simulators be used through computers? Kids use virtual reality games and it is as though they are on the road or flying through space. If the program is used via a computer with a steering wheel the special simulator would not be needed. I am suggesting some other ways instead of using a big simulator.

Ms COOK: Yes. I do not believe that a simulator provides all of the input that you need to assess a person's ability.

Mr NICK LALICH: I understand that.

Ms COOK: But it could definitely be used in training, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What consultation have you had with the New South Wales Government about the changes to driver training standards and any other relevant matters affecting drivers with a disability?

Ms VOLKERT: Could you just repeat that question, sorry?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What consultation have you had with the New South Wales Government about changes to driver training standards and any other relevant matters affecting drivers with a disability?

Ms VOLKERT: We have not to my knowledge had any direct conversations with the New South Wales Government other than our submission to this inquiry and submissions to previous inquiries. So, we have not really had conversations with the Government around that. We are really delighted to be here to give our opinion and advice, such as it is, but we have not had conversations, to my knowledge.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Anything from IDEAS?

Ms PALMER: No, we have not.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In your submission you point out some of the difficulties for regional residents who are car dependent. I am interested in what your perspective is on that front for regional people with disabilities?

Ms VOLKERT: I think my colleague, Ms Palmer, has already mentioned it, but it is extremely difficult for people who live in regional and rural areas who have disabilities that may prevent them from easily accessing whatever public transport might be in their area, and certainly public transport is not well spread through our regional areas in New South Wales. That is the first challenge anyway. If that transport is available it may not be physically accessible to many rural or regional people who are living with disability. The ability to be able to access, as we said, any form of transport that is modified is reduced, taxi transport is reduced and the availability of modified taxis is reduced. It is a significant challenge for our community who live in regional and rural locations.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I imagine with driver trainers as well, because of the critical mass figures and the like, it would be hard to find somebody who specialised in driver training for disabilities as well.

Ms VOLKERT: Absolutely. The accessibility of a driver trainer, full stop, may be reduced, let alone one that has any expertise in the area of disability, and access to allied health services, such as occupational therapists, is also reduced in our rural and regional areas.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Have you got any figures for how many driver trainers across the State have an understanding of assisting those with disabilities?

Ms COOK: In terms of driving instructors themselves?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Yes.

Ms COOK: I do not have those figures, no.

Ms PALMER: I am sorry, I do not have the figures. I could actually provide those with you on follow up.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: If you could provide the figures on notice, that would be good.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I was particularly interested in the discussion you were just having with the Deputy Chair about accessibility issues in rural and regional New South Wales. Last week in the context of the Indigenous population it was raised with us that people were potentially put in scenarios where they were forced to drive unlicensed due to an absence of existing infrastructure. Is that an issue with any of your clients or with the cohort that you represent?

Ms PALMER: I would certainly say yes, we have certainly dealt with and are aware of that situation, or that sort of situation occurring for people living in more remote areas and less remote, more rural areas where there just is no access to any form of public transport and then there is no access to any accessible transport at all for them. It is not surprising that people have to turn to that at times.

Ms VOLKERT: And I probably support that. I have heard of that happening. That has not been the case of any clients I have met, but I have certainly heard of that happening in our rural and regional areas and with the Indigenous population in rural and regional areas.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Ms Cook, do you have anything to add to that?

Ms COOK: No.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Dare I ask if you have any suggestions to help us combat that problem? Last week we were talking about the lack of instructors or even anything in the education space, aside from the physical limitations. Is there anything that you would like to raise with the Committee or bring to our attention in that space?

Ms VOLKERT: In terms of encouraging more instructors in rural and regional areas, do you mean?

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Combating the accessibility issue.

Ms PALMER: It is a complex issue.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I said "dare I ask".

Mr ADAM CROUCH: You have got plenty of time.

Ms VOLKERT: The availability of accessible public transport in our rural and regional areas would be a key factor I would have thought in starting to decrease the isolation of the rural and regional population with disabilities. That is not necessarily a cheap option for any government to consider but it is certainly one that would go some way to reducing isolation and increasing participation in rural and regional areas.

Ms PALMER: There is also an issue around community transport services in regional and rural New South Wales as well. They do provide great services but you also have some accessible transport infrastructure that is tied up there within a community transport service and depending how available that is in the community, there can be restrictions for people with disabilities accessing that as well currently because of the changes in the funding schemes. So that is another area. But then, yes, accessible public transport and accessible taxis, there are many communities that have no accessible taxi, so someone with a disability who has no access to private transport is unable to go out outside hours that a community transport service might be operating, and that is it. They cannot go out for lunch with the family on the weekend at all because they have got no access to any accessible transport.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Ms Cook made comments about older drivers and training. I believe you were here for the last session when we focused on that particular cohort. Do you have any views about the older driver testing system in this State? That question is open to any of you.

Ms VOLKERT: We do feel at Occupational Therapy Australia that the testing of older drivers is appropriate and a good strategy to use. We make no claims that that should apply only to older drivers; it could well apply to the younger cohort that has high accident rates. Some of the evidence I have read—North American, not Australian—shows that people over 70 years of age have a higher crash risk, and that goes up again over 80. It is appropriate that that group is being driver tested.

Ms COOK: With regard to a medical condition, at the moment it is not appropriate to have an occupational therapy driving assessment. The driving test that is completed at 85 is nowhere near as comprehensive as an occupational therapy driving assessment. I definitely feel that the current practice is appropriate.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: You mentioned the occupational therapy driving assessment. What is it about your particular assessment and training process that you feel is more beneficial or has been proven to work for your clients?

Ms COOK: Our assessment includes an off-road component, which is more clinical based. We look at someone's physical, cognitive and vision ability; that is, we look at them as a whole and consider any functional deficits that they present. We then take them on the road and have them drive in areas they are familiar with in their home environment. We use different components during the on-road test. They have to follow instructions from the driving instructor, but they also have to self navigate, which is predictive of their future risks with driving. The assessment allows us to provide feedback about any bad habits they may have so that they can work on them and demonstrate that any deficits they are demonstrating on the road are related to their medical condition rather than their habits as a driver.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: You mentioned people taking driving tests. As occupational therapists, how long do you spend training driving instructors? Is it two days?

Ms COOK: Yes. They need to be a qualified driving instructor.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Do you feel that two days is long enough and should that training be industry wide? Driving instructor representatives appeared before the Committee last week to give evidence. They said that they were concerned and that the industry needed to be more highly regulated. As part of that increased regulation, do you think more extensive occupational therapy training is necessary?

Ms COOK: Yes. We would then potentially have more driving instructors available who could provide that training.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: At the moment there are obviously not enough occupational therapists to cover New South Wales. How long should that formal training process be? That would be in addition to the two days they get now, which is probably a very abridged version. How much training would they need to get them to the skill level they would require to identify a driver with issues?

Ms VOLKERT: That is interesting. They could be in a position to screen, for example, and filter who needs a more comprehensive occupational therapy-based assessment. I gather that is what you are suggesting.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Yes.

Ms VOLKERT: Certainly more than two days. I would say it should be a minimum of five days, and perhaps up to two weeks.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Could they do that as an ongoing accreditation process? The Committee has found that trying to squeeze everything into one or two days does not work. I think they have to be accredited every five years. Should there be an occupational therapy component as part of that? So, over the past five years they would have undertaken X, Y and Z.

Ms COOK: Yes.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: And the industry could provide the necessary education tools to those driving instructors.

Ms COOK: We believe we could. There should definitely be an online component for driving instructors. That would be beneficial because they would get an understanding of medical conditions and the potential they have to impact on driving and teaching someone to drive. However, they would also need a practical component. In the current two-day training we provide in Sydney, one day is spent on the road with instructors who are experienced in this area. They try out different types of vehicle modifications.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: But that is done only in the Sydney metropolitan area?

Ms COOK: That is correct.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: It does not happen in the regions or on the Central Coast?

Ms VOLKERT: Yes.

Ms COOK: Yes, and it is optional.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: You mentioned the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] and the cost of modifying a vehicle for a person with disabilities. Am I correct in assuming that those costs would now be covered under an NDIS program for a particular client?

Ms VOLKERT: Provided that it is deemed reasonable and necessary.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Who deems it reasonable?

Ms VOLKERT: The agency.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Do you think that at any point the driver education system in New South Wales is discriminatory?

Ms VOLKERT: That is not the view of Occupational Therapy Australia at this stage.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Evidence was given last week about the benefits of starting education for future drivers at year 9 or year 10 and having an ongoing process. As occupational therapists, do you believe that that sort of education program should be included in the existing school curriculum? Would you see it as beneficial for both able-bodied and disabled children, who all want the freedom to drive? Could that be implemented relatively easily in the school environment for every student?

Ms VOLKERT: It would be incredibly beneficial for it to be included in the school curriculum as early as possible so that children and young people with disabilities can explore their options at an early stage. They can start to think about what is available, for example, the vehicle modifications available, the type of training that might be available, and what that enables them to participate in in future. It would really help young people with disabilities to expand their horizons and to be able to participate in all aspects of society as we would ideally like them to. That is a fantastic idea. Whether it could be easily included in the curriculum, I am not sure. I would like to think so, and it would be ideal if it were.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Your submission states that there is currently no national standard of good practice due to State and Territory variations with mandatory reporting. Ms Petinos talked about regional general practitioners reporting people who can no longer drive and the community stops going to them. Do you think that the introduction of mandatory reporting across all general practitioners, occupational therapists and driving instructors would be beneficial in reducing the risk of adverse driving?

Ms VOLKERT: That would be beneficial. The mandatory reporting in South Australia and the Northern Territory is considered to be a good practice.

Ms COOK: We find that general practitioners are sometimes hesitant to tell a patient with whom they have had a relationship for 20 or 30 years that they can no longer drive. We receive referrals for driving assessments, and we are the bad guys because we tell people that they can no longer drive.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: That is one degree of separation.

Ms COOK: Yes.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Does that happen now?

Ms COOK: Yes, it does.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Is it widespread?

Ms COOK: Yes.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Do you get a lot of referrals from general practitioners saying they need to have an assessment undertaken?

Ms COOK: Yes, we do.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Are they predominantly from rural communities?

Ms COOK: I cannot answer that.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Do you have statistics on the source of the referrals?

Ms VOLKERT: I cannot say for sure.

Mr NICK LALICH: Last year this Committee did an inquiry into driverless or autonomous vehicles. We all understand the benefits for everyone, not only disabled but also normal drivers. How do you see this technology benefiting disabled people? Have you had any contact with vehicle manufacturers about what technology you would like to see in these vehicles to assist disabled drivers?

Ms VOLKERT: Ms Cook will probably come in as the expert assessor, but I will start by saying driverless vehicles obviously have a great deal of potential to open up driving to more people than might previously have been able to. But at this point in time you still need judgement, sensory abilities and cognitive abilities because you need to be able to take over the vehicle at a point of issue.

Ms COOK: I definitely agree with that. As a practitioner, we have not had any liaison with any builders or companies. I believe it is still early days for autonomous vehicles. People's ability to operate them and to access the vehicle definitely continue to need to be assessed.

Mr NICK LALICH: We are in phase three or something of the autonomous vehicle. Phase five is the one that will be self-driven. I think you should still probably get in touch with them early in the piece—now—to have the vehicles modified in the way that disabled drivers will be able to drive them. Otherwise you are going to have them modified for the disabled driver as well, later on, as you are with the vehicles that are on the road. I know it is new technology and it is probably 20 years down the track before all of this happens, but 20 years is going to go so fast.

Ms VOLKERT: Yes.

The CHAIR: I would like to ask a general question to all of you. Many of the submissions we received commented on training and qualifications of driver trainers, whether professionals or volunteers. Many also commented on the cost of driver training and the capacity of community mentoring to assist disadvantaged people to gain their licence. What qualifications beyond holding a driver's licence are required of volunteers and mentors? Do you see them playing a role with the sectors we are discussing here?

Ms PALMER: I would say I am not aware of any additional training that volunteers or mentors would need. If we are talking about young children, it would be the Working With Children Check. Other than that I am not aware of anything at all.

Ms COOK: At the moment if it is a young learner driver learning to drive a vehicle with vehicle modifications, they obviously need to do 120 hours, as any standard learner driver needs to. We tend to have our specialised driving instructor provide them with an initial training in how to learn to physically control the vehicle and the modifications. We also encourage family members to come in during those lessons to learn also how to not physically drive the vehicle, but they sit in the back and understand the terminology that is being used and the differences in vehicle position that are implemented. But there is no additional training that they require.

The CHAIR: No, but that is an indication of the type of information that you are endeavouring to convey when you talked about the parents, so that is exactly what I was after—is there a role for mentors/volunteers to play and how would that be coordinated? Ms Palmer, could you perhaps take us through the information hub at IDEAS, which I found fascinating? Is there a role within that to assist?

Ms PALMER: Thank you for that. IDEAS has an online database that is our information hub and certainly within there we have a tailored directory through which you can access motor vehicle modifications, driver training, driver school and driver assessment schools as well as occupational assessors. That could certainly be another area we could focus on in building a database of where there are mentors and trainers available. Then again it is about communicating that information out to the community so that people are aware of where they can go to access the information and the services.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Do members have any further questions, particularly to Ms Palmer, representing IDEAS?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Ms Palmer, have you engaged with an organisation such as Service NSW, for instance, because part of the driver process is obviously to purchase your Ls then arrange your driving. Have you spoken with Service NSW about the information hub, because obviously getting access to information through Service NSW is becoming easier all the time? Have you had those interactions with them at all?

Ms PALMER: We have not. We have had an initial conversation but we need to go back and have further conversations. It is certainly an area that we are interested in. The information that we house on our database is, as you might be aware, broader than this area as well, but there are certainly some tailored areas that we can focus on for different parts of Service NSW activities.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Last week, in an earlier discussion of rural communities, one thing that was brought up was Indigenous people. A huge issue was the fact that the lack of literacy often led to a lack of licence and so on. In your professional opinions, do you think that if somehow the driver education was also linked into literacy, effectively, that the two of them could work together? We need to work out a way of encouraging people to improve their literacy and obtain a licence, which means they are able to then be an active part of their community. I assume by all the nodding that that is something you as therapists would be supportive of.

Ms VOLKERT: Yes. From an occupational therapy point of view, that wraps meaning into your need to learn to be literate, because it provides an outcome that is going to be beneficial to you and the community.

Ideally, literacy stops being a thing that just sits there that you do not understand the benefit of. If literacy is linked to something really practical like learning to drive then there is a desire to become part of that and access that life.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: One drives the other.

Ms VOLKERT: Yes, absolutely. You still need to be able to do it—you need to be able to get onto that driver training and get onto literacy programs that will help to support you, so that access issue will still be there.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: As an occupational therapist do you encounter that a lot? Do you have dealings with that? Is somebody has a lack of literacy, for instance, is that something occupational therapists get involved in?

Ms VOLKERT: It can be. In my professional capacity, that has been more around people with long-term mental health problems accessing services and returning to work. Ms Cook might have some comments about whether she has seen that in a driver's capacity.

Ms COOK: The only time I guess I would encounter literacy is passing the learner's knowledge test. If they cannot pass that test then we cannot assist them. So I would agree that literacy is huge. They cannot be given assistance to pass that test.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: And somehow we have to find an early intervention for that where it can be identified that there is a benefit to learning to read and write. The long-term benefit is that you can attain your driver's licence without it being a terrifying event which you avoid because you cannot read or write.

Ms COOK: Yes.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: As Ms Volkert and Ms Cook are staying for our next session, I advise Ms Palmer that we may wish to send you some additional questions in writing. Your reply would then form part of your evidence and be published. Would you be happy to answer any such questions?

Ms PALMER: Yes, of course.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee today.

Ms PALMER: Thank you.

(The witness withdrew)

SUSAN McCARTHY, General Manager, Services, Policy and Research, Alzheimer's Australia NSW, affirmed and examined

ANITA GAE VOLKERT, National Manager: Professional Standards, Occupational Therapy Australia, on former oath

LYNDALL COOK, Driver Trained Occupational Therapist and Industry Adviser, Occupational Therapy Australia, on former oath

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. Do you have any questions about the information which was sent to you and our processes today?

Ms McCARTHY: No.

The CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms McCARTHY: Yes.

The CHAIR: Please do so.

Ms McCARTHY: Sorry, I have a little lurgy, so bear with me. I want to highlight some key points from the submission that we sent through, which I am sure you have all read, but I would not mind doing that. Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia. As our population ages the number of older licence holders is expected to rise, as is the number of people living with dementia. In New South Wales today there are over 138,000 people living with dementia. By 2025 that is expected to be 175,000. These are really significant numbers. It is a significant health, social and economic issue. Because of these numbers, as you can imagine this puts significant strain on government, services and, in particular, in relation to this, into driving and the ability of people to stop driving. We know that driving safely is dependent on decision-making capacity, reaction time, visual perception, sensory processing, memory, attention and planning. All of these things are affected by dementia. Alzheimer's Australia recognises that people with dementia at some stage will have to stop driving. At the same time, we would like to state that this does not have to happen immediately. I think that that is a really important point.

I would also like to highlight the importance of a licence and transportation for people. As I am sure you can all appreciate, having a licence brings independence to people, and when that is going to be taken away from someone it really impacts on their quality of life—on their ability to drive themselves to the shops, to the GP, and to community and social and engagement activities. It has a direct impact. At Alzheimer's Australia we run an early intervention program called Living with Dementia. That program looks at the diagnosis. It looks at planning ahead. It looks at the end of life. One of the topics that comes up consistently is driving. From the person with dementia the questions are often, "What do I have to do? Who do I have to tell? What will this mean?" They say, "I don't want to give this up. I am perfectly fine to drive." The carer says, "What do I do? I don't feel entirely safe any more," or "I am not sure that they should keep on driving; what power do I have?" It is a very emotive issue. We deal with it on an almost daily basis with our clientele.

I guess the point of all of that is to emphasise that we believe that the rights and the roles and responsibilities of the person with dementia, of the RMS, of the occupational therapists and the medical professionals need to be a lot clearer. We are often told by the people with dementia and by the carers that they are unclear about what their roles and rights are, and what it is that they have to do.

I would like to highlight some of the recommendations that we put in the report. As I mentioned, the guidelines at the moment for medical professionals are quite unclear. They are not sure exactly what they are meant to do. I also think that there is a lack of information that they are able to pass on to their clients. As I mentioned before, early intervention is key in this area. From the point of diagnosis one of our suggestions is that the medical professionals have an information pack, that is perhaps developed by the RMS, that they can pass over to the person with dementia and the carer, which outlines what their rights and responsibilities are in terms of driving. We know that GPs are a trusted source for people living with dementia. We are also very aware of the pressures on their day-to-day duties, so I think it needs to be realistic. They need to be able to pass something on to that person. We would also encourage mandatory reporting, because the other side to this is—as you may be aware—that people with dementia often lose their insight. Today they may be able to drive. Tomorrow their driving skills may be impaired, but their ability to recognise that will also be impaired. So there need to be opportunities for the medical professionals, carers and people to be able to reach out to report this.

One of the things that is mentioned to us is the cost, affordability and accessibility of on-road assessments. We do not deny that this needs to happen. We support on-road assessments but, at the same time, they need to be accessible. As I mentioned, we get calls regularly about the cost of this and about trying to access someone. As you may be aware, the number of people with dementia living in regional and rural areas is significant. Again, it is very hard for them to access these services. The other point that we would like to mention is around culturally appropriate resources. At the moment the process is quite difficult or very hard to understand for people whose first language is English. Another layer of complexity around this is for people whose English is not their first language. We do not believe that there are culturally appropriate resources that have been developed.

The other important point to mention is the eligibility criteria for existing transport subsidies. This does not include people living with dementia, and we would seriously like the Government to reconsider this. As I mentioned before, all of these factors are about improving the quality of life for people living with dementia and their carers, so that they can still enjoy a good life. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. You have touched on a range of issues. I am sure that they will, in turn, prompt questions of note from the Committee. In your submission, and again in your introductory statement, you made reference to a lack of awareness of, and confusion about, the legal requirements for a driver with dementia, in spite of the publication of the Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive guidelines. Do you see any merit in a public education campaign to clarify matters?

Ms McCARTHY: Yes, absolutely. People with dementia really do not know what is out there, or what their obligations are; nor do carers or a lot of medical professionals. So I would definitely see a benefit in a public education campaign.

The CHAIR: Along those lines, are you aware of any successful examples of public education campaigns covering the particular groups that you just mentioned?

