

**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE UPON ROAD SAFETY**

**INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

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**At Sydney on Wednesday 20 February 2008**

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**The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.**

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**PRESENT**

Mr G. Corrigan (Chair)

**Legislative Council**

The Hon. R. L. Brown  
The Hon. R. H. Colless  
The Hon. I. W. West

**Legislative Assembly**

Ms D. E. Fardell  
Mr D. R. Harris  
Ms N. Hay  
Mr A. D. McDonald  
Mr D. W. Maguire  
Mr G. Souris

**MAUREEN ELLEN OWEN**, Data Manager, Youthsafe, 600 Victoria Road, Ryde, and

**ANNE LESLEY DEANS**, Executive Officer, Youthsafe, 600 Victoria Road, Ryde, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** I declare open the inquiry into young driver safety and education programs and welcome Anne Deans and Maureen Owen, representatives of Youthsafe here today. Anne is the executive officer and Maureen is the data manager and acting assistant executive officer. Thank you for appearing to provide evidence on the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into young driver safety and education programs. The Committee has received your submission and, unless there are any objections, it is proposed that your submission will be authorised for publication. There being no objection, it is so ordered. Do you have any further documentation that you wish to table to form part of your evidence here today?

**Miss DEANS:** We do not have anything further to add to our submission. However, we have provided some packs with background information.

**CHAIR:** We will incorporate them into evidence. I have been advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also copies of Legislative Assembly Standing Orders 291, 292, and 293, which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Miss DEANS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information that you provide. I also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Miss DEANS:** Thank you, yes. I reinforce that we are a not-for-profit organisation and a peak body in New South Wales for injury prevention in young people, basically adolescents and young adults. As such, we are looking at road safety from a different perspective to dedicated road safety organisations; we are looking at it in the context of preventing serious injury and death in young people. That is one of the reasons for our submission. We have focused on issues such as risks associated with being young and adolescent brain development, which have significant implications for preventing injury in young people, including on the roads. This also allows us to work in a nice, complimentary way to other dedicated road safety organisations, whether they be research bodies, government departments, or other not-for-profit organisations.

Primarily, we are working with community-based professionals and we work to support them in a lot of their activities. A lot of the distribution of our materials is through community-based professionals. Equity of access is also something that is very much at the forefront of our minds, with programs and resources, which is one of the issues at which the Committee is looking. Also, all our programs and resources are pilot tested, evaluated and subject to consultation with relevant parties. I think that is probably sufficient for the moment.

**CHAIR:** We will move to questions.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I notice in your submission and in your opening statement that you talked about how you have worked with other organisations that are doing much the same sort of thing. Youthsafe, in particular, makes reference to a range of road safety education and awareness programs with which you have been involved, including RYDA. Your submission also discusses your own presenter program, which involves your own presenters delivering these programs. I have two questions: Of the driver education awareness programs that are currently available—these are programs other than your own—do you have any views about their effectiveness and benefit? You mentioned earlier that you work with other organisations. Which ones do you work with and support?

**Miss DEANS:** With RYDA and programs like Reduce Risk Increase Student Knowledge [RRISK] on the North Coast in Lismore we have an involvement with those organisations. For instance, we are on the RYDA advisory committee for that program. We provide the parent fact sheets for them to distribute.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** For RYDA?

**Miss DEANS:** For RYDA, yes, but also, similarly, for RRISK. We provide resources for them. On occasions we will also provide presenters for them as well. As I understand it, both of those programs have undertaken some evaluations. The indications are that the community focus is one of the strong features of those programs. We just met with the new director of operations at RYDA. With some of the plans that they seem to have underway it appears as though there will be some good opportunities for collaborative work.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** You mentioned that your programs are evaluated?

**Miss DEANS:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Who does the evaluation?

**Miss DEANS:** We use a range of strategies. When we are developing our programs we always consult with expert stakeholders. We consult with target audiences; for instance, it might be pilot testing of a resource or a session. The feedback is then incorporated into it. The evaluation may then be something that is integral to what we are doing. For instance, with our presenter program it may be evaluation sheets from teachers and students on a sample population basis. There is also self-evaluation by presenters and mentoring and review by senior staff of the presenters.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** In that evaluation process, by whatever means, do you have any results that demonstrate that your program has been effective? Are you able to point to any statistics or to any anecdotal evidence that your program has achieved its aims?

**Miss DEANS:** Yes. We have project pro formas and we look at evaluations relating to those program objectives. In relation to our programs changing the injury statistics it is a very complex area. There are a lot of variables and it would not be reasonable to say that our programs made a difference at that level. However, we are very clear about the aims that we set for our programs, and our evaluation is very much related to achievement of the aims and objectives of those programs.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** When you developed your programs did you have any involvement from the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] in their development? Did you take any advice from the RTA?

**Miss DEANS:** Yes, we do. We have an excellent working relationship. We have had the same contacts in the RTA for a number of years now. It is one of the government bodies that provides us with non-government organisation [NGO] funding, but we always consult with it on the issues. It provides us with information about the data, indicates what current trends there are and what problem areas there are. We make sure that what we develop complements what it is doing. For instance, last year, with the changes to young driver legislation literature that the RTA was putting out, there was information about the legislative change.

We had parent fact sheets which were focusing on tips for parents supporting their young drivers, but we updated them to make sure that they were aware that the literature was available and that there had been changes. We also developed a postcard for young people. In a complementary way we were looking at the sorts of things that young people can do or say to manage, for instance, the young passenger issue. So the RTA is saying, "This is what the change is." We are saying, "These are some of the ways to help self-efficacy in young people; how they can help to protect themselves."

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** How many young people have taken the courses or have participated in the various programs that you run?

**Miss DEANS:** I do not have that information handy.

**Dr OWEN:** In the last two years, just under two years, we did about 250 presentations. So if there were approximately 20 in each group it would be about 5,000 students.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Over two years?

**Dr OWEN:** In just under two years, from July.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** A lot of courses are available. Do you see any value in a more formalised role for those courses, for example, official accreditation and evaluation? Maybe those courses could become part of a system where, if someone had offended or someone was going for a new licence, they could get some sort of credit if they participated in one of those courses?

**Miss DEANS:** That is probably not something for which we have a quick answer. It is not something we can answer quickly. Certainly a range of programs is available and we would advocate for coordination of those programs. Benchmarking and attaining certain standards are desirable. There is room for a number of programs because the research that we have been involved in highlights the fact that a multi-strategic approach, reinforcement, and young people hearing the messages from different sources is a good thing. So, again, the RTA has the resources for schools and for teachers to deliver in schools. RYDA has their presentation where they all go "offsite" in groups. We have our presenters who have personal experience, which adds to their credibility, but it is a properly structured session plan that complements those other things that are happening.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Do those courses get to the individuals who need them, or do people generally do the right thing and go and do them?

**Miss DEANS:** In our view, looking at the number of injuries in that youth population, we consider that adolescents and young adults as a whole are a population at risk. Certainly there are some at the end of the spectrum who are at considerably greater risk. There are a number of programs, whether it is through schools or community groups and that sort of thing, where it will be very difficult to impact on those people. We are aware of young offender programs. Again, we have been asked to provide some sessions to those on occasions. I understand that they also are undertaking some evaluation activities.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** A range of programs is available, but there is still a hesitancy in some areas for youth and parents to become involved in them. How do you market your programs successfully to get entrants to come along and to be involved in them? How do you promote and market that?

**Miss DEANS:** I think we probably would put into context that our presenter program is only one aspect of what we do, and we market that through the schools. As I have said, primarily our service consumers are community-based professionals. So we use a range of community professional networks, road safety officers, health promotion officers, police, youth liaison officers and youth workers. A number of community groups have direct contact with their local communities, young people and parents in those areas. A lot of our marketing is through that networking. Our mailing list is round about 500 and we have a website. Interestingly, there is also media interest in what we are doing and we promote that where we can. We also have an annual forum where, generally, our registrations are around 200 community-based professionals.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** I found your submission excellent and very interesting, especially the delayed maturation stuff, which I think needs a wider audience. Yesterday we heard from another presenter that road transport trauma is the fourteenth most common cause of injuries in young males, but yours says it is the most common cause of death and disability. I think that reflects the severity of illness rather than treatment, but I would like your comment on that.