Ms McCARTHY: That is a good point. Off the top of my head I cannot think of a campaign that has been that successful across those groups. I think it is fair to say that we have done a lot of work around trying to get early intervention and earlier diagnosis. So we know that reaching out to people to increase awareness has worked—we start to see rates of diagnosis increasing. So we do know that it can be effective, but it often takes quite a lot of resources.

The CHAIR: It is interesting. I attended—probably along with some of the other members—an Alzheimer's Australia presentation here last year, at which you launched a book to do with Alzheimer's and driving. It was one of the prompts—along with many others—for this particular inquiry. We would look at ways in which you can work with Transport for NSW in conveying the message to all those sectors. I think it is vital, given what you have stated in your submission and in your introductory statement.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you very much, Ms McCarthy. You mentioned how important early intervention is. Given that the cognitive ability of a person with Alzheimer's starts to become impaired, and there is no standard requirement for driver testing when a person is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, would you see a benefit of early intervention being tailored to an assistance program so that that person would get tested on a more regular basis? If so, how regularly would they need to be tested?

Ms McCARTHY: That is a really good point. It is important to mention that there are many different types of dementia—over 120 different types. Alzheimer's is just the most common. Capacity and insight can change on a daily basis. So one of the issues around the assessment every 12 months is that the day of assessment could be a better day for that person or it could be a worse day. So 12 months is quite a long time in the progression of some forms of dementia. So we would encourage earlier assessments. The reason we encourage early intervention—or at least acknowledgement—and that the person with dementia contacts the RMS is so that it is on their licence. We know that, as the disease progresses, they are less likely to contact the RMS.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I would like to add to that. One of the discussions we had was about whether a person renewing the licence should undergo a number of mandatory questions—not a pass or fail, but an assessment of their ability to understand. Perhaps a suggestion could be that someone diagnosed with Alzheimer's would have to undergo a regular online assessment where they could be asked a random number of questions put together by occupational therapists and your own organisation that could help tap into, and identify early, what is happening with that person. So rather than doing a 12-monthly test they could do it every couple of weeks. We would be guided by you. Should there be a recommendation that that would be beneficial and appropriate, or would that just be adding another drama to an already difficult situation for them?

Ms McCARTHY: In terms of the cohort that we deal with at the moment I am not sure that an online tool would be the most effective. As things start to change over the years you could, potentially, introduce that. Particularly in regional and rural areas connection to the internet and the need to have those kinds of the skills would probably impact on the assessment. You would be adding another layer of anxiety to a process. The other side would be with respect to engaging someone in that. Why would they keep doing that every few weeks, and what happens if they do not do it?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Obviously carers play a big role in this. They have to live through this situation, so could the carer, as part of the information pack, be brought on board to run through these assessment questions just to keep an eye on the person? As you said, they would be the best ones placed to analyse their partner's or loved one's condition.

Ms McCARTHY: Yes, sorry. I was just going to say the only thing is the carers already feel so much stress now.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: They do.

Ms VOLKERT: Yes.

Ms McCARTHY: And they often go to the GP to say, "Can you please tell my loved one that they cannot drive anymore?"

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Yes. And that is when it gets referred back to you guys over their guy?

Ms VOLKERT: Yes.

Ms McCARTHY: Yes.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: So any suggestions about how we could deal with that? It is a very complex issue, I know, but we rely on organisations such as your own to make recommendations to the Committee that we could then look at, I suppose.

Ms McCARTHY: I think if the medical professionals had a better capacity to report someone with dementia – I happened to be here before and heard the point about the GPs not wanting to, and I do support that, but it would be different if they just saw it as a mandatory blank thing that they had to do, not as this GP is taking it upon himself.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: All GPs are the same.

Ms McCARTHY: Yes. That is right. So it is not about have you got a strict GP or not, it is actually just about the fact that they have to, as part of their standards, report it. And I think it just removes some of that pressure from the carers, even the person with dementia as well.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: You mentioned before you were not aware of any other studies nationally, effectively, I suppose. If you take this on notice, again we are trying to ascertain information. Are there any other regimes involved with Alzheimer's that have put in education programs that may be beneficial? We would obviously be keen to get those recommendations. It does not necessarily have to be in this country, for instance. It could be something overseas which has been done to assist drivers in that situation. If your organisation has something it would like to submit or could submit, that could be beneficial for us.

Ms McCARTHY: Sure.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I am going to return to some questions about older drivers, if I may. They are the same questions that the Committee has been putting to witnesses over the last session as well. One of the standard questions that we have asked people is how do you respond to the submissions that describe the New South Wales testing regime for aged drivers as harsh and discriminatory?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Mr Lulich particularly wants to know the answer to this question.

Ms VOLKERT: I think we have answered this one.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Yes You already have.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Specifically the proposition that it is harsh or discriminatory.

Ms McCARTHY: For people living with dementia?

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Any older driver, but I guess that would include people living with dementia. If you want to make it specific to your cohort I am fine with that as well.

Ms McCARTHY: I do not think it is discriminating against them. I guess for us we see that there needs to be a fairly rigid process in place for people who are diagnosed with dementia in driving. It is a safety issue. As I said, from our perspective, I think it is important that it is reportable.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Would you describe the New South Wales regime as best practice or not and—if you can answer this—why have other States not adopted the New South Wales testing regime? What do you consider some of the impediments in the system potentially to be?

Ms McCARTHY: I do not know the answer to that. I am not sure what the other States and Territories do in terms of their regime so I am not entirely sure.

Ms VOLKERT: We would consider best practice to be the Occupational Therapy Australia driver assessment of the over 85s and would recommend it as a national approach.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: This one is probably more for Ms McCarthy because it is about the accessibility of dementia assessments. In your submission you state that the barriers to people taking assessments are the cost, which is not covered by Medicare, and difficult accessibility due to a low number of therapists causing longer waiting times, especially in regional areas. What needs to be done to address this problem and how can further specialised professional development be funded?

Ms McCARTHY: Often something that people contact us about is who they are meant to go to. And then in regional or rural areas there is not necessarily the same level of staffing as in metro areas to do the test. The other issue for us is it gets reported that it can cost over \$700 for these on-road assessments, which again is expensive. The flip side to that is that we know some professionals tell people with dementia to go and get a test, an on-road assessment for much cheaper, say like \$80 if they just went to any on-road assessor. So I guess for us it is the discrepancies in these messages and then it confuses people in terms of where they are meant to go for the assessment, what is the most rigorous, what is the best practice. If that is the best practice then we believe that it should be subsidised so people can afford it.

Ms VOLKERT: We would certainly support that point at Occupational Therapy Australia.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Is either organisation aware of potentially, I suppose, other medical conditions which would cause the same sort of impediment? Are there any other common examples aside from dementia?

Ms VOLKERT: Parkinson's disease might be one. The age-related decline associated with diabetes is another one that is mentioned in the literature. Also stroke, post a stroke, which can happen at any age. It does tend to be an older cohort again but actually it is quite common amongst the adult age group as well. Congenital disabilities such as cerebral palsy, et cetera, also affect driving.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: My final question comes out of personal experience predominantly through someone I work for whose parent ended up with quite severe Alzheimer's. When dealing with people who are suffering from Alzheimer's or any other associated illness and they are going through this assessment process for roadworthiness, how can we properly assess all of these conditions when in so many instances the person who is suffering from the illness often reverts to their dialect? If they are from a multicultural background they do not always revert just to their native language; they will revert to a specific dialect. They might actually have their faculties but they are not communicating in English. How do we go about combating that specific issue?

Ms VOLKERT: I think Ms Cook might have some points from her actual on-road driving assessment, but the way an occupational therapist assesses is not just through verbal communication. You assess through observation in a practical setting. When people cannot necessarily tell you about the decisions and planning and judgements that they are making, they can show you. That is why it is so important to be doing on-road assessments.

Ms COOK: We can do cognitive testing but they have got to be literate to do it or speak English to be able to complete our test. We will not make a decision on someone's safety to drive based on those tests. The recommendations are based on their functional performance, so their practical performance.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Ms McCarthy, you were mentioning before about not having an issue with the over-85 driver assessment, but with the dementia cohort is there any advantage to having driver-based training over a medical assessment or not?

Ms McCARTHY: Absolutely. I think it is important because the medical assessment, again, is only one component of it. And again, capacity can fluctuate for people with dementia so it is really important to have the on-road assessment. I think that allows a sense of independence for the person with dementia, too. It is a rigorous process that is not just about the GP deciding that day that the person does not have capacity. It is actually about going through a process that is separate to them, and I think that is really important.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It was put to this Committee earlier that perhaps we should do away with that driving assessment at 85 because it does not add anything further to a medical assessment. You would not share that view?

Ms McCARTHY: No. We know that people are living with dementia in their seventies and sixties and fifties so, again, I am not saying you necessarily implement the same but perhaps maybe something, a review around the actual age of 85, whether or not that is the only limitation.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In a sense, could I suggest that potentially it is more liberating to have that driver assessment at 85 rather than just a medical assessment which would be a yes or no. A driver assessment at 85 could let people who would otherwise fail a medical assessment to drive because their skills were still at a level where they could drive?

Ms McCARTHY: Absolutely. Again, when people are assessed for dementia it could be seen that they are impaired, or their cognitive function is not there but that does not necessarily mean that they would not be able to drive. I think it is important that there is another viewpoint in that process.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I know that Ms Cook raised this before in terms of the bad cop role that occupational therapists play when it comes to doctors, particularly in smaller communities, but some submissions have raised concerns that the role of doctors in overlooking the driving capacity of drivers with dementia is potentially unclear. One submission in particular describes the situation of a family member with dementia in a country town where the doctor appeared reluctant to make a dementia diagnosis due to social pressures and misplaced loyalties. Is this something that you see often?

Ms McCARTHY: Unfortunately, yes, we do get told that GPs did not want to diagnose or do not want to tell the person they have dementia, or they tell their family member. We are still working through those issues with the GP communities, with medical professionals, to make sure that a diagnosis occurs. I definitely see the impacts of the GP having always to tell the person what they can and cannot do, which is why we support a consideration of mandatory reporting, because then it does not go back to an individual's GP's decision to do something or not to do something, and it is just a requirement. As mentioned before, they will have been a GP for a family member for 20 or 30 years, and they have built a relationship and know the impact on the family of taking away a licence. These are real impacts, so it definitely needs to be thought about.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How do you envisage mandatory reporting working, and where would it be potentially outlined? Would it be to do with medical codes or would it be a requirement for a driver licence?

Ms McCARTHY: I am probably not the person to answer where it should sit within the medical practice. From our perspective, it would make most sense for mandatory reporting to occur at the time of diagnosis.

Mr NICK LALICH: Your submission highlights the need for culturally appropriate information about dementia driving to be directed to diverse communities. Should particular groups be given priority? What form of educational resource is most appropriate, in your view and experience?

Ms McCARTHY: This is similar to the conversation we had around GPs and the need to give them information packs. Those information packs also need to be in different languages. At the moment the process for English speakers it is not clear and creates a lot of emotional turmoil. If we could have information in other languages so that it could be up on the web and in information packs for GPs, then they could pass it on to the family and the person with dementia. I think it is really important that it is available in different languages.

Mr NICK LALICH: How would you suggest we overcome the problem? Over the years I have had a couple of mates who have got dementia. The process was slow and it was not until we looked back over four or five years we realised that the silly questions they asked were because of the onset of dementia. How can we educate the community to see the onset of dementia? We used to get upset with the person and tell them, "You're stupid." Later we realised that was the wrong thing to say.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Diplomatically put!

Mr NICK LALICH: They can get annoyed with their families—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Or with you for calling them stupid.

Ms McCARTHY: It is a difficult one, because the pathology of dementia actually starts 20 or 30 years before the onset. The way the disease affects someone really does depend on the pathology of their brain, so one person might start to show symptoms at 60 and another will show symptoms at 70 or 80 because of what they call cognitive reserves or the type of dementia and lifestyle. The diagnosis is still an issue for the reasons I

have said. On average we say it takes about three years from the point of people starting to notice some changes to the end of the diagnosis process. That is not to say that driving would necessarily be impacted in that time. People are often still employed when they first reach out to us to talk about their diagnosis. There is still capacity, and I think that is important to emphasise. The person is not void of all independence and capacity; it is a progressive disease and how the disease will progress very much depends on the type of dementia and the individual.

Mr NICK LALICH: And how we respond.

Ms McCARTHY: Exactly. Again, a very common thing is the response of family and friends.

Mr NICK LALICH: And you feel sorry later.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I return to the design parameters around the mandatory reporting scheme. You said the point of reporting would be at diagnosis. Who does the reporting? Is it doctors or medical professionals?

Ms McCARTHY: Yes, I think it would be good if the doctors did the reporting to the RMS. It is communicated to people with dementia now that they have to report. That is what we put in the driving with dementia discussion paper, so that is the message we give. We know doctors see people with dementia more often than we do, so it is important to have it as part of that process.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Should the intensification of the disease trigger reporting thresholds?

Ms McCARTHY: That is where I think there needs to be assessment after 12 months. We are cautious about how much a disease can progress in 12 months, so there need to be some triggers. It is very individualised, so the process needs to be flexible. It cannot be that it must be every month or every six months. There needs to be flexibility for the medical professional to report it as they see significant changes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: In terms of other significant triggers, presumably the appointment of a guardianship arrangement would be another trigger to be looked at as well? If a person loses legal capacity, would that have a bearing on their ability to hold a licence?

Ms McCARTHY: Again, I think they are separate things. I am not saying that it does not indicate something, but I would not necessarily mix guardianship with driving only because people go down the guardianship path for a number of reasons—financial, end-of-life planning and many other factors. Keeping the driving process separate makes sense.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I see your logic. Assuming that you report to RMS, what should RMS do?

Ms McCARTHY: Currently they are meant to submit a conditional licence to the person with dementia and then they get assessed in 12 months.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: What is the purpose of reporting if it is going to trigger what RMS does anyway?

Ms McCARTHY: They only do it if the person self-reports at the moment. We do not have the numbers, but it would be difficult to say—and perhaps this is a question for RMS—how many people actually report they have dementia on a yearly basis. I am not sure it would correlate with the statistics of people living with dementia.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Your evidence is that it should trigger either additional medical assessment or the granting of a conditional licence?

Ms McCARTHY: Yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: In what circumstances should licences be removed, and how should RMS go about that?

Ms McCARTHY: Again, I think that should go back to the on-road assessment process. They should go through a similar process for the delivery of a conditional licence.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Once the licence has been provided to an Alzheimer's sufferer, currently they are assessed every 12 months. You have said that that is not suitable because it is too long a period of time. How long should it be before there is an assessment?

Ms McCARTHY: I could not give a set period. As I mentioned, it really does fluctuate. Twelve months may be perfectly fine for some people, and for others you start to see capacity changing within three to six months. Medical professionals are more likely to be the people seeing them on a regular basis.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: How regularly would an Alzheimer's sufferer have to see their medical practitioner once diagnosed?

Ms McCARTHY: Often, because it is the older age group, they tend to have other chronic conditions. Similar to other older age statistics, people with dementia would still see their GP quite regularly.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: And that is where you see the mandatory reporting and so the onus is back on the GP or the occupational therapist to update RMS to say the person needs to be reassessed as a matter of urgency.

Ms McCARTHY: Yes. I think it gives the carer that opportunity too, because they are often involved in the room with the GP to be able to say, "I'm noticing" or "I'm concerned about their driving".

The CHAIR: As an aside, I am aware of a family with a child who was diagnosed with juvenile dementia at the age of six. It can strike at a very early age and has an unfortunate prognosis. Broadening Mr Crouch's question to embrace the whole cohort you identified, including those who have suffered strokes, if we presume that they are able to drive again after training, at what stages during the rest of their lives do you think there should be some intervention or assessment? How would that occur? Who would be best placed to undertake that?

Ms VOLKERT: I think it is difficult to put a single figure around that. For someone with a stroke or someone following a traumatic injury, for example, those kinds of things where a period of stability is reached, they would continue through the rest of their lives as would anyone without those conditions and then they would be subject to the usual assessments at 85 and the medical reviews earlier than that, and that would be fine. If your condition is one that deteriorates over time, such as Alzheimer's disease, such as age-related diabetic changes, such as Parkinson's disease, your function will decrease.

It is incredibly difficult to put a time frame, and it is more about the medical practitioner's judgement about how functional decline happens. In some conditions, such as multiple sclerosis, the decline can be a sharp sudden drop, a plateau, a sharp sudden drop, a plateau, so time frame does not really work for that. It is more about triggers that the medical practitioners are looking for that show functional decline that may indicate a resultant decline in performing a practical activity such as driving.

Ms COOK: When a medical condition is advised to the RMS—so we see someone and we need a medical referral—that then triggers an annual medical review for the rest of their life. If they are 30 and they have been diagnosed with MS and need to drive with vehicle modifications, every 12 months they need to be medically reviewed so that that ongoing medical review continues.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: It is effectively mandatory for the rest of their lives.

Ms COOK: That is correct.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee today. We appreciate your time and expertise. We may have some additional questions in writing. Would you be prepared to accept them? They will be published and form part of your evidence.

Ms VOLKERT: Absolutely.

Ms McCARTHY: Yes.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

BRIAN WOOD, Secretary, Motorcycle Council of NSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions about the information which was sent to you and our processes today?

Mr WOOD: No.

The CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr WOOD: Yes, I would. A couple of items we did not include in our submission, which have been raised since we made the submission. The first is the National Transport Commission [NTC] has just released a regulation impact statement on anti-lock braking systems [ABS] on motorcycles. Their recommendation is to fit ABS on all motorcycles above 125cc, and between 125cc and 50cc whether ABS or combined braking system. Because there are not that many under 125cc motorcycles in Australia it really means the whole fleet will be mandated to have ABS. They have found that their proposal would have a benefit-cost ratio of 37 and would reduce injury crashes by 33 per cent and serious and fatal crashes by 39 per cent.

In our submission to the NTC we put that they should include in the statement that it includes training for riders, so that riders who are new to ABS on bikes should get some training. When ABS was introduced on cars it was proposed that it would bring about a huge reduction in the number of crashes in cars, but history has proven that really there is no real benefit identified from ABS in cars. Maybe people overcompensated thinking I have got ABS on my car, it is going to save me in a braking situation, so they overcompensated. I guess on the original cars the ABS was quite coarse so had a pulsating effect. People, because they were not educated on what the system was going to react, when they put their foot on the brake, felt this pulsing, lifted their foot off the brake and subsequently crashed.

We think it is a bit short-sighted that the NTC have not included training. And I think with this proposal that basically can reduce motorcycle crashes by a third, and this is sometimes referred to as a silver bullet in road safety, and I think we should not be squandering that opportunity by not including training to riders. Because really the ABS only cuts in when you are getting to a locked brake situation, and there is research that shows that many riders do not brake or do not use really the full capacity of the braking of their motorcycles. If they are currently not doing that, they are not training or they are not educated on how to use the ABS then they will not get the benefit from it because they will not be braking hard enough to get the benefit.

The second one I would like to raise is the NSW Centre for Road Safety commissioned a desktop study of post-licence rider training. They looked at what courses were available They are still researching that further, but we are certainly encouraging them that we should be encouraging more riders to take up post-licence training. We would like to see that they have a course outline that they can see if rider trainers provide that then it is sort of like an accredited type course. We also would like to see those courses be subsidised because the take-up on a lot of these courses is quite low because the cost in some cases is prohibitive. I think in the same way that learner rider training is subsidised we believe that post-licence training should also be subsidised to encourage riders to take up that training.

I know at the inquiry that you had into motorcycle safety there was some criticism of the Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] regarding their learner training scheme, that perhaps it had been a little bit neglected. But we have since had discussions with the RMS and I think they have taken on board your comments regarding that they do need to give that sort of scheme the attention that it needs. Our recommendation is that since Victoria have done extensive study on learner training, they have introduced a learner training scheme, perhaps similar to but enhanced on the New South Wales scheme, that once that is bedded in and perhaps the benefits in Victoria are being recognised, then New South Wales should have a look at that scheme with a view of reviewing the rider training in New South Wales.

The last item is protective clothing. The Centre For Road Safety has just let tender to run a trial for what was a five-star scheme for protective clothing. That is a trial for 12 months where they are bedding in the protocols for the testing and getting some real life data from clothing, which is actually in the marketplace. But I think once that scheme starts to roll out, then there needs to be education around the riders as to the benefits of selecting—the five-star scheme will have two components; one is for protection and one is for thermal comfort. Many riders do not wear protective clothing because of the fact that it is just too hot to wear it. I have what I call my "summer gear", because it has ventilation. But I know the level of protection it gives me is not as good as what I call my "winter gear", which has a good protective rating. As that five-star scheme is rolled out, we

believe there needs to be rider education about what they need to look out for and what it means. We need to take the best advantage of the scheme, which will be a world first.

The CHAIR: You mentioned ABS braking in your opening statement. Several submissions to the Committee argued that drivers do not understand modern vehicle technology, and ABS braking in particular. What is the best way to introduce new technologies to drivers of any age?

Mr WOOD: Drivers or riders?

The CHAIR: All road users using a vehicle of some description.

Mr WOOD: We would prefer riders to be riding the vehicle they are going to buy. That may be somewhat restrictive in that everyone who buys a new motorcycle would need have training on that particular vehicle. There would be benefit in having ABS demonstrations; that is, how it works and how it will save them in a crash. Perhaps not everyone who attends can ride a bike, and perhaps they should select from those who attend so that they can have a real-life experience. It should not be stunt riders doing the riding and demonstrating the bike because they may make it look more spectacular than it is. It should be actual riders benefiting from it. In terms of other technologies, we are always concerned about mobile phones. I believe that young people do not get the connection between distraction and the consequences. Many drivers have difficulty in seeing motorcycles as it is, let alone if they are looking at a mobile phone or texting.

The CHAIR: I am sure we will come to that. I would like to follow up my initial question by asking whether you have a view about the role of simulators now or in the future for both driver and rider training and competency assessment of licensed drivers and riders?

Mr WOOD: It is difficult to get a motorcycle simulator; I do not know of any that really simulate motorcycles. With a motorcycle you steer in the opposite direction from where you want to go. That then starts to lean the bike, and it continues the curve. The simulators that I have seen do not simulate that counter-steering; they basically steer as you do in a car—you turn the handlebars in the direction the vehicle is going. It would be very difficult to develop a simulator for motorcycles. Some people get nauseous in car simulators because of the motion. My feeling is that they are probably not sophisticated enough to be of any benefit in training. Studies show that experienced motorcyclists lean the bike far more quickly and with more determination in a corner than learner riders. They would probably benefit from instrumented bikes that can tell how quickly people are reacting to entering into curves. That way you can tell whether someone is still a novice in the way they are riding compared to an experienced motorcyclist.

Mr NICK LALICH: Can you give the Committee your opinion on current road safety campaigns and whether they are having any impact?

Mr WOOD: The Live to Ride campaign is very well accepted among motorcyclists. There is also a series called *Roads We Ride*. Two in the series have been released, and I believe a third has been made. They show rides on popular motorcycle roads, including the Putty Road, which runs between Windsor and Singleton. It is an excellent piece of footage. It has an underlying message about safety, but the real message is about motorcycle riding being an enjoyable pastime. There is also a piece on the old Pacific Highway. Those sorts of campaigns for motorcyclists have been well received because they do not have a heavy road safety message. There is an underlying message, but it accepts that motorcycling is a pleasurable pastime and that you need to be aware that there are safety issues.

Mr NICK LALICH: I asked that question more in relation to the one-metre clearance between bikes and cars campaign. I travel to work down Alison Road and up Anzac Parade. Given the number of motorbikes and scooters zigzagging between the cars, there is no chance of leaving even six inches between the two. I do not know if the car drivers are giving them that distance, but I know a lot of motorbikes are not giving that clearance when they try to overtake a vehicle or go down in between vehicles. I know they are allowed to do all that, but how many times do you see when somebody moves off and a motorbike comes in front of them? I do not know if the campaign is working that much with the motorbike riders. I do not so much mean the professional motorbike riders, as I call them, but the normal people going to work—young ladies, and I am not knocking the young ladies at all, and young guys who use motorbikes to go and from work. They are not really the motorbike riders that you would deal with. It is just a convenience to get to and from work.

Mr WOOD: Many people ride for different reasons. We did a survey on the Old Pacific Highway. It is a stretch of road which is popular not just for motorcyclists but for pushbike riders. I would have thought the pushbike riders would have hated us, but they did not. They recognise that motorcyclists have similar issues to them, because we are both single-track vehicles. They accepted that the motorcyclists would give them more space because they realised that that was what was required. So there are synergies, I guess, between the two. When you are lane filtering, the distance is certainly far less than a metre or 1½ metres. But again I think a

pushbike is a bit different to a motorcycle. A motorcycle can keep up with other traffic; pushbikes do not. Again, because they are slower than other vehicles, they always have vehicles going past them. I guess sometimes I get a bit of a shock on the bike when a vehicle goes past me quite closely and I was not expecting it to. I can appreciate the view of pushbike riders.

Mr NICK LALICH: The other one was on the ABS brakes. I agree with you on that that you have to know how to drive with ABS brakes. I had an experience once where I was in a vehicle with ABS brakes. I thought, "This is great." On a rural road, I came up to a T intersection. I hit the brakes as I was coming to the corner, and there were road corrugations for about 1½ metres. Because of the corrugations, the ABS braking holds, lets go, holds and lets go on its own. The ABS brakes probably did not know what to do with the corrugation. I ended up about a metre out on the road. I was lucky nobody was coming at the time.

Mr WOOD: It has been recognised. A lot of adventure bikes or dirt bikes have an option whereby you can switch the ABS off but it will automatically reset itself when you restart the motorcycle, so you have to deliberately cancel the ABS. We do have concerns about the effect of corrugations on motorbikes because it does certainly get confused as to whether it is braking or what is happening. In that NTC regulation impact statement they are referring to a number of updated standards for ABS on motorcycles. We were originally suggesting that there needs to be a rough road trial to make sure that the ABS does not get horribly confused on things like corrugations.

Mr NICK LALICH: You were talking about protective clothing and that kind of thing. Some time ago we did an inquiry about motorbikes and witnesses said that the protective gear from Aldi was very good and probably some of the best.

Mr WOOD: Yes. The stuff I wear as winter gear is the Aldi gear. It is certainly very heavy.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Aldi has had quite a mention in this hearing today—some good from Mr Lalich and some bad from the Transport Workers Union.

Mr WOOD: It is quite heavy gear—that is why I wear it in winter. I do not wear it in summer. It has the something approved level 2 and I think under the protocols of the five star it would really end up there—it probably would get five stars for it. I think I paid \$128 for a jacket, which is quite cheap. You can get jackets that are \$500 or \$1,000 each.

Mr NICK LALICH: For quality it is a good price.

Mr WOOD: Yes. We certainly recommend when it comes around that people go and purchase it.

Mr NICK LALICH: Thank you.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Wood, I found your graph of fatalities per 10,000 registrations for motorcycle users in your submission quite striking. It is significantly higher than for other road users and car fatalities in particular, but it has seen a very large decline over the last 15 years. You say it is not because of engineering improvements, but what are the factors that have led to that significant decline?

Mr WOOD: Rider training and the engineering on bikes. Suspension, brakes, tyres and so on are far better than they used to be 15 years ago. Certainly the handling is a lot better. So I think it is improvements to do with the motorcycle itself and general awareness. When I started being involved in motorcycle safety around 15 years ago, there was virtually nothing available for motorcyclists in the way of a safety message. Gradually we have been able to improve that. As I say, the current campaigns at the Centre for Road Safety are well received because they are targeted to motorcyclists.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: When you say "education", are you talking about that level of education in terms of information campaigns rather than training programs or rider training?

Mr WOOD: Really both, but certainly those education campaigns. I guess there is more rider training. People have to do compulsory training. They are more accepting of doing training later in life. Unfortunately the take-up rate of post-licence training is lower than we would like, because I guess people feel, "I can ride. Why do I need training?" The take-up is perhaps a little low because as soon as you say, "It's training," they tend to turn off. I mention a course in Canberra called the MASTERS course, which is well received, probably because it uses the term MASTERS, so it is for people who are experienced. That is the sort of message we need to get out regarding post-driver's licence training.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With driver training, there are certain specialities when it comes to motorcycle riders compared to other driver training that is out there. For instance, there is the fact that you are on a bike and you are alone. For my dad it was the reason he went and got a motorcycle licence—he was able to ride on his own and did not have to worry about somebody being in the car next to him when he first started on

the roads however many years ago that was. Apart from those issues, what other impediments do you see in rider training when riders are first getting onto the road?

Mr WOOD: I cannot really criticise the rider training scheme as it is. They do mainly off-road initially. Then prior to getting P-plates, they do an on-road component. Maybe in that learner part of it they should be doing a road component. Quite how you would do that, I am not sure. At that stage they are still very much learners. Maybe there should be an on-road component as part of the learner part to get your learner's permit as opposed to doing the second part of the course, which is to get your provisional licence.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The New South Wales Government is currently evaluating the motorcycle graduated licensing scheme, which you are no doubt aware of. What, in your view, are the main priorities for the review in relation to rider training and education?

Mr WOOD: I guess there are some anomalies in there—the fact that they can carry a pillion when they go on to red P-plates. That is an indication that they have reached a certain level of experience and yet they are not able to lane filter. We feel that lane filtering should be made available to those on red P-plates. The length of time is also an issue. I guess the research shows that it is four or five years from the time you first get a licence to when your crash rate tends to level out, so the fact they have to be one year on red Ps and two years on green Ps is perhaps appropriate.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do you have any views on national harmonisation of driving laws and how that affects motorcyclists?

Mr WOOD: That becomes an issue in that you have then got all the States and Territories believing they have got the best scheme.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The Chair is very interested in these points, coming from the his seat of Albury.

Mr WOOD: Everyone has best practice. My feeling is that there should be a unified scheme. I guess somewhere like Queensland is struggling with their scheme because of the way it has been set up historically. Without too much experience, I see the Victorian scheme as currently the best, followed closely by that of New South Wales. Other States should come into line more with New South Wales and Victoria.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Your submission expressed concern about the lack of access to post-licence training in rural areas. With that in mind, do you believe that there is scope for more teaching and mentoring to post-licence riders to be delivered through TAFE and at the local government level? If so, can you provide examples of how post-licence training can be made more accessible in regional areas?

Mr WOOD: I would not suggest TAFE or local government. We ran a series of seminars—about half a dozen—and about five of those were in regional areas. The cost needs to be not prohibitive. We are regularly trying to encourage rider trainers to do courses in regional areas but they say that the cost is too prohibitive for them to do it. Other rider trainers seem willing to do it. What are the areas to do it? Those that I see as being most successful are usually done on go-kart tracks and that sort of thing. A lot of people say that it needs to be in a race-track type of environment. I would not support that.

As part of Motorcycle Awareness Month last year the road safety officer for Kempsey ran some courses. I think the cost to the riders was something like \$25, which is virtually nothing. But that came out because a rider trainer from Sydney went up to run those courses. I think it should really target those who, for some reason, are able to do it economically. We should encourage them to go to more areas.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Mr Wood, my question was about TAFE and local government, and you expressed a view that you would not recommend those two options. Why not, and what is a more appropriate delivery mechanism?

Mr WOOD: Because it is a specialised area. If TAFE had riders who had been through a training course it would be appropriate, because to do the rider training you need to have done an accreditation. Maybe if they can do that accreditation it would be an option. I guess usually motorcyclists are keen to put something back into motorcycling. So, yes, maybe that could be done through the TAFE system if they can get that accreditation.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Do inexperienced drivers receive training on a sufficient variety of roads in real-life situations? What I mean by this is: Should they be restricted to lower speeds than licensed drivers, and barred from experiencing certain types of road conditions, as they have been in some jurisdictions?

Mr WOOD: In some jurisdictions there is no speed limit for learners.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: True.

Mr WOOD: There is in New South Wales, and it does get criticised from time to time. I believe that there should be some restriction, but not a huge differential between the two because then it becomes an issue, in the same way as pushbike riders have difficulty with car drivers wanting to push past them. Learners on bikes having to go at a significantly different speed to other vehicles would suffer the same sort of thing—being pushed past.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Sticking with younger drivers, do you believe that the current regime is too harsh on provisional drivers? Can you comment on the current balance between sanctions and incentives, especially for young drivers?

Mr WOOD: I guess when you are younger you cannot see the reasons as to why you need to be restricted, but once you see the statistics and the over-representation of young drivers and riders you would appreciate that there does need to be a graduated licensing scheme.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Do you have any of those statistics that you could share with the Committee?

Mr WOOD: No, nothing that comes to mind.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Are you aware of any driver training and education incentives which have been successful in achieving positive road safety outcomes?

Mr WOOD: I have referred to the Mature Age Skills Training for Experienced Riders [MASTERS] scheme that is run in Canberra. That is the only scheme that I know which is able to attract a reasonable number of people wishing to take the course. I know that in Tasmania they sent out notices with every registration or licence renewal. They sent out thousands of invitations and I believe that they got something like 16 responses. Perhaps sending it out through registration and licence renewals is not the best way to promote rider training. Maybe they would have had more success if they had promoted it through other channels of contacting motorcyclists.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Mr Wood, have you undertaken the MASTERS course that you described earlier—the one from the Australian Capital Territory?

Mr WOOD: No, I have not done that one but I have done a number of others in New South Wales.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: If you do not mind my asking, what sort of rider training have you undertaken yourself?

Mr WOOD: When we ran the series of seminars I attended the one at Picton, which was on a go-kart track; the one in Newcastle, which was also on a go-kart track; and the one at Mount Panorama in Bathurst, which was in a car park behind the corporate stalls. Those were the three that I attended. They were run by Skill Master. I have also done a Skill Master course—mainly because I am a member of Ulysses and they subsidise rider training.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Ulysses club subsidises additional rider training?

Mr WOOD: Yes. I think you are allowed to do one course every three years, but the take-up within Ulysses is not great. Again, I think it is because of the word "training". A lot of riders say, "I know how to ride a bike; why do I need training?" I have done training with a number of the other smaller operators, basically to see what they were offering and the sort of information they were giving to riders.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: What you say about the lack of take up because of the perception of its being training rather than additional education is interesting. We had submissions this time last week, when there was quite a difference of opinion about advanced or defensive driver training, and whether additional training empowers younger people, as car drivers, to think they are more invulnerable. Do you think that would be similar for bike riders? If they undertook advanced rider training would they feel that they were more impervious, that they would know more and would therefore take greater risks?

Mr WOOD: I would probably take that view. There are a number of courses. Perhaps they are referred to as training courses, but they are track based and they are more orientated towards going fast around the track. Our view is that to make a safer motorcyclist we need to make them better risk-managers. So the information needs to surround the types of crashes you can be involved in and the sorts of things that you can do as a rider to avoid having those crashes. Motorcycling requires more skill than driving a car, so there is a need to be able to get a feeling for the competency on your skill levels. Not all riders are really skilful riders. They need

to appreciate where their skill level is at, and to ride at that skill level. There needs to be that risk management component, as well.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I had trouble hearing what you said earlier. Were you not supportive of rider training on a race track? Did you say that you were not supportive of that?

Mr WOOD: No, I am not overly supportive of it. Again it depends on what the course content is. As I said, a lot of those courses are more about racing—being able to get out and corner and brake, with the intention of getting lap times down. But that is not what happens out in the real world.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Further to that, a lot of younger people find it very difficult to purchase a car, because of the cost, and a motorbike or a scooter can be their first vehicle, because it is more cost effective. Once they have done their 120 hours of training and they are on their red Ps—I think it was for 12 months—and then two years on their green Ps, do you think an early intervention with education with regards to road safety, even prior to them attaining a learner's permit, could be beneficial for a bike rider? I am talking about grade 10 students or even younger—year 9 students—having some introduction and ongoing education about driver or rider safety well before they attain their L-plates.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I think it should be around sharing the road because a lot of motorcycle crashes happen because car drivers are not watching out for motorcyclists. So even at that earlier stage at school if they are getting the message about sharing the road, and they have got to share the road with push bikes and pedestrians and large, heavy vehicles, I guess if they have got more of an appreciation if there is a range of vehicles out there which have different needs as far as using and sharing the road then that would be beneficial.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: And that sort of education program would be a natural flow-on effect, say, sharing the road, attaining your learners permit, and then ongoing defensive driver or rider training as a holistic approach to education would be a much better option, do you think?

Mr WOOD: Yes. Until you have actually got an appreciation of what happens on the road—even as a pedestrian, schoolchildren do not appreciate, well, they are not thinking that the car is on the left-hand side of the road or where it may appear from. So if they have got an appreciation even at that earlier age. I do know that a lot of high school type students and upwards are amongst the statistics for pedestrians because of the fact that they are not, I guess, thinking about road safety or their place in sharing the road.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Has the Motorcycle Council of NSW been consulted by the Government about the changes in driver training standards or any other relevant matters and as a segue to that, do you also think that the current drivers licence scheme is suitable and not discriminatory in any way?

Mr WOOD: We have not been directly consulted about the review of the graduated licensing scheme [GLS]. It is certainly something I will be enquiring about. There was another point there, but it has just slipped my mind.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: And the other one was do you think the current system is discriminatory in any way towards riders and drivers?

Mr WOOD: I think to parents with several children it is discriminatory, because of the fact that they have got to do 120 hours. So you have got several children close in age and they are going to be spending a fair bit of their free time just sitting in the passenger seat, trying to get their 120 hours up. So—

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Just quickly before I finish up, on that, with the 120 hours and the parents, do you think the parents or the mentors of younger drivers and riders should themselves have to undertake some additional questions or training considering they are going to be imparting that knowledge onto a young driver or rider?

Mr WOOD: Yes. I think they should have an appreciation of the sort of information that they should be giving their children. I would not be proposing that all the training needs to be done professionally. A lot of people criticise: "They pick up bad habits from their parents," but yes, maybe they probably do. So some information for parents on what sort of messages they should be passing on.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you very much, Mr Wood.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Wood. During your introductory remarks you did talk briefly about distraction and I intimated that it would be a subject taken up. It has not been yet, but it will be now. Some submissions we have received claim the biggest problem with the use of mobile phones and other distractions is that drivers and pedestrians do not appreciate the reduction in focus which this causes. Do you believe that the current education campaigns have succeeded in getting this message across, or do you believe that they have not

got the message across? And what needs to be done to raise awareness of distraction and change behaviour as something that affects both, obviously, riders and drivers, particularly in their use of the roads?

Mr WOOD: I think given the number of people who are booked and noticed using their mobile phones that no, the message has not got across. I know, speaking to some driver trainers, they tell their trainees, "Where is your mobile phone? Put it in the back seat," because their first reaction is as soon as it rings, to try and pick it up and answer it. So I think again, there should be in the school the fact that you only need to be distracted for only really a fraction of a second before things go horribly bad, and I do not think that they appreciate just how quickly things can go horribly wrong.

The CHAIR: Are you aware of some of the campaigns that have been run by the Government?

Mr WOOD: Yes, certainly. Yes.

The CHAIR: Are there other means which should be utilised? That would be a mass media approach primarily, although it did have a social media component. How else would you see the message being relayed to those people who carry their personal soundtrack of their lives, basically, with them wherever they go?

Mr WOOD: A difficult one. I think it should be centring around just how quickly—because I know there are ones where they have got a blindfold on. Perhaps that approach more, that yes, things go terribly wrong very quickly. I guess we have also criticised that you are allowed to mount your mobile phone on the windscreen. If you have got a stone chip or a crack in the windscreen it is a defect, yet you are able to put an object that's that big. And I have seen them up, basically, right in where the driver's view must be so not only are they distracted to look at it, if they are in places somewhere over on the right-hand side a motorcycle on a roundabout could be hidden behind that mobile phone. So we have concerns about that.

The CHAIR: Thank you for raising that. Unfortunately, time has got away and we have to thank you for appearing before the Committee today. We may have some additional questions and would then send them to you for answers. Would you be happy for those to be sent to you and published as part of your evidence?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee this afternoon.

Mr WOOD: Thank you for the opportunity.

(The witness withdrew)

ALLAN GRAHAM PRYOR, National Liaison Officer, National Motorists Association of Australia, sworn and examined

MICHAEL FREDERICK LANE, National Spokesman, National Motorists Association of Australia, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions about that information which was sent to you and our processes today?

Mr LANE: No, I do not.

The CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr LANE: Yes, if we could.

The CHAIR: Please.