**Dr OWEN:** I think what we are most concerned about is serious injury and death in young people. Road injury is the leading cause of death and hospitalisation from serious injury for young males in particular. That is our understanding of the statistics in New South Wales.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** You said that the alcohol-related deaths were not increasing in young people. That is surprising. Do you have a reference?

**Dr OWEN:** I do not have the reference with me but we could provide the reference for that. What that was saying was it accounts for about 40 per cent of crashes among young people. Fatigue is an issue. Risk-taking is an issue, but alcohol is really only on par with all drivers and that is what the evidence shows.

**Miss DEANS:** That certainly does not detract from our concern about alcohol and safe celebrating, which is a major area of activity for us, and of course getting home safely from that is a key issue.

**Dr OWEN:** Many of these issues compound too. Given that many young drivers should not be drinking alcohol at all when they are on their Ps, that might also account for the fact that it is on par with all adults, because adults are allowed to have some alcohol.

**CHAIR:** The view has been expressed by other people who made presentations that the P1 system of not allowing designated drivers is putting more young drivers on the road at risk, particularly in regional and outer urban areas. Do you have a view on that?

**Miss DEANS:** Our view is that road safety is an extremely complex area and is very delicately balanced. So, whenever there is an attempt to address just one issue, that potentially has a flow-on effect to others. Designated drivers have a place but certainly what has been a concern in more recent times is the peer passenger issue and there is certainly good evidence to say that more than one peer passenger increases the risk of crashing three times. I think probably the approach taken last year where there were some restrictions was an appropriate response to the matter. But I think where the passenger issue becomes a problem, and designated drivers are not the answer there, we need to be looking at a whole range of other strategies, and under our safe celebrating one of the things we are looking at is safe alternative transport options. We have a large role with parents, encouraging them to provide support for young people and making sure they get home safely.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** What other options are you looking at, because from the regional perspective we get anecdotal information that the system is causing problems, that young people are needing to drive backwards and forwards through the town to pick up their friends, there is no public transport late at night, young women are being left at risk at the taxi ranks, and where there is an incidence of their being harassed in the main street they call their friends to come and get them and, of course, if it is past the curfew there are serious difficulties. I would like to know what considerations you are thinking about that would resolve some of these problems for these kids. When my secretary realised I was attending this, she made a whole heap of notes because she has a number of P-platers and the information they are giving me is that whilst they agree the limit is good they say it is creating enormous problems.

**Miss DEANS:** I think that illustrates the fact that when you try to address one issue there are potential flow-on implications in other areas. Certainly in rural areas and in some metropolitan areas where there is not good public transport, that is problematic. One of the things we have been looking at is community shuttle bus type arrangements. We have been doing a round of consultations with community services that have been operating those to look at the pros and cons of those, and we are in the process of putting together a guide, again, for community people about how to do that sort of thing safely. That is one area we are working on. There are no easy answers to that. Certainly parental support, which again is not always easy to come by these days, is another way we try to encourage parents to take some responsibility.

With celebrations, the sorts of things we are encouraging parents to do is to negotiate agreements about how young people will get to and from parties. We look at sharing cabs. We look at party hosts having available public transport timetables. We look at options for sleeping over if it is going to be a problem to get home. I certainly cannot say we have all the answers but there are some of those measures that we are looking at, I guess the feasibility and effectiveness of those, in contributing to improve the situation.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Of course, the knock-on effect is that kids are taking risks. They are removing P-plates. We are finding perhaps a sibling has gone out and has arranged to be picked up by the older sibling. They have a number of friends, no public transport, so therefore that eventuates in about three or four trips because there is pressure to take those kids home. It really is a difficult problem that I think needs to be reconsidered, and soon.

**Miss DEANS:** Yes, and I understand that. One thing kids are not good at doing is planning, and that is something we are really pushing. If you are going out, plan how you are going to get there and back again, and to involve adults in that planning.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** But incidents occur where there are altercations or where a young woman has been harassed and there is not access to public transport, so therefore the kids will take risks to take that young woman home from the street and they end up losing their licences or having to go to court to defend it, having made the decision to ensure that person was safe.