Mr LANE: We are talking about training here. I am reminded of the words of one of the teachers of my son, who said that pupils are little regurgitators. What he meant by that is you tell them something and they give it back to you for the examination or whatever they are doing. And that sort of raises the issue here that we have that is the learner drivers have a low rate of accidents, but this diagram here is in several of the submissions and it shows that they have got a very low accident rate until they take their test and then they have a whopping great increase. That says to us that there is something wrong with the testing system, what people are being tested for. Clearly, they are not being tested for sufficient things to keep them safe. Now, all training systems train to the examinations. And it does not matter if it is a National Assessment Program—Literacy And Numeracy [NAPLAN] thing in the primary schools, right through. So it follows from the low standards of the driver testing that there will be low standards of driver training.

There are a few phrases that worry us a little bit. One of these is the statement that is often made by some of the safety people that if you hit somebody at, say, 50 kilometres an hour, they are likely to die, where as if you hit them at 30 kilometres an hour, they are likely to live. From our point of view, the problem with that is what they are saying is that it is perfectly alright to crash into somebody so long as you are going slowly and only maim them, do not kill them. Our view is that not crashing is the safety objective.

We also have a problem with some of the definitions of speeding. One of the things that is being done by the Centre for Road Safety [CRS] at the moment is to add to the cause of crashes driving in excess of the speed limit plus speed that is inappropriate for the circumstances, including going below the speed limit, and use that as an excuse for adding more penalties for exceeding the speed limit. When many of those crashes occur below the speed limit, it really is relative. I think it is a misrepresentation in order to adjust policy, which is frankly unacceptable. As a former Australian Government public servant I really think this is not acceptable.

The third thing I would like to bring up is that statistics of crashes are now coming up per head of population, which is also known as per registered vehicle. There is no perfect system, but it should be per distance travelled because that represents the exposure that people have to road systems. The normal one is fatalities per 100 million kilometres travelled. For example, there is a statement that people who live in cities are less likely to crash on country roads than people who live in the country. The problem is, of course, that people who live in cities drive a lot less in the country. The average guy driving to the Gold Coast, say, drives 2,000 kilometres a year; the average guy in a country town probably drives 40,000 kilometres a year. If you are doing it by location or by head of population, you are going to get some problems. That measure per 100,000 vehicle kilometres gives you a fair idea of the vertical change by year, but it should be expressed cautiously when you are going horizontally from different areas to another.

For example, in the city, if you crash, you will probably get a first responder in 15 to 20 minutes. As any medical professional will say to you, the first hour is the critical hour, the golden hour. If you are in the far distant west or the Northern Territory, it can be a couple of hours before the first person comes across you and it can be another couple of hours before the first responders or medics arrive, and you have a much bigger chance of dying. Different countries have different circumstances. For example, Germany is the transport crossroads of Europe. It gets people from all over the place, so its figures are going to be different than rural Ireland, say. Those are a few things that we thought we would raise.

The CHAIR: I was interested that you raised the graph, which is contained in several submissions, showing the incidence of accidents or crashes for new P-plate drivers. I take you to advanced and defensive driver training. Submissions generally do not degree on the value of advanced or defensive driver training.

Some driver trainers expressed the view that advanced driver training is not appropriate for inexperienced drivers; others say that it gives a false sense of confidence to inexperienced drivers. How does your association decide what is appropriate or best practice?

Mr LANE: One of the things found in the so-called research into the outcomes of more advanced driving is that there is a claim that people who have done it become more confident and more likely to have a crash. Unfortunately, they are not comparing the full cohort of people, because generally the only people who go for post-licence training are people with a particular interest in driving and they are very high exposure rate people. They are not typical of the whole cohort of the population. It is very difficult to find anywhere where you have the full cohort of a population being trained to those standards. Germany would be one, and that is quite difficult because there is not much in comparison. The only thing I would say is that when Germany was reunited, the eastern people very quickly came up to the western people's standard. As soon as they got out of their Trabant motorcars and got a real car, they soon discovered what life was about.

There is one other example that is, again, not perfect. When the United Kingdom [UK] police opened up the Hendon police driver training school—obviously, this cohort is not typical of the whole population but it is typical of a fairly wide range of the population—they found that their accident rate dropped by two-thirds, not up to two-thirds. That is an enormous amount, but it was the 1950s and 1960s, when things were quite different. For those who are not aware of it, in that time a lot of people in the UK had licences but had never had a test because they got learners licences during the war and at the end of the war, the government said they could not test all of these people and so they gave them full licences. Belgians actually did not have licences until about the 1970s, and even then you just went to the post office and bought one.

Mr PRYOR: There is a difference in the title between defensive and advanced, but the important thing is the content of the course. For example, an advanced course would teach the driver how to stop a vehicle in the shortest possible distance, which is fundamental to avoiding a crash. The motorcycle training in New South Wales does exactly that—in fact, the trainer teaches the rider to stop so quickly that the back of the bike comes off the ground. That is the sort of thing you need to focus on—the content of the course, not the name.

The CHAIR: Thank you for making that point. As someone who has done an advanced driving course, admittedly many years ago, I can say that one of the greatest lessons to take from those courses is an enhancement of anticipation. That is something that stays with you for life, whether as a rider or a driver, and it is extremely important. In that scenario, I take you to the use of simulators for both driver training and competency assessment of licensed drivers, because lying within that particular framework is exactly the aspect of anticipation.

Mr LANE: I think it is fair to say that a simulator that is good, very good, is very, very expensive. They are very complicated beasts to get right. If you go to the Qantas base you will see some really good simulators that really put the pilots through tests, including really awful things like getting off the ground at the end of the runway just over the fuel centre and cutting off all engines. They are very good, but they are very expensive. I find it really difficult to come to grips with the price of these things, when you are talking millions of dollars, and the actual benefits compared with a system where you have real people on the ground.

The effects on motor vehicle, bike or truck are very dependent on a lot of other factors, and there are relatively easy things like the grip surface, the tyres, whether the shock absorbers are in good condition et cetera; all these things will make a difference to how the vehicle reacts. I find it very difficult to think that you could do a good simulator at a reasonable price. If you did this simulators properly, you are talking millions of dollars and that is a big expenditure to spread right around the country. That is my personal view. It would be too easy to get it wrong and then you would have a problem.

The CHAIR: Some of the witnesses have agreed that there is a role for computer-based training or simulators as a complement to but not as a replacement for practical driving on the road.

Mr LANE: They might give you some approximations, but the requirements in the real world are so complex that it takes our brains, which are very good computers, to work out all these things.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: One of the things that was brought to our attention last week by the Driver Trainer Association was the fact that they believe that there needs to be even more regulation for becoming a driving instructor. You mentioned other countries and that European nations follow best practice. Do you think that there are points that could be taken from those countries and imparted into our system, where we are teaching driving instructors?

Mr LANE: Absolutely. We have referred to the German system, which is very strong and very good. All training is done by licensed instructors, and the licensing system there is very thorough. Obviously much of it is on the road, but they also have a lot of in-classroom training. They are required to do, for example, first aid,

which needs to be done. That is not a shock value thing. It is just saying, "This is what you do when you come across somebody who is hurt." They are also required to do an exercise in managing traffic around the crash situation so you do not get multiple crashes from one event. That is very good indeed.

The Germans used to have the instructors certify that their trainee could do a crash stop, emergency stop, from 130 km/h in the wet—quite an interesting exercise. However, now that they have anti-lock braking systems, they do not worry about that too much. Many of the German instructors used to take their trainees up on the Autobahn to the prima facie limits, not unrestricted but actually prima facie, and take them up to 200k, because next month they are going to do it so they need to know how to do it. The German Government now only wants them taken up to 130k. But the training for the teachers is very thorough. Obviously if you are teaching to the standards of the German people, you have to have a very high standard. If you are restricting it only to licensed instructors, the licensing system for the instructors again must be on a very high level.

It is quite interesting: I am doing a French language course and my French teacher is French, got her licence in England and went to work for a German company in the sales team so she travelled a lot, particularly in north Germany. They put her through about a week's intensive crash prevention course. She said one of the things they did that frightened her first up was that they had a big area with cold water channels underneath to get it to freezing level. They poured water over the top and made her drive over that very quickly, and the trainer yanked the handbrake on. She said, "The first couple of days scared the living daylights out of me," but she got to learn how to handle it and how to recognise where the problems were. She said that was great, because driving through north Germany in winter is an interesting exercise in road grip.

One of the things I will say of advanced defensive driving training courses: The very important thing is that you may learn to deal with the problems there but what you really learn is to recognise the problem before you get there, before you do it. Although some of the people opposing it have said, "You forget everything straightaway," you do not. For example, when I was teaching my children to drive, as soon as they could drive in a straight line on a very quiet road I made them use the anti-lock braking system so that they felt what it was like. On one of the cars I had, it felt like a machine gun going off under your feet: a lot of banging and clattering. As we have said in the submission, if nobody has ever tried that before, it would scare the living daylights out of them and they would take their foot off and they would crash. Unfortunately the government people say, "You mustn't teach them that." Sorry, but if you do not teach them that they are going to crash and die. This is what you get from here. It is in the submission here. If they get P-plates, then they learn to drive—unfortunately, usually by accident. Not a good idea.

That anticipation is essential. Does it stay with you? Yes. I taught my children only once how to do that. My son some five years later said to me that, having stamped on the brakes crossing the Story Bridge in Brisbane when someone swung across in front of him, knowing that he could steer saved him. That was years later. In my own case I did an advanced driving course when I was significantly older. It was a sixty-fifth birthday present. In the oversteer section of BMW, everything came back. I just knew it after 35 or 40 years of never having done that. It was like a click of the fingers. You do not lose it if you have learnt it properly. You do not have to do it a lot but you do have to understand it. That is very important.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: One of the concerns raised by the industry is the fact that every five years driving instructors complete questionnaires with tick boxes and are effectively reaccredited for the next five years. From your perspective in the association, does the German industry have practical advanced training?

Mr LANE: As far as I am aware, they have a whole series of standards and they go through a level of examination. Things change. There are not terribly large numbers of driving instructors and it is much easier to get them through the system rather than try to get every individual through it. For the individuals, most of them are on the road less and you really should be able to convey a lot of these things to the media. Unfortunately the way the advertising budget seems to be spent is more on self-justification of the bureaucracy and what it thinks rather than getting the message across to people. It is alright telling something to Mrs Bloggs who drives to the supermarket and to church every other Sunday, but you need to get the message through to the people who are out there all day every day in the real world. Driving at a desk is interesting but it does not actually teach anything about reality.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: That leads to the next question: What is the cause of crashes? The insurance industry appeared before the Committee last week and it was obvious to a number of us that we do not capture data well with regard to accidents, especially smaller accidents where the police are not called. Does your association have any suggestions about how we can get more accurate data? The reality is you can tailor the training much more effectively if you know where the most accidents are. We believe, unless I am speaking out of turn, that the lack of continuity of data and the lack of sharing of data may lead to inappropriate training as well. Would you agree with that?

Mr LANE: Absolutely. One of our addendums is that the Institute of Advanced Motorists in the UK did a study on crash causes in the UK over a five-year period—quite a substantial set. The figures it was looking at were the responses from the first attendees, not the specialist crash investigators. The criteria it used were developed from a study by the Transport Research Laboratories in the UK. It was quite a few years ago, part of the Blair Government era. The report is TRL323. That gives a way of assessing the primary causes. Up to six causes can be a possibility. Interestingly, the original TRL323 report said that speed as the cause of fatal crashes was about 7 per cent, not the huge figures given here, which got a sharp response from Lord Whitty, who at that time was the junior transport Minister responsible for road safety.

The system they have takes into account those things that are seen by first responders. There are also specialist groups within the UK Police Forces that have that specialist crash investigation training. In fact, my nephew is in the West Yorkshire Police and he was one of the people doing that. He tells me it was a very stiff course. He is a science graduate and even as a science graduate he said the six-week course was intense, very difficult. When they do that, the basic system they use is very much to the same extent as in aircraft crash investigations where you not only do a reconstruction of the crash itself but then start to look for the reasons behind the crash and the reasons that caused those reasons. That way you get a far better indication of what has gone on.

People say it is expensive and we could not do it, but our fatality rate in New South Wales is about the equivalent of two fully laden Boeing 737s crashing and killing everyone. The serious injury rate is something like 10 times that—so a dozen Boeing 737s—and nobody is prepared to put the effort and work into finding out what really happens. The essential thing is if you find out the real, in-depth causes of crashes then you can adapt your countermeasures but also adapt your teaching systems so that you deal with those problems and, as I say, not let people find out when they are on P-plates.

The CHAIR: I am sure Ms Petinos would like to explore some of those issues.

Mr LANE: It is essential in our view that we do this. It is expensive. This Committee has recommended this in the past and I am afraid the bureaucracy has simply said, basically, "No, we won't do it."

The CHAIR: We will have the opportunity to question the Government in a short while.

Mr LANE: I am sure you will. It is a very serious matter.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: My question is about older drivers, which has been more topical than I was expecting it to be. In your association's mind do you consider the current New South Wales laws with respect to older drivers to be harsh or discriminatory?

Mr LANE: Let me confess to being 73. The answer to that is no. As we grow older we all lose our faculties, things change, we get slower, sometimes we get smarter, but not often. Experience changes us and there comes a time when physically we do need to be checked in our vehicle. Whatever age you pick is always going to be an arbitrary factor, no matter what. I do not have any great problem with that. The age here is 75; the age in the United Kingdom is 70. That 70 in the UK is every second year, I think it is every year here. It is one of those things that basically you should be going to the doctor and getting checked out anyway. Unfortunately for me I am one of those rather disgustingly healthy people who rarely if ever goes to a doctor. I do not have a regular doctor.

In the next 18 months I am actually going to have to gather myself up and go and get a general check over so the doctor knows me and knows what I am about, whether I am any good, so that when I come to the formal thing he can say, right, I do know you, you are not doctor shopping, you are fine. One of my fellow students in the French course was like me, does not often go to the doctor, went to several doctors for odd things. When he went to get his certificate that he was fit to drive the doctor said, looks to me like you have been doctor shopping. It may be a good thing if the Roads and Traffic Authority did advise people a year before that they are going to come up for being tested and it would be a good idea to have a regular visit to the doctor.

The CHAIR: Thank you. That is good information.

Mr LANE: I am happy with that. The practical driving test for the over 85s, again, no great issue with that, except we are a little worried about the nature of the test itself. There is always a possibility—probability, I must say, with the State Government—that you can be very, very rigid on what is happening and what is tested. Someone I know was going to the test and he was very worried that he would have to, if he was pulling off on the side of the road, would have to sit there with five clicks on the indicator before he looked and moved out. That is not reality. This is not what you do in real life. Again, there is this fetish almost about twisting your head and looking over your shoulder.

Again, when I was teaching my children the first thing I did was set them up and make sure that they had the mirrors set properly. Very often you drive around and you can see somebody with mirrors and obviously they are showing half the side of the car in the mirror, no good at all. I actually taught them to get somebody in the back seat and put their fingers on the handle on the outside and you should just be able to see your knuckles in the mirror. That gives you a very wide range in the mirror. If they are disappearing outside your mirror as they are coming past you, they are actually in your peripheral vision. Again, that is another part of the teaching that does not seem to be covered.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: You are talking about your experience with teaching your children. Do you think that there are adequate mechanisms to monitor the performance of driver trainers to ensure compliance with professional standards?

Mr LANE: Obviously not. The most obvious thing is the proportion of passes. But there again, if the testing system is so weak—and I have the view that the Australian driver testing system is probably the first world's worst. That is a big condemnation.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Why?

Mr LANE: We are a long way behind the Germans, the French, the Italians, the Swiss, the English. My son's driving test 15 years ago was 12 minutes, checking in until he had been told he had passed. My test 55 years ago in the UK was 45 minutes and was much wider. The test I had in the UK, one of the things they are bringing in is instead of the tester saying turn left, turn right, they are saying go from here to XYZ, please. That is a much more difficult thing for the learner driver. But when they are on their own that is what they have to do. So you are actually testing them there on something that they have to do. There is discussion there too of having them set something in the sat nav, but I think that is something to come yet.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: What if you are being asked to drive somewhere that you do not actually know? In that scenario that is well and good and I appreciate the skills required to navigate yourself somewhere, but what if you are being asked to drive somewhere that you are not familiar with, or on roads that you would not use day to day? I am trying to understand what the tangible characteristics are that you are saying makes our system so weak, comparative to other systems. You have mentioned the length of duration of the test.

Mr LANE: Duration.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: But what else?

Mr PRYOR: There is no requirement for professional instruction. In Germany the requirement is for professional instruction. There will be parents who are not very good drivers in the first place who are the ones that are doing the training. And at the very minimum it should be compulsory to have some professional driving instruction before you get your first licence.

Mr LANE: We have mentioned the German system, where it is all done. The French have a system where they require a certain amount of driver training. The French system only counts professional driver training, you can have the parents take them out but those hours do not count. So they are properly trained. In terms of the difference in the driving tests, I have mentioned some of the things they have done in Germany, where the Germans have the actual trainer certify they can do things. One of the things that is done, certainly in the English test, is the emergency stop. That ensures that the driver knows what it is like, and it does not matter what the weather conditions are, you have to be able to do it.

It was actually snowing during my driving test, so that is a little bit stiffer than you are likely to get here. But, they test you, they check your anticipation of doing things, how you go around, how you manage yourself in the traffic. Whereas here they take you to a back street and then do a reverse park and a three-point turn, and that is about it. In the UK you have got to go through the normal traffic system. You asked a question there about going to strange places. The reality of life is that whenever you are doing any form of training for a driving test you are going to do it in the area of the testing. You may not know the precise routes that are wanted but the learner driver would know where things are in that area. So it is not like taking off to a strange town and told to go to the BP station somewhere over there.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I did my test in Kiama and I live an hour and a half away, so I do not know that I agree with that. It was the quickest place I could get into a test and I needed my licence before university, so I do not know that I agree with that, based on my own experience.

Mr LANE: But there again you would have been told to turn left, turn right, et cetera.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Yes, but if they said go to X, I would be lost.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I had a lot of questions because I think it was a very good submission but unfortunately we are quickly running out of time. I wanted to pick up on one issue in terms of advanced or defensive driver training. You noted in your submission that the bureaucrats had made a pretty scathing desktop assessment of the success and efficacy of some of those programs. I am interested in two points. Firstly, do you see a difference between advanced and defensive driver training, and if one is preferable to the other? Second, also from your perspective—and I know your submission says that you believe they should be included— but would you see perhaps a system whereby the logbook hours could be reduced by having a defensive driver training course or an advanced driver training course as advisable?

Mr PRYOR: I think I stated earlier it does not matter what the title of the course is, call it defensive, call it advanced, the important thing is the content of the course. If you can focus on the content and get that right, you will get the result that you are after.

Mr LANE: Because you are teaching people in the advanced defensive courses things that are very, very specific to it, rather than just usual things, running up your time, like to and from school, those sort of things, there is a very good option there of reducing the logbook hours. Because 10 hours on an advanced defensive course is pretty much as good as 50 hours with even a good driver sitting beside you, or reasonably good driver.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: At the moment there is a three-for-one discount. Do you think it should be higher for an advanced or a defensive driver training course?

Mr LANE: Yes, because you are taking people through that. The test itself should be far stronger, because people teach to it. It does not matter what the subject matter is—it could be NAPLAN—everyone teaches to the test. If the test is stiff enough, the teaching will rise to that standard, otherwise people will not pass.

Mr PRYOR: You may not be aware that many parents falsify the logbook.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: No, never!

Mr PRYOR: A professional driving instructor will not do that, and one reason is that they will not get paid for all of the hours.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is a very good point.

Mr LANE: I would like to comment on the speed restrictions on learners and P-platers. How on earth do we teach them to overtake? How do we teach them to merge onto or even drive on a freeway? It is very difficult. If they are limited to driving at 90 kilometres an hour, how do we teach them what it feels like to be driving at 110 kilometres an hour? They will do it, but they have to learn it themselves - by accident. They should not be doing that. Those restrictions prohibit them being taught properly. I took my children to Queensland before the rules had changed. I was able to teach them what it was like to drive at a higher speed. Trust me, taking a learner on the M1 in Queensland is an interesting experience.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is why your knuckles are so white

Mr LANE: Not quite. By that time they were pretty good drivers. Interestingly, in some sections you have three lanes of camber and then on the median lane the camber changes to the right. Taking them from lane three to lane four a couple of times lets them feel the change. They will pick up those differences. If they are overtaking on a country road, the camber goes the other way, and when they come back after overtaking they do not feel that. One of the silliest things we can do is to prevent them learning to the best of their ability and knowledge so that they can do it. The same applies to defensive driving and higher standards. It is silly to let them on the road themselves so they learn the hard way. We cannot do that; it is murder.