**Miss DEANS:** Yes. It really highlights the complexity of road safety.

**Dr OWEN:** One of the other things I talked about in our presentation was encouraging young people to think about celebrations within their own local communities so they do not have to travel too far to go to a party. Perhaps they can get together closer to home or get their parents involved so they can celebrate at home.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Thank you for an important, comprehensive submission. Do you have any connections with people who have suffered long-term trauma through road accidents and, if so, what involvement do they have or what support mechanisms are you able to give them and what services do they provide to you in terms of courses?

**Miss DEANS:** Yes, a number of our staff have experienced serious road trauma and have permanent disability. We have at least three staff with spinal cord injuries who use wheelchairs. We have one who had a degree of brain injury. They fulfil various roles. They are people first and foremost. Some of them are actively involved in the everyday work in the office. Others are involved as presenters, going out to schools. The original program that was established in 1982 was more focused on wheelchair presenters and their stories.

After we evaluated that in the 1990s we have substantially changed our "Presenter Program" and there are properly structured session plans, but the value of having people who know first hand what it is like is that they establish instant credibility with the kids. In the same way, if I am going to talk to parent groups and I say I have a 15-year-old, it establishes some instant credibility that I do have some understanding of what is going on. From a management perspective, it is not good in human resource management to have them talking about the worst day of their lives every day.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** In regard to those important issues of pre-frontal cortex development and the understanding within that target group in particular and the community at large as to the importance of those issues and the coming-of-age and responsibility, et cetera, do you think that that sort of a course of understanding those issues, maturing, should be part of getting your L-plates and P-plates?

**Miss DEANS:** I do not think that approach has been evaluated and I guess my initial reaction is that when you try to talk to young people a bit about that it is not the sort of thing they really want to hear. Our approach with that has been it is really important for policy decision makers, for people who are responsible for creating the environment in which young people operate, parents and educators, to really understand that is the issue and to build into their education programs and their policies and their environment mechanisms that help manage that maturing adolescent or issues associated with the maturing adolescent brain.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** So you do not see any value in having ongoing courses that people have to undertake or do correspondence or at least attend something that gives an understanding of those issues, of rite of passage and coming of age and maturing?

**Miss DEANS:** It is difficult to comment on that because we have not seen any evaluation as to the effectiveness of that. I think with young people they are not necessarily particularly interested in road safety or that sort of thing per se, so to build those sorts of things into things that are of more interest to them is possibly an approach that is worthwhile considering as an alternative. I am certainly not saying it is not worth doing, I just do not know the effectiveness of that, but I think there needs to be a much wider community understanding of those issues. We understand with younger children that they have certain limitations but I do not think there is a good understanding in the community at large and with people who are involved with young people that there is still a little bit of brain development happening.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** You mentioned a couple of times tips for parents, parent responsibilities, agreements entered into, et cetera. How are you accessing parents to get the information to them and also in getting information back on attempts to have some agreements going? As a mother of four, I assure you trying to get an agreement from one of mine would have been the most difficult thing in the 15-year age group. How is that interaction with that information going?

**Miss DEANS:** We do have a number of parent fact sheets that you will find in the package of information. Again, primarily distribution is through community-based professionals, so that through the networks, as they work on their own local community projects, they will use our fact sheets and so forth to support their projects. The Roads and Traffic Authority has our fact sheets in its offices so they are available from the RTA. We do mailouts to schools, promoting them as, effectively, a take-home note for parents.

They are available on our website. Our fact sheet for parents of young drivers is available in Arabic and Chinese on our website, and we will print that out for particular projects as well. Our website also has agreement formats so that parents can see what sorts of things are important to negotiate. We considered that with parent-teenage agreements there has to be a lot of flexibility as to how they are set up. What we are trying to do is get across the point that there are certain points that need to be negotiated and some points where you really need to try to stand firm. The agreement formats set out those sorts of points. Obviously a parent knows their child better and knows what form that agreement should take.