I know the rules have changed since I took my kids to Queensland. They took a blind eye to restrictions on interstate driver licences then. At that stage, I think Queensland did not even have L-plates. It now seems as though the bureaucracy here is trying to force other States to comply with that restriction. They have not learned; they are slow learners. They must not inhibit people learning to the best of their abilities.

Mr NICK LALICH: I agree with you about parents teaching their kids how to drive to a certain point. I trained my two kids, but when I got to a certain point I told them I thought they knew enough of my bad habits. I then sent them to a professional driving instructor and they then got their licence—at their first attempt.

Mr LANE: I did the same thing.

Mr NICK LALICH: That should be done with everyone. I know that some families cannot afford it, but for the safety of our children they should have some professional driving instruction. Can you comment on

the balance between sanctions and incentives, especially for young drivers? Are the current regimes too harsh on provisional drivers? Are you aware of any driver training and education that has been successful in achieving positive road safety outcomes?

Mr LANE: The issue is that we seem to have a very punitive regime. I am not sure whether it is psychological or critical or whether it comes from the days when this was a convict colony. However, there is that very strong feeling that punishment is the only thing that works. I am surprised that some people do not advocate 20 lashes. It does not help.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is an idea.

Mr LANE: I do not want to give them any ideas; they have enough bad ideas as it is. The problem is that if we use punishment as an incentive, all we get is a resentful person. There is no explanation of the problem and what they have done wrong. If your objective is to correct things, you need to go back to a higher standard of driver training and encourage people to understand what it is about. We have a rule about keeping to the left unless overtaking, but no-one seems to understand it. The message should be sent to young people and is adults that the object of the exercise is not to hold up traffic. If we do that, the traffic is much easier to manage and it is much safer. We hear people complaining about drivers weaving in and out of traffic. If they are keeping left unless they are overtaking, there is no way drivers will weave in and out. That message about what should be done needs to be sent. It was suggested that we should follow the United Kingdom and, I believe, the French system of having a highway code. It is not in legislation, but it explains why you do or do not do things.

I have referred to observation skills at various times. Representing our local member on the traffic committee, we have come across points where people go through stop signs, and we wonder why. When I investigated I found that the stop line—which is the only thing the driver sees—was almost out of sight when you are on it. That means we need some other form of recognition. Punishment does not get the message across; it simply says that there is some brutal idiot trying to take money from you. People I have met who have been close to losing their licence under the points system say they have been so wary of not breaching the rules that they are more dangerous than they were. No, if you are going to have people catching kids doing things they should not, it is better to send them to a training course provided by people who not only know what they are talking about but who also know how to teach children, particularly the recalcitrant ones.

As I said, learners are regurgitators; they spit back whatever you tell them. It does not sink in. Sometimes you need to take a different approach when you are talking to people. My son's cohorts said some very savage things about cyclists. I said to them, "You've got to try to miss them. It is not worth the paperwork to hit them. If you do hit them and they go under your car, you get all the flesh and blood underneath." That is totally politically incorrect; it is violently incorrect but it got through to them. Sometimes you have to take a different tack to get through to people at that age. We are talking about those in the mid-teenage years when they are still regurgitating what they are told; they do not tend to query things. If you are telling them not to do this or that, it is meaningless. There are strict rules about how close you can park to a postbox. I have no idea how many metres it is, but I do know that I need to leave enough space for the postal van to get in so that the mail can be collected. That is the sort of thing that should be taught, not this finicky stuff.

The CHAIR: Thank you for bringing your experience to this hearing. The Committee may have some additional questions, which will be sent to you in writing. Would you be happy to answer any additional questions? Those answers will form part of the evidence and will then be published.

Mr LANE: Yes, indeed. I am leaving for France on 16 June, and I will be away for six weeks. Of course, I will be driving around.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Analysing their driving?

Mr LANE: Yes, indeed. More importantly, I will be observing their actual on-road practices, which are interesting. If members are ever there, they should watch the traffic navigating the Arc de Triomphe. It works.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Enjoy that summer experience. We do have to close now, unfortunately. We need to move on to the next witness.

Mr LANE: Mr Chairman, if there is one other thing I can say to you, I criticise the bureaucracy—they just do not do the things you want them to—but it would probably be a very good idea if there was a supervisory panel consisting of people such as ourselves, the NRMA, motorcycle people, somebody probably from the legal profession involved in compensation cases—Brydens Lawyers come to mind. I would like to see somebody from the pedestrians—a pedestrian representative is perhaps not the best person. And similarly with the cyclists. There should be, but they tend to be: "I want all my rights but I accept no responsibilities." That is just a thought

for you. It is not directly here, except that it is because of the poor information out there we are getting some poor outcomes. You would have to talk to the Minister and keep the bureaucracy away.

The CHAIR: Indeed. And on that note, thank you. We have to conclude.

Mr LANE: Thank you for accepting that one.

(The witnesses withdrew)

STEWART JAMES NICHOLLS, Business Development Director, Ian Luff Motivation Australia Pty Ltd and Drive to Survive, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Mr Nicholls, I am sorry we ran a little over time with our previous witnesses, but we will endeavour to make that up for you. Thank you for appearing before the Committee this afternoon. Do you have any questions about the information that was sent to you or any of the processes today?

Mr NICHOLLS: No, not at all.

The CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief opening statement.

Mr NICHOLLS: First of all I want to thank this Committee. It is a very worthwhile topic and it is a topic that has a lot of merit and is certainly in our belief overdue. Hopefully from the mountainous amounts of information you most likely have, you guys can formulate something that is effective.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. With driver trainer standards, are there adequate mechanisms to monitor the performance of driver trainers and to ensure compliance with professional standards? How would you change current regulations?

Mr NICHOLLS: Who in particular are you referring to when you say "driver trainers"?

The CHAIR: I would like you to comment on both types—the professional drivers and the non-professionals such as mentors or parents.

Mr NICHOLLS: In terms of the professionals, you have got learner driver coaches—

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Driving instructors.

Mr NICHOLLS: Driver trainers. They predominantly only teach learner driver training. What tends to happen is they stick to a very precise set of parameters relating to what the student is going to be tested on. They tend not to deviate from that. The actual information required to gain that licensing to start with is quite intense and quite expensive. It is a fairly substantial burden on anyone to gain that accreditation to start with. In terms of ongoing testing, I believe it is something that should perhaps be monitored more. I do not think it is monitored enough. There is not even anything to ask whether they are practising on an ongoing basis—there are no concurrent standards that they have to adhere to to maintain that licensing.

The CHAIR: To take that further, the question was going to lead to continuing professional development. Your indication is that there is an absence of that.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, but what we have to understand is that continuation of professional development still relates to the same topic they are teaching. They are still teaching the same thing—that has not really advanced. The other side of the coin is when you are talking about post-licence driver education, which is a field we have been in since 1972, there are no standards for that. The reason for that is that the industry is self-regulated. You do not need to be a learner driver coach to teach that because, in effect, you are not actually teaching how to pass a test. You are not teaching people how to do that. It is information that is not in any formalised curriculum or anything that will get someone to pass a test and so on.

Marginally, what happens is most organisations will have their own standards that they want to set—I know we do. We have our own training and development and we have our standard operating procedures and things like that that we adhere to. Certainly our trainers are regularly monitored, coached and improved. Largely the curriculum is controlled by us and we set any changes that might have happened. Certainly in the last five years our programs have all gone through huge changes. In the last 20 years they have constantly evolved. That sort of thing is happening. I am not sure that that is happening at the learner driver level and I am not sure that that is happening for learner driver instructors.

The CHAIR: Indeed. In your experience, would you like to comment on the contribution made by the parent supervisors and volunteer mentors? Do those non-professional trainers support or undermine the efforts of the professional driving instructors?

Mr NICHOLLS: It is one of the things we put down in our submission. There is actually no requirement for you to have any formalised training to obtain a licence in New South Wales. You can literally rock up to an RMS, apply for a go and have a turn. Indeed, last year when my son was going for his provisional licence there was a person there who was on his eleventh turn. Eleven goes at failing that fairly basic test says to me that he is not getting the right information. I would love to see the statistics on how many people fail that

beyond once or twice. Once or twice can be put down to a mistake, nervousness or any of those parameters, but failing it 11 times and getting frustrated at the tester—that was the case and I witnessed the whole thing—was an indication to me that perhaps that person did not have any kind of training. Even the basic training of learning how to pass that test is a level of training.

Coming back to your question, it is fairly well documented that a learner driver will start to learn from the parents from the age of two—literally the moment they start learning every other aspect. Whether the person in the vehicle is yelling at other motorists and displaying a level of rage or aggression or how to respond to certain circumstances, people have learnt a lot of bad habits well before they have even obtained their learner licence. This is where we believe in good quality education within the school system. We have an in-school program but we have also developed a program through which parents can log in and learn how to instruct their kids during that phase, because a lot of parents find it daunting. They find it completely frightening and they would not have a clue where to start. You may know how to drive but it does not mean you know how to educate.

The CHAIR: Great. That is the type of information we are looking for. Thank you.

Mr NICK LALICH: Some submissions claim that the biggest problem with the use of mobile phones and other distractions is that drivers and pedestrians do not have an appreciation of the reduction in focus that they cause. Does this mean that the current education campaign has not been successful and is not getting the message across? What should be done to raise awareness of distractions and change that behaviour?

Mr NICHOLLS: That is a good question. Part of the problem stems from the fact that it is so easy to drive a modern motorcar. In fact there is talk about autonomous vehicles and people being able to stay in lanes. I know of one person—a manufacturer—who drove from Gosford to Ryde without using any of the controls in a vehicle. Then there is a discussion about being able to catch up on paperwork: "I don't have to be aware." When a pilot is flying a plane on autopilot, on average it takes them 11 seconds to respond when the autopilot suddenly disengages. We know that some of the autonomous functions in motor vehicles do not work so well in rain, fog or any sort of inclement weather. We do not know how they work out in country roads. If that is the case, what sort of information are we passing on to people? The level of boredom that people are finding behind the wheel is causing them to pick up things like mobile phones—be distracted with social media and catch up on things. People are using the car, literally, as a secondary office.

I live in the Hills area. My wife works at Ashfield. It takes her, on average, an hour and a half in each direction. A lot of that is in bumper to bumper traffic. She is just sitting there. In every car there is someone looking at their phone or doing something other than focusing on driving, because there is that level of boredom or frustration, and they are looking for other outlets. To answer your question, I think what needs to be done is better enforcement. I saw trials in Western Australia. They had officers on dirt bikes going between the traffic catching people out and issuing fines. That was also a visible exercise. On the back of their shirts was "Mobile phone enforcement". That tells other drivers what is going on—that they could be caught. That was very effective. There was a very good social media campaign relating to that.

The only thing you can do is come down hard on people. We certainly educate people about distractions in our programs. Distractions are a huge part of not maintaining focus. If you are not aware, you are downright dangerous. How can you possibly take control of a vehicle and take steps to avoid any kind of crash? It is not just mobile phones. It is looking out the side window—perving. It could be perving on a car or on a house. We believe education is the key. It is not so much about a campaign, saying, "This is what will happen; you'll die," because that can sometimes be ineffective. A lot of people say, "It will happen to someone else: it will not happen to me." We have to get through to people by giving them real-life examples of what could happen, and give them a reason why these things are happening—why is it illegal for them to be using the phone?

Mr NICK LALICH: I would say you are right with respect to education about merging and all the rest. Years ago when you changed lanes you had to wait for a person to let you in. Today you just use the blinker. People cut in on you; you have to let them get in. "Hang on, you have been sitting in that lane for the last two miles and all of a sudden you want to get over here; just wait until there is an opportunity." People do not wait, they just cut in on you.

Mr NICHOLLS: You are 100 per cent correct. Drivers today are not as courteous. They are also more selfish. There are no two ways about that.

Mr NICK LALICH: It is terrible. I try not to do it.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We have heard a lot in this inquiry about the merits, or otherwise, of defensive or advanced driver training.

Mr NICHOLLS: Sure.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Noting that the first thing you deal with in your submission is the driver training myths, do you want to step us through that?

Mr NICHOLLS: Absolutely. Ian Luff gives his apologies today. Sadly, his sister passed away on Thursday and her funeral is tomorrow in Queensland, otherwise he would have been here. Ian has been in the industry since 1972. He started our organisation in 1983. Anyone who drove a car in that era, around 1972—my first car was a vehicle of that era—would know that it had no technology. There were no ABS brakes and no stability control. Most of them did not have power steering. Power steering was considered a luxury, really. We had to adjust the seatbelts ourselves. We had to wind the windows up. There was none of the technology that you have in a modern car. The tyre technology was different.

Mr NICK LALICH: There was no car radio.

Mr NICHOLLS: Absolutely, and there was no air-conditioning.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: You had the floor missing too, didn't you, Mr Lalich, so that you could use your feet?

Mr NICHOLLS: Fred Flintstone style! In all honesty the tyre technology of the day was appalling. Suspension technology was not what we have today. Most vehicles had a rear-wheel drive with a solid axle, meaning that there was not as much traction, and things like that. So, certainly in wet weather—in any kind of inclement weather—the vehicle was likely to lose traction, and therefore the driver could easily lose control. That was something that a lot of people were fearful of. So the ethos back then was: let's get them to lose control and show them how to regain control. Certainly that is possible so long as you know what to do. That was the methodology used for a long time in driver education, because that was seen as the most important aspect.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: *Police Academy* stuff.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes. It was not uncommon to get someone to come down on a wet road, pull the handbrake on, make them lose control and then get them to regain control. It was very effective. It worked really well. To the observer, though, it is quite violent. It is erratic, risky and dangerous looking. Even though it was done in controlled circumstances the outside observer would perceive that as teaching someone how to be what we would refer to today as a hoon. Certainly that was not the intention.

Let us fast forward to today. We have vehicles that do all those sorts of things. They will prevent most of that from happening. They will not prevent you from crashing, unfortunately. If you enter a corner too fast, no matter how good the stability control and ABS is, you will still leave the road—and you will leave the road at a greater rate of knots. Normally, the first thing the driver looks at is the tree or the Armco barrier. That is what they will hit, because your hands follow your eyes. The driver gets target fixation; that is normally why you see the tree in the dead centre of the vehicle—in the middle of the bonnet.

With respect to our techniques today, we focus on what is going on in the driver's mind. You talked about distractions. We are talking about distractions, drugs, alcohol and fatigue. Fatigue is a big one. We also factor in, for some of our clients who work in regional areas, what to do in the event of a kangaroo or a wombat coming out in front of them. Some of the organisations that we work for get 457 visa holders who have come over here to go through this training so that they understand Australian conditions. The first time they see a kangaroo jump out in front of them, who knows what their response will be?

These are some of the things that we deal with today. We certainly envision all those sorts of aspects which are modern teaching techniques. We also use adult learning techniques, which is far from the way it used to be. All the pulling-on of handbrakes and sliding around is long gone. We do not do that any more.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: If we were to look at how to implement defensive driver training or advanced driver training in the driver education system, how do you see that happening?

Mr NICHOLLS: I definitely would not recommend it for a learner driver. I know that that was discussed with the previous witness. That information is far too advanced for where they are at. We are accredited to conduct the Safer Driver course for learners, which was put together by this Government back in 2013. We were involved in the panel that put that together. That is a very good program for the learner level. Once the learner has progressed to a provisional licence they are now out on the road on their own with no extra pair of eyes looking at them and monitoring what they are doing.

Largely, that is the big myth about the difference between learners and P-plate drivers. People think P-plate means they have their licence. In fact, they are still in the learner phase. They are still learning. It is a bit of a myth for P-platers to think that they have their licence and they are now competent. They have passed a test

and that is it. They are still learning. We largely throw them in at the deep end and say, "Now you have to learn through experience." We do not teach them anything. We do not teach them what to do if a child runs in front of them. Most of them will look at the child because that is the danger, that is fight or flight, will hit the brake and will drill the child. There is no looking for the "Let us not look at the child. Let us look for the escape path and steer the vehicle in the right direction and let us hopefully miss the child". The same with a pedestrian. It all comes back to education. The other side of it is that we talk about this big push for speed. "Everyone has got to slow down." That is the campaign. "Slow down". Slow down to what? Everyone is doing the speed limit. You can die at the speed limit. This is what people do not understand: you can die at the speed limit. You can kill someone at the speed limit. I give the example of Market Street outside State Theatre on a Saturday night after the theatre has come out. Forty kilometres per hour is the speed limit through there and I challenge anyone to do anything more than idle with your foot covering the brake pedal ready to stop, because people are that packed on the sidewalk that you are waiting for someone to spill in front of you. But the speed limit says 40. If you travel down at 40 I believe you are reckless. So it is inappropriate speed to the conditions. And all of these things need to be worked in to educate people as opposed to just barking at them all the time, "You are doing this wrong. You are doing that wrong." They are literally sitting there going, "Well, we do not know any other way," because they are unconsciously incompetent, sadly.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Where do you see the benefits of undertaking a defensive or advanced driver training course taking place in terms of the graduated licensing scheme? Would it be from the transition to full licence?

Mr NICHOLLS: We believe that definitely the red P drivers should be involved at some point. We also believe that current drivers should be either encouraged or find a way to get them to do a refresher course at least every five years, because in the last five years our course has changed because vehicle technology has changed so much. So the courses are keeping up with the latest information. We do work with the NSW Centre for Road Safety to keep up to date. I know that drug use is rife with drivers so our education steers people towards that. Not saying, "Don't take drugs," but, "If you are going to take drugs, do not drive." That is our message. We are not a health organisation; we are a driver education organisation. So that is the sort of thing that has to happen in our thought process on a regular basis. There are a couple of ways you can do that. You can either do that through workplace health and safety, through organisations with fleets to mandate that they do some form of education because at the moment there are very large fleets out there with drivers who drive for a living. Under workplace health and safety they are undertaking a risk and yet there is no formalised training for them, whereas if you were to operate a forklift you would need to have some sort of accreditation given to you. It is the same thing if you were to lift a box or go into a closed space.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I would like to pick up on the story you told us earlier about going to the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] with your son and going through that process, and look a little bit at training incentives. Can you expand on the idea that the New South Wales Government's three-for-one discount on logbook hours for learner drivers up to a maximum of 10 hours and therefore a 20-hour discount in total has encouraged a view that 10 hours is a maximum recommended amount of professional training?

Mr NICHOLLS: With our Safer Driver course, you cannot do that until you have done 50 hours. And they are genuine on-road hours. I can tell you at 50 hours most learners are still very green. Some get it quicker than others but 10 hours with an instructor again comes back to what they are teaching. If they are teaching you just to pass the test then obviously that is only going to be as beneficial as what they are teaching. So perhaps what is tested needs to be looked at in terms of the provisional licence accreditation from learner. Therefore then you can change what is being taught. And in that case you would then encourage further training and more hours with an instructor. But I think having an instructor over no instructor is certainly a benefit.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: So where you are using an accredited instructor, do you believe that reductions in hours of driving experience should actually be permitted within our framework given the importance of practical experience for learner drivers?

Mr NICHOLLS: I think it is a good thing. I think what the current system says it is fairly well spot-on. I think the additional 20 hours for doing the Safer Driver course is also a good carrot, although I would like to see that probably at 25 hours because I believe that that course—and this is the hard part, it is currently opt-in; it is not even mandatory—should be mandatory at a bare minimum. The things that are taught in that course are so much better than not doing that, and we certainly see the difference in those drivers who come back to do our defensive course who have done the Safer Driver course versus somebody who has not. There is a huge difference in the way they perceive driving and certainly in the way they even look at things like tailgating, as just a very simple way of looking at it. They just understand because they have been taught at that point. It does have an effect. They go back and it passes it on to the parents as well and you get feedback, too.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: You mentioned the Safer Drivers course here and you touched on defensive driving a little bit earlier with the Deputy Chair and potentially looking at making it mandatory at five-year intervals. In your mind, would cost be a prohibitive factor in doing that? Do you believe that it is an impediment to certain users having access to the program?

Mr NICHOLLS: Certainly, some people would think that. Absolutely. And that would be a challenge that would need to be looked at. However, when you look at our full one-day defensive driver course it retails at \$285 including goods and services tax [GST]. If you equate that over five years it is \$57 a year. That is not even one tank of fuel each year for most vehicles. And you are investing in your own safety, it is a life skill, it is something you will be using on a daily basis, and it could well save your life and the life of others. And in terms of looking at it that way, it is not just the life it could save; you could end up with an acquired brain injury as a result of a crash which means your whole life is changed. We have an ambassador whose name is Jarred Ingram. He talks about what happened to him 10 years ago with his acquired brain injury and how he still cannot even shave himself. He regrets the poor choices he made on that night and we certainly see that as encouragement for giving people more information about what they could do to mitigate their risk.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Drivers are often exposed to many different road conditions, so something we have spoken about during this inquiry process thus far is the differences between metro and non-metro driving conditions and the ability for people to get exposure to all of those factors early on in their driving life. Do you see any value in computer-based training or simulators as an addition to practical driving or do you perceive that sort of use as a training tool to be limited?

Mr NICHOLLS: That is a good question. A lot of our corporate clients ask for this sort of e-training. There is some merit for it to be used in a limited fashion. The issue we have is—and it is no different to a PlayStation or an Xbox—if you crush the car you press reset and go again. Sadly we know that is not the case in real life. So it plays a part and simulators can be effective but they can also be expensive to set up. It can also be quite time-consuming to run someone through a program. We have looked at simulators in the past. I think the best thing to do with people with country roads is to educate them on what the challenges out there are: the camber of the road, the soft edges, wild animals, changing surfaces. All of these things come into play and a driver who is prudent should know all about those aspects. Sadly they just are not taught that.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I assume the simulators do not really translate as well for an animal being a couple of metres in front of the car and needing to deal with that?

Mr NICHOLLS: A hundred per cent. Yes. The common misconception in the real world, particularly with kangaroos, is you just hit them. When we are educating, we will say yes, we certainly do not advocate swerving around them because obviously that can create other issues. But we say why would you not want to hit the brakes and slow up so that if you have to hit it you will hit at a slower speed? Or you could miss it. I will give you another example: 98 per cent of people who do our Drive to Survive program do not even know how to apply the brakes properly. We will have a difference at 70 kilometres an hour of 24 metres in stopping on average in a group of 20 people, who are using our roads today, before we start the program.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Earlier you gave the example of pilots taking 11 seconds to kick in with the response time when autopilot is on, effectively.

Mr NICHOLLS: When it disables, yes.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: In a circumstance where you have not been in an automated scenario, if you are driving with human factors at play, what is a typical response time?

Mr NICHOLLS: The RMS will say the figure is about 1½ seconds for the average person to see the problem and do something about it. Then there is another 1½ seconds at 70 kilometres an hour to stop, so that is a three-second gap. You can see way further down the road than that on most occasions, but most people are looking at the car in front of them with their eyes low. Human physiology means our centre eye line is 15 degrees below dead straight, so our natural tendency is to look down. When we get fatigued, our eyes drop. Unfortunately, when our eyes drop, so does our ability to see danger further ahead. That is why on a Monday morning you will see on any of the Ms—M4, M7—a multicar pile-up with one car going into the back of another.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I have to declare that I did one of your Drive to Survive courses many years ago and recently I took part in a driver education course on the Central Coast. As others have said, we need to do the course again because you get reminders that no matter how many safety devices on a vehicle, when you are doing 100 kilometres an hour, it is 30 metres from when you hit the brake until the car comes to a stop. One thing I realised last week is the lack of regulation for driving instructors, which they admitted, compared with your industry, which is self-regulating. Your industry is also calling for better regulation to get standardised

advanced and defensive driver training. Would you say it would be beneficial for driver trainers to undertake a mandatory defensive driver course? They will only do what they have to do; they will teach the test. As part of their education, should they undertake a course such as yours? Should their skills be assessed on a regular basis?

Mr NICHOLLS: You are absolutely right. I believe it would be a very good recommendation to get learner driver coaches into a defensive driving program; a lot of them have never done it. The same could be said for parents; even if a parent was undertaking learner driver coaching they should also do a course. As you said, a lot of things get forgotten and it is the little things. How many Committee members still turn with their hand inside the wheel because of the old days of heavy steering? Does anyone here do it? You may not be aware of it. We will catch on average about half a dozen people every course doing it, yet there is no need for it today. Ten to two, or quarter to three—where do you hold the steering wheel? Most people are still holding it at ten to two, but airbag deployment could burn the insides of their arms. Airbag deployment is a violent process. A lot of kids will drive along with their feet on the dash in the passenger seat; if there is a crash you are doing a sit-up at 250 kilometres an hour, because that is the speed that the airbag deploys at. Normally what happens is that your knees will drill through your head. They just do not understand this information. It is all information that is relevant, and it is information that we believe people who do our program are blown away by. Even the seating position is critical; it can help to reduce fatigue and it can help to increase car control.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And this is all stuff that is not in our current driving test or driver education.

Mr NICHOLLS: Correct.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: You talked about the Safer Drivers program, which you contributed to. You said that kids pick up behavioural practices from the age of two. We have a submission saying that children in years 8, 9 and 10 should be exposed to safer driving information from a much earlier age and that it should potentially be part of the school curriculum. That would lead them to safer driving practices and potentially to defensive driving.

Mr NICHOLLS: The Centre for Road Safety will argue that that is already in the school curriculum, even from kindergarten right through. That is being delivered by teachers. When we do a presentation in a school, the feedback from the teachers is that they need to have programs like this because they do not have the same effectiveness with the kids as we do. I agree that there are definitely changing elements to training, but you cannot go in and tell schoolkids they are all going to crash and die, because that does not work. You will scare the ones who are already on that page, but the ones who are risk takers are going to say, "It is not going to happen to me, it happened to him." That is what evidence tells us, so it has to be a very good program in that regard. We are really proud of the one that we deliver, but it is constantly evolving.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: As you said there also needs to be better regulation. You talked about the cost, and by standards of owning a vehicle, they are minute. We have talked about harsh penalties for people disobeying the rules. What about incentives for people who do both safer driver and training courses? Could you see these incentives as being of benefit? It would be a bit like renewing your licence and getting the pleasant surprise that you have been a good driver for 10 years.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, I have just got that.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I never knew it existed until I went to get my licence renewed and they said, "Congratulations".

Mr NICHOLLS: Barry O'Farrell brought that in, the platinum licensing scheme.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: It is a fantastic idea.

Mr NICHOLLS: He launched it at our office.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The next step is, what we could offer to encourage people to do the training. Rather than saying they have to do the training, from your perspective what could we do?

Mr NICHOLLS: When you have repeat offenders out there accumulating points, there has to be a point when you say enough is enough and they now have to go and do the training as part of their penalty.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: They have to do a mandatory amount of education.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, and bring back evidence that they have satisfactorily completed the course. That is one idea, and the other idea would be through workplace health and safety. Obviously it then becomes a business expense for most organisations, but they are already mandated by law to mitigate the risks for their employees, no matter the environment the employee is in. A lot of them are out there driving as part of their

work, and some of the workplaces do not even have a driving policy in place. We know this for a fact. They need to have a driving policy that reiterates to the worker that they have a licence, for instance, to drive a vehicle and look at the vehicle before they drive it. There are a lot of pool cars, and people go, "It is not my responsibility to pump up the tyres." Things like this are going on all the time and there are many ways of working through them. We would love to see a working committee set up and we would be happy to be involved in that committee. We would also love to see this Committee come out and do our program. We will put together a very short defensive driving program that could be done in a short amount of time that will not take up too much time, but will give an idea of what modern driver training is like. That would help to dispel some of the myths.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: It is interesting that you mentioned pool cars. We have been told many times about the similarities and differences between airline pilots and drivers, but you never see an airline pilot jump into a 737 without walking around the plane to check it first. Yet most people jump into their cars not having walked around their car to check it. We have to look at how to do these sorts of things better. I recently undertook a course as a visitor and there were kids attending the course on their Ls who did some advanced driving work with their parents, who were their instructors. Their parents commented on how much they had forgotten. We need to look at the mentors and the parents needing to undertake such courses and update their skills. If they have a child coming to the point of learning to drive and so needing to spend 120 hours in the car, technically all of which could be under the instruction of their parent, should there be a mandate that they undertake a refresher before educating another driver for 120 hours?

Mr NICHOLLS: Certainly from our experience I think parents are almost crying out for a program like that. That is the feedback that we have been given and that is why we have gone to the trouble of putting together a program where they can actually opt in through their kids. We have already been to the school in year 10 and they then can go into that portal and hear some vital information that they probably have forgotten.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: It is the continuation of the ongoing education of both student and parent.

Mr NICHOLLS: A lot of parents do not even know that they are supposed to have zero alcohol when they are sitting next to a learner driver. A lot of them do not know that they are not supposed to be on their mobile phone, so they are using it as catch-up time, reading papers and doing all sorts of stuff. That is inappropriate. They need to be as aware as if they are driving the vehicle and need to be completely on board at the same time with that. Things like commentary driving, which is something that police use at the academy—we encourage parents to do that. Get your child to tell you what they are seeing up ahead, because how does the person who is teaching them know what they are looking at? It could be: "There's a vehicle up there with their left-hand indicator on and I can see a car coming up on my right. There's a motorbike back there and there's a vehicle over there, and this is happening and that is happening." Parents would get a lot out of that.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Situational awareness.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, absolutely.

The CHAIR: Unfortunately, time has got away from us. We thank you for appearing before the Committee this afternoon with that valuable information. We may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, and your reply would form part of your evidence and be published. Would you be happy to answer any additional questions?

Mr NICHOLLS: Sure.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I also note Mr Nicholls' invitation for us to do a driver refresher course.

The CHAIR: We do indeed note that, and we will consider it at a meeting to come.

(The witness withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

BERNARD CARLON, Executive Director, Centre for Road Safety, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined
MELINDA BAILEY, Executive Director, Compliance and Regulatory Services, Roads and Maritime Services, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee this afternoon. As you have no questions about the information you have been sent and our processes, we will proceed to opening statements.

Mr CARLON: Thank you very much for the invitation to attend. Transport for NSW has prepared a submission on behalf of the New South Wales Government. We would like to make a brief opening statement in relation to that submission. The New South Wales Government is committed to achieving a 30 per cent reduction in road fatalities and serious injuries from the 2008-10 three-year average by 2021.

The NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-21 has been effective in reducing the fatality rate from 5.67 deaths per 100,000 people in 2010 to 4.97 in 2016. However, there has clearly been an increase in fatalities on New South Wales roads in the last two years when compared with 2014, which had the lowest road toll since the 1920s. The safe systems approach underpins the road safety framework adopted in New South Wales and the safe systems principles are based on safe road design, safer vehicles, safe travel speeds as well as safe road user behaviour. Road trauma levels are largely determined by the interaction of these key elements. Whilst driver education and training is a key component, it is only one element supporting the successful implementation of a safe system.

In New South Wales education and training combined with enforcement and penalties are key countermeasures that aim to motivate road users to follow the rules and behave safely on our roads. Each year the New South Wales Government invests around \$20 million in road safety public education campaigns to the general community. New campaigns launched in response to the increase in the road toll included: the Towards Zero campaign; Don't Trust Your Tired Self, due to the rise in fatigue-related fatalities; Slow Down speeding campaign, in response to an increase in speed-related fatalities; and the Look Out Before You Step Out pedestrian campaign, again in response to an increase in pedestrian fatalities over the last two years.

New South Wales leads national and international jurisdictions with its comprehensive mandatory best practice road safety education framework in schools and early childhood services. For over 30 years road safety education has been a key part of the learning for each and every child growing up in New South Wales. Just last year we revolutionised our primary school resources through the launch of Safety Town, an online and interactive resource for children, teachers and parents, which reflects learning principles in a digital age. It is embedded in the curriculum in New South Wales. We support the view that health and community issues, such as road safety, are addressed by qualified teachers who are familiar with their students' background and strengths and the focus is on the development of knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviours to enable students to make informed decisions as safe road users.

Road safety education and training should be underpinned by robust principles around child and adult learning to ensure sound program design and delivery. We want to make sure that what is being delivered is done in the most effective way possible and results in genuine long-term safe behaviours. Our partnerships with organisations such as the Little Blue Dinosaur Foundation, the RYDA program, the Drive to Survive program, that you have heard from this afternoon, and Bstreetsmart, are key community initiatives and programs that support our education efforts. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of technology and road safety education and training. Transport for NSW has already started this journey with Safety Town and new initiatives, including the digitisation of the novice driver pathway and the new driver logbook app, and new initiatives to move that education into the digital age. We are always keen to identify new driver education initiatives that target specific high-risk road user groups.

The TAFE initiative is a good example of a project that targets young drivers who drive long distances for TAFE and their work as apprentice tradespeople. In 2016, 600 trade apprentices in western New South Wales participated in a series of Towards Zero road safety workshops. Following the success of these, workshops are now being planned and implemented across the State through our TAFE network. The driver licencing access program supports disadvantaged Aboriginal people and other disadvantaged communities by supporting them to meet the graduated licensing scheme requirements. The program provides help with tasks such as licence enrolment, learner driver supervision and debt negotiation and management. In 2016-17 Transport for NSW expanded the program to 14 providers covering more than 50 geographic locations with the target of achieving 630 learner licences and 586 provisional licences for those disadvantaged drivers.

Professional driver trainers are an integral part of ensuring New South Wales licence holders are safe drivers. They provide instruction and assessment for novice, heavy vehicle and older drivers. In order to safeguard professionalism and standards of driving instruction a strict application process is in place. An ageing population will bring about with it a larger cohort of older drivers and as part of the recommendations of the Older Driver Taskforce the New South Wales Government will continue to focus efforts on assisting older road users to make safe choices. The use of technological solutions will be important in developing road safety education resources which target families, medical practitioners and carers, as well as older road users themselves. We want to make sure that our licensing system is holistic, supports the mobility and safety of older drivers and the wider population. The On the Road 65Plus strategy aims to provide older drivers with practical information about choices they can make to keep safe. The evaluation of the motorcycle graduated licensing scheme is a key action in the New South Wales motorcycle safety action plan, launched last year, and running from 2017 to 2019 and Transport for NSW will commence that evaluation this year. Motorcyclists aged 40 years and over are making up an increasing proportion of the road toll. Between 2014 and 2016, there were 109 fatalities where the rider was aged over 40. Of that 109, 42 were aged between 50 and 59.

Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services work with training providers to better promote appropriate courses among infrequent riders such as returning riders. We understand that a number of submissions advocated for regular retesting of unrestricted licence holders. Studies have shown that periodic testing of all drivers is not an effective method of reducing road safety risks. However, research indicates that for the general driving population factors such as attitude and risk-taking play a much larger role than driver knowledge.

The Committee may be aware that the New South Wales Government requires retesting of licence holders. Drivers who have had their licence disqualified for more than 12 months must resit their driver knowledge test. In addition, drivers who have had their licence disqualified for more than two years will also need to retake their driving test. Drivers who have exceeded their demerit points twice or more in five years, are required to pass the driver knowledge test and to attend the Traffic Offender Intervention Program. Between 2012 and 2016, more than 34,000 drivers resat their driver knowledge test or driving test, or both. Melinda Bailey, the Executive Director Compliance and Regulatory Services, and I are here to answer any questions the Committee may have.

The CHAIR: Thank you for a very comprehensive submission. The challenge ahead for the Committee, and no doubt for you, is how to communicate the bulk of the information contained in your submission to the general public. That could reflect some changes of attitude, and you have identified that as a major issue. You mentioned in your opening statement the spike that is part of the prompt for this inquiry. Is our current research sufficient to understand the causes of road fatalities, injuries and accidents? Do we need to collect crash statistics on other topics to better understand the causes of those crashes? We could be talking about detail such as road type, age, gender, location, time, driving history, health status, whether solo or accompanied, speed, and weather conditions. I think many people believe that we tend to focus on speed to the detriment of all the other causes. The focus is then on attitude.

Mr CARLON: New South Wales has the most comprehensive set of data and information in relation to crashes resulting in injuries and fatalities. Over the past 30 years, we have developed a very strong and robust analysis. That includes right down to the time of day, the weather conditions, the number of people in the vehicle, the injuries sustained by the individuals, the location, the vehicle type and so on. All of that data is collected from the police and hospital reports. It is evaluated in terms of the countermeasures that have been introduced in New South Wales to drive down the road toll over the past 30 years.

We can tell you in great detail about any crash that resulted in an injury to any individual, and the contributing factors, including whether the occupants were wearing restraints, the type of vehicle, the age of the vehicle, the safety features of the vehicle, the conditions of the roadway at the time, and all of the information about the contributing factors in those crashes. In my view, there is no outstanding detail, data or information about the serious injuries that is impacting our communities and the fatalities. We are now providing that information online through our data visualisations, and it is available to the general public on our website. All the statistical information and the contributing factors, including drink driving, speeding and fatigue, are available to us in informing the design of the strategy for New South Wales to drive down the road toll.

That information has been very successfully applied over the past decade. In fact, the new road strategy launched by the Government in 2012 specifically used that information in the design of the countermeasures that have been implemented to reduce our road toll. Although we have had an increase in the road toll over the past two years, the rate has decreased since 2010. We are still on a trend line down. Clearly, the increase in fatalities over the past two years is disturbing, and we have taken significant action to address that over the past 18 months. Between December 2014 and June 2016 the moving 12 month fatality total increased by 26 per cent.

Since June last year we have turned that around to a 6 per cent reduction in fatalities. The countermeasures that we have introduced, the campaigns to re-engage the community, and the police operations that have been run throughout the State—the enforcement activity—are having an impact, but we clearly need to do more.

The CHAIR: From that I take it that there is a direct correlation between analysis of those statistics, the education campaigns, and the road improvements that are rolled out by the Centre for Road Safety and by Transport for NSW?

Mr CARLON: That is the case for all of our partners. We share that information with the NSW Police Force, Roads and Maritime Services, our education partners, and organisations like those that have given evidence to the Committee. We are sharing that information and intelligence so that people are able to adapt their programs to tackle the specific problems. We are targeting increases in fatigue-related crashes, speed-related crashes, pedestrian fatalities, and the increased number of light truck crashes from a geographic perspective and also a police operational perspective. All of that intelligence leads to strategies that are specifically targeting those problems to reduce them. Yes, we must continually update our education programs to ensure that they are relevant in that context.

The CHAIR: Therefore, the gathering of information is vital. I now refer to data collection via point-to-point cameras. The activation of point-to-point cameras for the purpose of improving data collection, amongst other purposes, has been recommended in the past by various bodies. What is the Government's response to that proposal?

Mr CARLON: The Government released its speed camera strategy in 2010. That strategy includes regulatory programs for all light vehicles or heavy vehicles. It has a red-light camera program, a fixed-camera program, and a mobile speed camera program, all of which impact on all vehicles across the network. The speed camera program for average speed cameras was implemented in regional New South Wales with a plan to roll out over 25 lengths to tackle the increase that we saw in 2009-10 of heavy vehicle crashes in the regions. That program has been successfully implemented. We gave a commitment to continue to monitor international and national experience in this area. The regional fatalities associated with heavy vehicle crashes declined during that period, so that program has been successful. We know that where we applied both fixed red-light cameras and mobile speed cameras in a similar fashion we have seen significant declines in casualty crashes and fatality crashes.

The CHAIR: That information indicates that the concentration has been primarily on speed. Have you been able to obtain any information that would benefit education campaigns in relation to fatigue management?

Mr CARLON: We are constantly running attitude surveys and assessing the data about fatigue-related crashes. Over the past five years in particular, we have seen a significant increase in fatigue-related fatalities in the metropolitan area. Fifty per cent of total casualty crashes related to fatigue are happening in the metropolitan area.

We have actually reshaped our education campaigns to take away from that notion that it is only about two-hour trips—that it is only about long trips that people are travelling on. It actually applies to short trips as well. We have focused a lot of our new campaigns around the urban areas. People are getting in their cars already fatigued and taking risks on the road by driving tired. So our new campaign has actually been focused around "Don't trust your tired self" rather than the old campaigns which were all about long-haul trips and holiday trips. We are still focusing on that because there is still a high number of fatigue-related crashes on those longer journeys, but we have refocused the education campaigns around short trips and the urban areas which have seen an increase in fatigue-related crashes.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Thank you, Mr Carlon and Ms Bailey, for being here today. Regarding the regulation of driver trainers which I was discussing with you earlier, the industry came in last week and said they believe they need more regulation as driving instructors. They feel that every five years their instructors go through their obligatory testing, but they do not believe that testing is strict enough. We also heard evidence that professional trainers experience very low levels of auditing of the three-for-one discount scheme for learners. Are you confident that the regulation of the professional driver industry is adequate, given that information we had from them last week? Also, what would your comments be around the audit of the three-for-one discount scheme?

Ms BAILEY: I might start. Roads and Maritime Services is responsible for the licensing of driver instructors under the Driving Instructors Act 1992. At this stage, Roads and Maritime Services does not have an ongoing role in the professional development and ongoing training of driver instructors as such through any professional development. The question that raises is: Should they or could they? Yes, they could, but currently that is not the case. I can outline the requirements for the driving instructors. There are certainly standards that

they need to meet. Obviously they are different for cars, for heavy vehicles and for riders. Predominantly they require attainment of a driving instructor qualification and then of course a submission of various checks such as medical check, police check, Working with Children Check and so on in order to be licensed as a driving instructor. In short the requirement is that they are currently licensed to be a driving instructor. That licence is issued for five years and then there is a process for renewal. But once you have been licensed there is no requirement for ongoing professional development.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: There is no practical ongoing assessment at all.

Ms BAILEY: No, there is not.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The other thing that was brought up with us was about the 120 hours of driver instruction. A parent, guardian or mentor can conduct that 120 hours of driver education and the driver can then go and attain their P plates. Effectively a learner can have no professional instruction and go to obtain a provisional licence. Do you feel that system should be reviewed, given the evidence we have heard? There is the graph that we have all seen multiple times that shows learners are quite evidently literally the safest drivers out on the roads and then there is a very sharp spike as soon as they obtain their P plates. Is it possible the system is not suitable, given that dramatic increase in accident rates once they have gone from being a learner to a provisional plate driver?

Mr CARLON: The comment I make in regard to that graph about provisional drivers who are then subject to much higher rates of serious injury and fatality crashes compared to the learner period is that the majority of that learner period is under supervision not of a professional driving instructor or qualified instructor but under the supervision of a parent, carer or other supervisor. In fact that system clearly is working. They are very safe during that learner period. There is little evidence at this stage in the driver system to indicate—either with the professional instruction or the instruction by a parent/supervisor or supervising driver—the degree to which that differential in the risk for people who then enter their Ps. This is more about the cognitive development of the under-25-year-old driver.

The majority of those crashes are actually young males, who take more risks when they are solo driving, which is why as part of our education programs with parents and supervisors we encourage them to have a continuation of driving instruction and supervision beyond the Ls. We encourage them to get in the vehicle with their P driver to continue that supervision and coaching beyond the learner period. The reality of the research before us in terms of the studies that have been done, yes, we recognise that professional driving instruction is clearly beneficial to individuals and that is why we are giving the three-for-one discount on the hours that people have to be in the vehicle—that 120 hours gets discounted by 20 hours.

Similarly, the Safer Drivers course, which also includes a practical element of a hazard perception process of coaching by a professional instructor in the vehicle with two other learner drivers, is also subject to that 20-hour discount. The minimum a supervising driver would have was 80 hours of instruction. Other people have also given evidence to the Committee that when you look to between 50 hours and 80 hours you are still just getting to the vehicle control issues being dealt with as a young driver. Hazard perception and the management of risk learning accelerates after that 50 hours. That is why the system we have in place is in place.

Since the introduction of the graduated licensing system we have seen a halving of the casualty crash rates for those under-25-year-old drivers as a direct result of the system having been implemented. Another important element for us to keep in view is the graduated conditions which come off your licence as you move through each stage—the restricted speed and alcohol conditions, and the night-time driving restrictions on P platers and other occupants in the vehicle. Those conditions such as that zero blood alcohol level which gradually come off as you become a more experienced driver have also had a significant impact on the reduction of the casualty crashes for that age cohort.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: You have identified that professional driver education is potentially the best option. Some of the suggestions have been that we should look at increasing the amount of professional driver education as part of that 120 hours—so, effectively, rather than offering a three-for-one deal, we look at significantly increasing the professional driver contingent of the 120 hours. What would your comments about that be?

Mr CARLON: My commentary would be that we know that the amount of time a young driver spends on the road in learning in a variety of different circumstances—in a variety of night-time or other driving conditions—is actually critical to the safety outcome for those young drivers. I would not recommend a reduction in the number of road hours that are done by our learner drivers, because it has delivered a safety benefit and a reduction in fatalities. With the 120-hour system that we currently have in place, I would be

concerned if we were going to take that maximum of 80 hours to 70 hours by adding another benefit of 10 hours for driving instruction or taking it back to 50 hours or 60 hours. I think that would be a significant risk.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: While increasing the 120 hours overall could you make professional instruction a larger component of that?

Mr CARLON: That is a different question which could be considered. I think the only issues associated with that currently would be the equity issues associated with people across the community being able to afford those additional hours of professional instruction which would come across.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: That graph shows a significant cost in life, limb and vehicle insurance because of this dramatic spike. You clearly identified the predominant risk factors and who they will involve. Now that we have that data there has to be more that we can do to target that cohort. We know who they are but it is still happening. We need to come away with some strategies. We have some suggestions about how to take that very high red figure and drive it down and about what other things need to be done. At the moment it obviously is not working because we are still seeing that very dramatic spike.

Mr CARLON: We are still seeing that dramatic spike but the system has dramatically decreased the quantum of that trauma. Other jurisdictions have other conditions in place with regard to night-time travel, stronger passenger restrictions, and stronger restrictions on the penalties associated with driving under those conditions. Under the national graduated licensing system other jurisdictions have some conditions which are slightly different to ours, which we could explore, which would further reduce that. We also have an issue in terms of the quality of the vehicles that young people are driving. A number of people have already suggested that perhaps we need systems or incentives for those who are most vulnerable and overrepresented in our road fatality data—younger drivers and older drivers—to drive safer vehicles. They are more likely to be in cheaper, less-safe vehicles as well.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: We have wonderful ways of penalising people for doing the wrong thing but we seem to have very few ways of congratulating or rewarding people for doing the right thing. Rather than penalising younger drivers we should also look at how we can assist them and give them positive reinforcement for doing the right thing. You would have heard evidence given earlier today that we have very few ways of saying, "Here is an incentive if you go off and do these additional courses or educate yourself further." Whether it be industry-wide or for individuals, there is no incentive at the moment for people to do that. Other than the good 10-year licence pat on the back, which is great, what about taking those high-risk drivers and saying, "If you undertake X, Y and Z over the next 12 months or two years, when you are most at risk, we will assist you. So when you go and renew your P-plates, or when you go from your P-plate to your full licence you will get a discount for good behaviour." I think that there needs to be more positive reinforcement. We have great ways to penalise people, which is fine. We always tend to find new and innovative ways of penalising people but we do not seem to come up with the same innovative ways of rewarding them.

Mr CARLON: That said, the design of our Safer Drivers course is an innovation in New South Wales that other States are seriously looking at adopting. Yes, it is voluntary, and it is incentivised by being made very affordable by the Government—because we subsidise participation in that course through the Community Road Safety Fund, so it is very affordable. As well, disadvantaged drivers are provided opportunities to do that course at no cost. We have had 66,000 young drivers go through that course. I would say that the 20-hour discount on the 120 hours is a tremendous incentive. Very preliminary research on that sort of innovation has come in. Clearly you need longitudinal data in order to assess the trauma outcomes of any of these interventions. That generally takes about five years of data to come through the system to see whether it is having a genuine impact. The initial evaluation process that we are currently running in the Safer Driver course is indicating that we are getting safer drivers coming into the system, and fewer crashes associated with those drivers.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Anecdotally, that covers the learners, but once they have ceased to be a learner and become a provisional driver there is no further incentivised education system. Would that be correct?

Mr CARLON: That is an accurate description of the system at the moment.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: That has been the biggest concern. We have all said this before. We effectively let people out on the road, and the next time we ask to see them is when they are 75. There seems to be a very large gap between the time they get their provisional licence to when we physically drag them back in and say, "We want you to have a medical test,"—unless they do the wrong thing, in which case, as you have pointed out, they are brought back into the system.

Mr CARLON: On a risk basis, of course you want to have in place systems that manage risky drivers. We know that drivers who take risks, who are caught in the system, are significantly at higher risk of being

involved in fatal crashes. Multiple offenders are five times more likely to be involved in a fatality crash. So the risk-based approach that we currently have of pulling people who have had multiple offenses or have been disqualified from driving into the Traffic Offender Intervention Program is a positive thing to do from an education perspective. As well, having to re-sit your driver knowledge test and having to redo your driver licence is a method by which we are punishing those people who have had infringements.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I am going to stick with driver testing but I am going to look at the other end of the spectrum—at aged drivers.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It continues.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: It is going to continue; yes. Several witnesses have appeared before this Committee in relation to aged drivers. Certain organisations or individuals who gave evidence put it to us that the New South Wales testing regime for aged drivers is harsh and discriminatory. Do you have any response to that? Would you like to respond to evidence put to the Committee by other witnesses?

Mr CARLON: I do have a response. When the current Government came to power in New South Wales it said that it would examine this issue and established the Older Driver Taskforce with a range of experts on that taskforce. Experts in research, medical research, health and road safety informed the task force and did a comprehensive review of the current state of the risk and the system that exists in New South Wales. Following that evidence it became very clear to that task force which recommended to Government that the current system we have in New South Wales should be retained. Between 2010 and 2015 we have had a 25 per cent increase in licence holders who are 75 years and over. In the same period licence holders who are 85 years or older have increased by 54 per cent. If you look at our population—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Could you say that again, please.

Mr CARLON: Licence holders who are 85 years and older have increased by 54 per cent between 2010 and 2015. Under the current older driver licensing regime in New South Wales, at 75 you are required to have an annual medical assessment conducted by your doctor. At age 85 there is an option of either an on-road hazard perception practical test or a conditional licence which restricts you to local driving or driving from point to point. Around 90 per cent of drivers continue to drive after 85, currently in New South Wales. And 33 per cent of those opt for a restricted licence. When we talk to older drivers and when we survey them we note that they are self-regulating. Many older drivers are deciding, on their own part, not to drive at night any more, or not to drive during peak periods or on long trips.

Self-regulation is another important element of the system in New South Wales, and encouragement for people to manage their risk is as well. You would have heard from Alzheimer's Australia that there are also issues associated with dementia and the physical decline that people have as they age that in reality means there is a time you get to when you should not be driving a vehicle because you no longer have the cognitive ability to properly control a vehicle. The system that we have in place for medical checks and that practical driving test has been reviewed and assessed by experts both in health and also in road safety to provide a reasonable framework for managing that risk as the ageing population grows.

As a result of our task force inquiry we launched a program called On the Road 65Plus—staying independent and mobile to attempt to get people earlier than when they get to 85 to start the plan for retiring from driving or experiencing public transport or community transport early so that they are more familiar with the services that are available in their community in order to remain active and mobile. So that process where you have workshops and a whole range of materials that have been developed and delivered through our local government and other community organisations directly in the community to encourage not just driver safety, but also pedestrian, cycling and motorcycle safety. We are seeing an increase in the profile of the age of all road users in our fatalities—for the older members of our community who are more frail but as well need to be supported in managing the risks that they have on the road.

Ms BAILEY: Today there are approximately 65,000 older drivers that are 85-plus and therefore they are subject to the practical driving test every two years thereafter. What is interesting is that on average 58 older drivers in that category fail the test every week. That means they are either disobeying traffic signals or perhaps exceeding the speed limit that is required for that area, et cetera. And also on average 1.2 drivers each week undertaking that practical test do something that is so significant and serious in terms of the nature of the serious fail that their licence is cancelled on the spot. I thought that may be of interest to the Committee.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Absolutely. Of the 58 drivers that you referred to, do you know what that is as a percentage to give us a better sense of how many road users we are talking about each week, or within the cohort?

Ms BAILEY: I am not sure. There is 1.1 per cent of New South Wales licence holders that are 85 years or older, so I am sure we could do the calculations if it is every week. I can advise you on that.

Mr CARLON: So again at that point of 85 years old, 90 per cent of drivers continue to drive and then people and/or medical practitioners make decisions about their ability to drive on an annual basis from their assessment on whether or not they are still competent to be driving. We have sped up that process as well so we now have an electronic lodgement by doctors directly to Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] in order to speed up that process of assessing and recommending to RMS whether or not that licence should be withdrawn.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: That specific complaint has been raised with me locally by constituents. Some of them are experiencing a delay in the medical information being received by Service NSW as they are going through the process. I find it interesting that you referred to it.

Ms BAILEY: I could probably outline there that it is only in March of this year that we have introduced the online medical check that comes through directly into our system, and that avoids the need for a handwritten assessment from the medical practitioner to be taken to a Service NSW registry or an RMS registry. And so we have now got more than 140 medical practitioners already registered and we are getting about 500 every week coming through. That uptake is increasing dramatically, and that provides the customer a direct entry into our system so there is no need for it to be manually scanned. They do not have to go to the service centre which will scan it and put it into our system, and then ring up and see where it is at.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Which is phenomenal, but so many of them at the moment still do not realise that they can spare themselves that trip to the Service NSW registries. I do not have a local RMS anymore, so I am finding that bit in the system a little complicated. But since we are talking about ways that we have been modernising the system for older drivers, can you elaborate for the Committee on the way that the Government is planning to improve aged driver education through the licensing process?

Mr CARLON: Yes. We are currently reforming the whole Graduated Licensing Scheme [GLS] framework and digitising that framework. So we will be able to deliver, as you have heard referenced right throughout the hearings, up-to-date, contemporary information about driver safety and driver risk and vehicle safety. For example, we now have an app in place for the driver logbook. We are about to roll that out more broadly and that app will also provide for being able to reference specific information at different stages to the supervisor. For example, "You are up to five hours now. Here is the information about where your young driver should be up to in terms of the skills at which they need to be looking at five hours. Here is where they need to be up to at 10 hours or 40 hours." Also reminders about spacing your professional instruction through the period of the 120 hours. So we are saying, "Up-front, here is where the ideal intervention is from a professional instructor in order to cope with these specific things a young person needs at this stage in the development of their driving skills," rather than the notion that, "I will just backend it all at the end of their time so that they pass the test." So a digital, flat form for the delivery of all of those really key points at which people need learning in order to be safer drivers will be able to be delivered much more efficiently on a digital platform both through a driver learner logbook but also through a digital platform that also maps through the red P-plate and the green P-plate process so that people are getting information that is relevant to their stage of driving and the restrictions that they have on at the time on their licence.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I return to delays in renewing licences for older drivers. When the George Institute appeared before this Committee it advised us that administrative difficulties such as delays in processing key documents and exchanging them between various agencies impede older drivers in renewing their licences. So the institute proposed case management to resolve this issue. Do you consider that to be feasible? Otherwise how could administration and customer service be streamlined?

Ms BAILEY: I would say case management of the 64,000 or 65,000 in a group would be considerable, no doubt—not impossible, but considerable. And the cost to administer would be very expensive. We do write to drivers not just once but about four times: on their seventy-fourth birthday; three months before their seventy-fifth birthday just to let them know they will need a medical assessment from there on; again two days before their birthday and we then post that if we still have not heard. So there is a lot of contact already with our customers in that regard. And the challenge we face, to be honest, is in a digital age all that correspondence is currently by mail which is becoming increasingly expensive.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: It was suggested to the Committee by a witness earlier this afternoon that a practical issue with older drivers, in the case that he raised, is that he does not have a regular doctor. As he was aware of the looming medical test he is about to face he raised it with us and said it might be worth looking at notifying people of the medical test up-front so that they can get to know a regular medical practitioner as opposed to looking like they are doctor-shopping later in the piece or not having someone who is aware of their history. How do you feel about a proposition like that? Is that feasible?

Ms BAILEY: When we write to them three months ahead of their 75th birthday, so we have notified them at age 74 that they will be needing to have a medical assessment done at 75 and thereafter, that three months ahead of the 75th birthday we actually enclose the information about what is entailed in the medical, so there is some information there for them to digest and share with their medical practitioner.

The other thing I would say is, the form, whether it is paper based or as we move more extensively to the online form that has been developed in collaboration with medical practitioners, is that it is the standard questions, so it should not matter whether you go to any doctor or your own. Naturally, there is a closer relationship between patient and doctor if you go regularly, but the form is designed so that the questions are the same no matter who is providing that service.

Mr CARLON: That information has been worked on with the medical practitioners themselves. There is a medical practitioner working group which has been established to oversee the introduction of the electronic systems as well, so that they are seamlessly available to medical practitioners on their electronic platforms right across the State.

Ms BAILEY: I would also like to point out we are also writing now to licence holders telling them that that online capability is there, because as you rightly point out, if they are not aware, they will be expecting to follow the same process, but if they ask their doctor, then the doctor can either do it through the systems they have in the practice there or through the portal that Health Link provides as well.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: With respect to drivers with ill-health, you touched on Alzheimer's Australia earlier in your evidence this afternoon. Alzheimer's Australia advised the Committee that they believe there is a lack of awareness and confusion about the legal requirements for a driver with dementia, in spite of the publication of the Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive guidelines. What is the New South Wales Government's response to that proposition?

Mr CARLON: I think there is clearly a need to continue to provide really clear information, both to medical practitioners but also to carers. We know that the crash risk associated with the onset of dementia is evident. We know also that the diagnosis of dementia can take some time. I know that Alzheimer's Australia and the NRMA have published a significant amount of information which has been distributed to all NRMA members right across the State. We have forums where this is raised at a local level in the On the Road 65Plus, the NRMA have run workshops with their members in order to inform people of the requirements around identifying with your medical practitioner whether or not you have a risk associated with your deterioration of health and the need to then apply the fitness to drive assessment process with a medical practitioner.

We need to continue to work with those stakeholders to ensure that there is clarity and information available to families, carers and the medical practitioners to make sure that we are reducing that risk and that we are identifying that risk early, and then managing that risk, because in the early onset of dementia it has been clear that medical practitioners said the risks may be minimal and you may still be able to have mobility and retain your licence. Really, we rely on medical practitioners to be making those assessments.

The CHAIR: I would like to follow up with a question relating to an issue that Ms Petinos raised and you, in turn, provided us with a copy of that booklet, 65Plus. It is interesting to see that, because we asked a previous witness today about that very publication because of his representational role for older drivers and he was unaware of it. It concerns me, that the policy coordinator for the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association could make that statement. How are these publications disseminated, because clearly you have outlined there that they are in the hands of general practitioners? How widely do you publicise and are they read?

Mr CARLON: This was in response directly to the task force. It was launched as well. There have been over 100,000 copies delivered right across the State and over 1,200 viewed on our road safety website. They are available in registries and in Service NSW, they are online. We have sponsored Seniors Week events for the last three years and distributed these at those events and the organisations that you have referenced actually have been part of those events, and we have literally distributed hundreds of thousands of hard copies into people's hands. In every workshop that we conduct across the State we provide this information and also it has been linked up with the NRMA's efforts to also provide this information across the board. It is surprising but I will take that on notice and make sure that that organisation is very familiar with that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I will start with aged drivers, but I will not be spending much time there. I will turn to the submission and the commentary from the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association earlier today. One of the issues that they put before the Committee was, of course, the increase in the number of both serious injuries and fatalities for the over-70 age group, but said that it should be compared to the increase in drivers who are over 70 now. They did their statistics on the basis of the New South Wales

population aged 70 and over, but said that a more meaningful comparison would be with respect to licence holders aged 70 and over. Would you agree with them that there has been a marked increase in licence holders aged 70 and over, over the last 10 years?

Mr CARLON: Yes, there has been, absolutely, and we will continue to see that number of people as the baby boomers transition into that older age group, a really significant upward number of licence holders in those older age categories. Tragically though, we have seen a corresponding increase in the level of serious injuries and fatalities in those age groups. Although we have had in the over-85 age group of license holders an increase from 2010 to 2015 of 54 per cent of the population, the number of fatalities for 85-89 year olds has actually tripled.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: A 300 per cent increase compared to a 54 per cent increase.

Mr CARLON: Yes, that is right. The reality here is that older members of the community are more frail. As you age, if you are involved in a crash, the impacts are going to be worse. We need to be looking at a Safe Systems approach to this. Again, last year in our cycling fatalities, the majority of those fatalities were over-60, and as we live more active lifestyles, as we see in the motorcycle profile, the over-50s fatalities increasing significantly, and so managing that risk with the older drivers, but not just older drivers, all road users, is going to be critically important because we know that all of those fatalities and serious injuries are preventable, so putting in place safe systems, safer vehicles and safer road environments and managing the risks that people take, is going to be critical if we actually wish to continue to drive down the road toll over time as our population ages.

As we have with the 1,300 fatalities that we had back in the late seventies, early eighties, 1,000 people less were killed on our roads last year because we have had all of these interventions in the system over that 30-year period, and we are going to need to continue to focus on how do we create safe mobility for the whole of the community into the future. The reality at the moment is that that age category is over-represented in the same way that our younger drivers are over-represented.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Does that hold true for the 70 to 85 age cohort as well, or is there a difference?

Mr CARLON: For the licence holders 75 years and older involved in fatal crashes, it has increased by 25 per cent. For the driver 60 to 64 involved in fatal crashes, it has increased by 40 per cent. There are significantly higher rates of serious injuries and fatalities when compared against the population as a whole.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I will leave aged drivers there. That is very interesting and contrasts with what we heard earlier today. A large proportion of the work undertaken by the Centre for Road Safety is around data collection, and you said that New South Wales' data is second to none Australia-wide. One thing raised by a few witnesses is in respect to the non-attendance of police officers at minor accidents. What sort of impact is that having on the data that you are receiving?

Mr CARLON: Certainly it has had an impact. There are several thousands of records that do not have a level of detail associated with the crash reports that police were filing previously. When you look at our serious injury data, which is admission to hospital, we have data matched to a police report and we have unmatched data, so the total hospitalisations. About 45 per cent of the total of our admissions to hospital do not have a matched police report, and that number has been increasing in the last few years since those reporting regimes have been put in place for efficiency dividends for the police. Yes, we have had a reduction in the contact that police officers have had directly in relation to crashes, and so the quality of the data we have in terms of understanding the dimensions of each of those crashes is reduced. That said, the outcomes of those crashes are less severe, and so although we do see an increase in the number of unmatched reports from our hospitalised data and that is of concern, we are still collecting data of who has been hospitalised as a result of vehicle crashes on the road or a road-related area.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It has been put before this Committee that the levers we have effectively are enforcement, education and engineering. I take it that with non-attendance we have seen less enforcement because police do not attend, and there are potentially less avenues for education because police do not attend. Would you agree with that?

Mr CARLON: Not necessarily, because there is always an opportunity cost and police non-attendance at a low-risk crash means that they are still doing enforcement during that time.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Are you saying they might be picking up more speeding motorists?

Mr CARLON: Yes, or they might be doing more mobile drug testing or random breath testing. Their time is available during that period, and so it is not necessarily a statement that policing is reduced or the impact

of the policing effort is reduced. The officers are still there being productive and looking after both traffic management and safety on our roads.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In earlier evidence, the TWU told us that heavy vehicle road fatalities over the last 10 years have not decreased, unlike other fatalities. Would you agree with that statement?

Mr CARLON: No, heavy vehicle fatalities have decreased over the last 10 years, so that statement is not correct. There has been when we saw the upswing recently—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And that is consistent with the rest of your road statistics?

Mr CARLON: Yes, that is consistent with the rest of the increases that we have seen and consistent with the upswing in the road toll. I have to say that there has been a slight change in the profile of crashes resulting in serious injuries and fatalities. The metropolitan area has seen an increase, as we have seen an increase in the heavy vehicle movements across the Sydney basin associated with the uplift in the economy and a lot of construction work. But over the 10-year period, certainly there has been a significant reduction in fatalities associated with heavy vehicles.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Can you outline the numbers?

Mr CARLON: I will try to get to that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You can take that on notice, if you like.

Mr CARLON: I will try to address the question this afternoon.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In their submission, the TWU said that in New South Wales the situation is particularly dire. How would you characterise the performance of New South Wales in comparison to other jurisdictions in Australia and potentially globally in terms of the reduction in heavy duty vehicle road fatalities over the last 10 years and its proportion in comparison to other road fatalities?

Mr CARLON: We have been successful in reducing the fatalities related to heavy vehicles in New South Wales over the last decade. That said, there is concern that with the increase in registrations of heavy vehicles and also light trucks, we have had a significant increase in light truck fatalities and serious injuries in the last couple of years above the trend. That increase is 39 per cent over the five-year period. A bit of that is the breaking down of the freight task into below 4.5 tonne trucks that are regulated under the heavy vehicle regime. But I would have to say that we have been relatively successful by comparison with the national statistics. New South Wales is the through State for the majority of freight task on the eastern seaboard. We have a lot of movement and, tragically, we still have a lot of preventable deaths from crashes involving heavy vehicles. That said, heavy vehicles are not always the at-fault vehicle. But clearly we want to have a system where heavy vehicles are not interacting with other road users in a way that causes death and injury to other road users. I would say that we have been successful, particularly in the regional areas, and that success is similar to the other jurisdictions in Australia.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Earlier you mentioned younger drivers in cheaper and less safe vehicles as their first car. The Federal Minister earlier this year said that a person's first car is often their least safe car at a time when potentially they have the highest propensity for a road accident. Would you concede that while these cars might be less safe than other cars, they are becoming safer and safer in comparison to a car five or 10 years ago, for instance, driven by a young driver?

Mr CARLON: Yes, as the vehicle fleet changes vehicles are getting safer. The counterpoint to that is that we have had the five-star vehicle assessment program, the ANCAP program, which is very successful, over a couple of decades, but still of the registered light passenger vehicles in NSW as of December 2015, 33.5 per cent are five-star rated. This means we still have a long way to go in terms of having the majority of the vehicles on the roads of New South Wales being five-star rated. When you look at light trucks, which are the dual-cab and utilities through to 4.5 tonnes and are the sorts of trucks that are very prevalent with young men, only 16 per cent of the vehicles registered in NSW as of December 2015 in that category are five-star rated.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What is the percentage of new vehicles available for purchase that comply with that five-star rating?

Mr CARLON: It is around 88 per cent for light vehicles. In the light truck sector it is around 74 per cent.

Mr NICK LALICH: Following up from the question on the safety rating of vehicles, I will not pick on Ford but the Mustang comes in with a two-star rating. Peter Warren said to me, "They are terrific cars just as

long as you keep going straight and do not turn corners." How do we stop them from coming into the country or make the manufacturer make modifications to bring them up to our standards?

Mr CARLON: We speak to the Federal Government about the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) and also what is allowed into the country in terms of vehicles. The same issue arises with the Great Wall utilities—a one-star vehicle being sold as a new car in our market—and the compromise in having a cheaper vehicle in terms of the safety of the people who are driving those vehicles. We are seeing a significant increase in the number of families using those vehicles now as well as passenger vehicles and it is tragic to see that happening when we know that you can create a five-star vehicle. The majority of vehicles being put into the market currently are being rated at five star. That said, next year the Australasian New Car Assessment Program [ANCAP] will also be going to the Euro NCAP standards so that will lift again. With the driver-assist technologies—the automatic emergency braking and the other life-saving technologies—that are available in vehicles more prolifically in Europe than in this country, there will be a strong motivator in the market to now start to provide those vehicles here in our market as well.

Mr NICK LALICH: You just mentioned automatic braking. The side mirror sensors that we have got now are also terrific. I drove one the other day and it was beautiful. You do not have to look to the side, the light comes on in the mirror and you know there is a car there—sometimes even in a blind spot it still tells you it is there. Are we looking to mandate in say the next four years that we want all vehicles to have them?

Mr CARLON: Again, those attributes will be incorporated in the ANCAP rating. Once we adopt the Euro NCAP standards next year, you will have to have those driver-assist technologies in order to get five stars. So there is a role for majors' fleets to incentivise this—for example, in New South Wales the Government has a policy to purchase five-star vehicles. So we are going to be purchasing those vehicles as part of our safe purchasing policy in New South Wales. It will mean that as the vehicle fleet rolls over within the Government, which it does very quickly, those vehicles will get into the second-hand market very quickly. We will have available in the market much more of those safety features like automatic emergency braking, lane-assist technologies and adaptive cruise control, all of which are going to add safety features to our vehicles. I think at a national level a conversation about incentivising, whether it is through insurance systems or otherwise, getting our most vulnerable and overrepresented parts of the population in those vehicles—our older drivers and our younger drivers—is a really worthy thing to do.

Mr NICK LALICH: It is great that we are doing that but, on the other hand, we are allowing those one- star ANCAP and two-star ANCAP vehicles to come to Australia and in some instances they may be here for the next 20 years.

Mr CARLON: That is right.

Mr NICK LALICH: Because the poor families will just keep them going forever. Some of the submissions to this Committee have said that unlicensed drivers significantly contribute to road crashes but are not captured by programs directed at licensed drivers. What strategies would you propose to deal with this issue? Can unlicensed drivers be identified through the current crash offence data? How should driver education campaigns be formulated to communicate with this group? Are these people disadvantaged people? Are they just ratbags who do not want to pay for licences and are happy to try to keep getting away with it? Or do they lose their licence and keep driving because they have to make a livelihood?

Mr CARLON: All of the above. This is a really important part of public policy where we do need to support particularly those people who are disadvantaged in the community. I think there was an Auditor-General's report around Aboriginal licensing and driving. We have taken quite seriously the need for building a more robust support system at the local level through local community organisations to case manage those individuals who need support to get their driver's licence because getting a driver's licence as a disadvantaged person takes you into the realms of being able to get an education, being able to get a job, and being able to be more responsible in your community. The system was fragmented and ad hoc, but good programs had been initiated with Berrang and other service providers over many years.

What we did in the last couple of years was to put out a contract across New South Wales to get in place 14 service providers in 50 communities. We are now funding those providers and we are slowly ramping up their capability to deliver these services in their local community to those disadvantaged communities. Last year 502 learner licences people were taken through the process of dealing with either their disqualification or their suspension or they may have had outstanding fines and having a payment system put in place in order to rectify that situation. We then help them to get the hours in the car, if they needed to get the hours in the car, for getting their Ls. We had 502 learner licences successfully taken through that process and 312 provisional licences for disadvantaged people. We have allocated fully funded positions in the Safer Drivers course for those people who are most disadvantaged, so that they get the benefit of that course as well as part of their Ls.

This is a good start. It is providing a framework of local businesses that are being funded to deliver those services in the community. But we need to continue to build on that system so as to take those disadvantaged people who are not able to get a licence currently or who are driving unlicensed and get them into the licensing system, which is the best thing we can do for them.

The CHAIR: My question relates to something you raised very briefly during your introductory statement—namely, the issue of mandatory periodic retesting—and I have asked it of many of the witnesses at this inquiry. Is there evidence to support some form of periodic intervention, say at licence renewal, which requires drivers to be assessed on their driving knowledge, their capacity and, importantly, their attitude without necessarily resulting in a pass or fail?

Mr CARLON: There is no comprehensive research evidence that mass retesting of people on knowledge from a safety perspective has a significant impact on risk. In reality, the requirements for retesting and for intervening are with the highest risk cohort of the community who are actually taking the risks that lead to crashes happening.

The CHAIR: I will leave it there because you made that point earlier. What is the value of computer-based training and what is the Government's view on the use of simulators for both driver training and competency assessment of licensed drivers?

Mr CARLON: There has been a significant amount of research done worldwide on simulators. They are very valid, particularly in a research context where you want to control the factors to assess risk and people's response to particular road environments. I think they add value. We have also been carefully watching the Victorian Drive It program, which has been done in collaboration with the Monash University Centre for Road Safety. We need to have a fresh look at the role that either high fidelity or even low fidelity audiovisual programs can offer in educating and keeping people engaged and understanding about new risk, new road rules and the environment that they are driving in as an adjunct to the real world driving experience. One of the researchers calls it the risk of actually taking people out of the real world and putting them into a simulated world where the risk does not exist, and particularly for younger drivers the real world risks exist. The brain being able to learn—this is what he calls psychological fidelity—the experience of driving on a road is a totally different experience in cognitive-development terms compared to an audiovisual stimulus of that no matter what the fidelity of that experience is. There is no concrete evidence that real-world environment learning can be replaced by a simulated environment. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that learning through those simulated environments is a very strong adjunct that can be used—should be used—and I think that we need to, in the digitisation of the learning experience from graduated licensing all the way through to older drivers, re-look at this question of how we deliver information, education and training to people in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: That is exactly the point, so thank you for answering that. It relates to a question asked by Mr Crouch about incentives and, therefore, the incentives for people to be presented with scenarios through the very platform you have identified at some other stage of their life when it might be desirable. Many submissions raised changing road rules as a reason to introduce periodic retraining and retesting of drivers, and the Pedestrian Council of Australia gave its support to the New South Wales Government campaign "Top 10 misunderstood road rules"—a very effective campaign, I believe. I have seen it regularly and I hope that it was seen by many people and interpreted for the purpose for which you designed it. Has it been successful overall? What priority do we place on mass communications? What changes do you envisage for the future for other campaigns?

Mr CARLON: I spent a lot of time on radio answering those misunderstood road rules and trying to get the community to understand the safety risks and how to share the road in a responsible manner. I think that it is critical that we continue to engage the community around those issues that are safety risks but also about respect for each other on the road and tolerance for each other on the road, because I think that is part of the anxiety the community has about sharing the road environment. The more active transport that we have, the more pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users, the increase in the registration of motorcyclists—we need to be familiarising each other as road users with the requirements and the risks. Some of that will come through vehicle technology but a lot of that actually has to come through things like "A meter matters!" rule that we have introduced in New South Wales for cyclists. So, yes, I think we need to continue to engage.

I have to say, regarding the social media platforms: We can have as many workshops as you would like in the community. You might go out and do 10 of them and reach 600 people, and a 15-minute Facebook live session reaches 2,500 people in 24 hours. I think we need to be thinking about how we adapt in this new digital world to engaging with the community and providing that information in a much more substantive but also widespread fashion.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Obviously you will come back to us with the numbers regarding the improvement in the heavy vehicle accident rate. You mentioned there was an improvement in regional accident rates for heavy vehicles. Am I right in assuming that is in long-haul drivers doing country roads?

Mr CARLON: Yes, that is the majority.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: We heard conflicting evidence from the Transport Workers Union today, saying it was the long-haul driver who was most at risk because they were potentially disobeying the rules to meet unreasonable delivery requirements. You are saying that the evidence actually shows there has been an improvement in accident rates for those drivers, not an increase.

Mr CARLON: Yes. In 2006 there were 98 fatalities; by 2015 that had reduced to 57—a reduction of 40.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: That is a huge percentage—a big improvement. The TWU made a statement, and I will try to quote as best I can but *Hansard* might be a better reference, along the lines that heavy vehicle drivers were some of the least literate drivers on the road and as such found it tough. I would assume that if someone is going for a heavy vehicle licence they would be required to undergo the same sort of literacy testing that anybody driving a normal vehicle would have to undertake, if not even stricter. Would that be correct?

Ms BAILEY: Certainly. I can answer that. The requirements for a heavy vehicle upgrade are certainly more stringent than for a car licence. You start with a car vehicle licence and in upgrading it not only is the practical component increased but the other knowledge aspects of the requirements increase as we move from the rigid class into our heavy combination and then our highest risk vehicle, the multicomination. What might be of interest statistically is that our heavy vehicle licence holders are an increasing group in New South Wales. We have had about a 24 per cent increase in assessments conducted in HVCBA over the last four years—

Mr ADAM CROUCH: But we have seen a decrease in the number of accidents.

Ms BAILEY: Yes, exactly. We also have the recognition that international drivers who want to come into Australia still have to meet our requirements. They can use their prior experience in part to obtain a heavy vehicle licence of that class, except for our multicomination. For heavy and multicomination we require that they must undertake our State-based HVCBA scheme.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Would the reductions in accidents be directly related to the point-to-point camera system, the enforcement of logbook follow-ups and so on? Are we seeing a positive outcome due to those implementations?

Mr CARLON: Absolutely, and particularly in the regional environment—

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The long-haul drivers?

Mr CARLON: The long-haul drivers. As I said, we have been concerned about an increase in the metropolitan area, with the increased registrations and heavy vehicle movements, so that is something that we are focused on right now as well.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: We mentioned before the capture of data regarding accidents. The Insurance Council appeared before the Committee last week. It captures a large amount of data regarding accidents that are not attended by police officers, and it did not seem to have an objection to working with the Government on sharing that data because it can fill in the information that is lacking at the moment.

Mr CARLON: Could I clarify: Our matching dataset in New South Wales includes our police data, our hospitalisation data and our attendance at emergency departments; it also includes our State Insurance Regulatory Authority data, so we work very closely with—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Does that pick up all the CTP?

Mr CARLON: It includes all the CTP and all the lifetime care data. We have a matched set of data in New South Wales which incorporates all of those aspects.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: I have a slightly different question that emanates from the evidence produced by the Insurance Council of Australia. Do either of you know the average distance from home that motorists drive? If not, can you take it on notice for me?

Mr CARLON: The average distance that motorists drive from their home?

Ms ELENI PETINOS: The context is that it was raised during discussions with the Insurance Council that most motorists probably have an accident within 5.5 kilometres of their principal place of residence. My question is: If people are having accidents within 5.5 kilometres of their home, how far are they actually

driving? It was suggested that most people do not drive further than five kilometres from their home, which I found surprising. I am trying to find greater context around the statistic and discover whether the statistic is even accurate.

Mr CARLON: We do have data on the location and the home address of the vehicle and the driver. As an example, 253 people died on country roads last year. Of those, 70 per cent were country people and around 60 per cent of them died within their local LGA. We know from our fatigue data that in fact, yes, crashes tend to happen closer to home but on the fatigue data that is because of the journey you have made—you are travelling back home, you are fatigued and you tend to crash towards the end of that journey because you think you are going to make it rather than stopping and resting.

We do have that sort of data available around the distance from locations that people are. We also do have data and ABS has data around travel distances and average travel for motor vehicles in New South Wales. So, yes, there are a lot of small trips, short trips.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: The average motorist I am assuming does go further than 10 kilometres from their home.

Mr CARLON: Yes.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Is either of you aware off the top of your head what the fail rate is for learner drivers going through that testing process?

Ms BAILEY: I do have some tests for the—

Mr CARLON: Just while Ms Bailey is doing that, another relevant piece of the misconceptions that people have around some of this information: a lot of people think that country people think that it is city people who are dying on their country roads. Country young people actually get their licence more quickly than metropolitan young people. That is normally a factor of them having access to driving further and being able to have access to a vehicle. That is not a disadvantage but, on average, there is a significant difference between the time period taken by a young person in a metropolitan area getting their licence compared to a young person in the regions because also young people in the metropolitan area have better access to other transport options.

Ms BAILEY: The broader pass/fail rate for a car licence is 71 per cent pass rate at the moment. I should say that is the knowledge test. Fifty-seven per cent is the driving test, the practical test. Across all of the areas it is about that 68 per cent mark.

Ms ELENI PETINOS: Some witnesses raised concerns with, the inference was, a pre-occupation with education in this space. What do you say to people who think that we as a Committee or as a government are being too pre-occupied with the idea of education in this space?

Mr CARLON: I would say that we can never be too pre-occupied with having a motivated and knowledgeable community around safety risks on our roads. That goes right through to the sort of vehicles that are available that people should be choosing but also they know how to operate. That is part of the training and education that is required that is provided by, essentially, the market—so people who are selling vehicles really do need to take that responsibility—through to organisations and institutions who have staff who access a vehicle, as was mentioned earlier, and the obligations within a safe work environment to continue to educate the people in your organisations and institutions about safe practices at work, because a significant proportion of people who crash on our roads are driving a vehicle in work mode at the time.

The education and the changes that we have seen over the last 30 years that delivered us 1,000 people who lived last year instead of died last year, education played a critical role in that reduction. I would also cite from an education point of view, we have halved the number of under 16-year-olds who have died in the last decade. That is about better child seats but it is also about people buying better child seats; it is about the safety around schools and the education of parents and communities around safety around schools as much as it is the use of the infrastructure around schools. So I do not think you can underestimate the value of having a motivated and well-educated community around safety.

The CHAIR: Ms Bailey and Mr Carlon, thank you very much for your evidence before the Committee this afternoon, we really appreciate it. We may wish to send you some additional questions in writing and your reply would then form part of your evidence and be published. Would you be happy to answer any additional questions?

Ms BAILEY: Yes.

Mr CARLON: Yes.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 17:04)