**Dr OWEN:** I should add that when there have not been agreements in the past it will take a while before young people accept that perhaps there is going to be a parental agreement. So one of the things we try to encourage is for parents to realise that if they have an agreement and they talk to other parents and encourage them to do it then we can change some of the behaviours over time and it will become more the norm for parents and young people to be talking together, to be negotiating and to be making agreements about these things.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** You said in your answer that parents need to search for this information. Do you think it is possible that you are missing the target audience—in other words, the risk takers? I am not saying that you do not reach a lot of young people through schools, but perhaps the main risk takers are not participating in the same way.

**Miss DEANS:** I think we have to accept that at the very end of the spectrum there are some kids who are seriously at risk. Parent fact sheets will not make a lot of difference in some of those areas. As Maureen indicated, by encouraging parents to work with other parents and contact them that has the potential to bring in some who might otherwise not be so aware of the risks. But the hard-core end-of-spectrum risk takers—the sorts of kids who are going to finish up living on the streets and that sort of thing—are very difficult to deal with, yes.

**Dr OWEN:** But also by working with youth workers who often have access to kids at risk—and we have a resource kit available to them—that is another way that information can be disseminated.

**Miss DEANS:** In the development of our parent fact sheets we consult with focus groups. We certainly have messages we want to get across but we also listen to what sorts of things they want to know about and how they want that information presented. So we incorporate that. One of the strengths we have is being able to integrate road safety into a range of other things. For instance, the television media contacted us the other day to talk about tips for parents hosting safe parties and we

were able to integrate the travel home safely message into that sort of context. With our sports safety programs and risk management in sports clubs, they are identifying transport issues associated with that. The approach that we take from that broader injury prevention perspective allows us to do things a little bit differently and integrate it into things that are normal, everyday activities for kids. We have been invited to talk to trades apprentices because employers have been concerned about travelling home afterwards. That is one of the strengths we have to bring.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** Are you aware of some young drivers falsifying their logbook records? Do you have any suggestions for addressing that issue, which is of major concern to me?

**Miss DEANS:** We have heard that that is a possibility. We have no hard evidence as to whether that is happening or the extent to which it might be happening. So I do not think we are in a position to add any credible information. I think it is a concern and I think measures certainly need to be in place to minimise the likelihood of misrepresenting the hours in the logbook. But I think the fact that the hours have been increased to the level they have is a positive thing. It is the on-road driver experience under supervision that has come up in the research as being very beneficial.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** The last part of your submission says that the agency believes the following approaches are necessary to reduce involvement, and it uses a bunch of population-based interventions. We agree that there is a large lower-risk group and a small very high-risk group, which we were talking about before. In an attempt to reduce the road toll the restrictions on the larger low-risk group have become progressively more restrictive. Are they too restrictive and which ones could be safely relaxed in the opinion of Youthsafe—such as the extra passengers and so on? You do not have to answer that.

**Miss DEANS:** I do not think we are in a good position to answer it. Certainly at Youthsafe we are concerned about young people and their rights. It is normal for young people to be out and about, and we certainly support that. I think that very few could come up with the right balance between what is the right level of restriction and what is the right level of freedom.

**Dr OWEN:** Also we will see what happens in the next year or two years in terms of injury and fatalities among young people and see whether that really reflects the impact of the restrictions.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** The only problem with that approach is that your statistics are built on dead bodies. I know we cannot do anything today; we have to do things progressively. I notice that your first conclusion is that to reduce the involvement of young drivers in road crashes Youthsafe supports the following approaches: a considered and evidence-based approach. We have received a number of submissions from a number of groups who do similar things to you. One of the basic arguments has been: Forget about driver skills training, attitude training is what it is all about. I think that is the basis of what you are saying. First, have you had any dealings with a program called SKYDS? Secondly, do you believe that the activities of the various groups who are conducting similar programs throughout the State could be improved by better cooperation and coordination between those groups?

**Miss DEANS:** I do not particularly recall SKYDS as a group. We have not had an active involvement with them in any case. Are the programs you are talking about more awareness raising or are they driver training type programs?

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** No, I am talking about the same sort of thing you do—that is, trying to address behaviour.

**Miss DEANS:** I think there is value—and we were involved in the process with the RTA in the last year or so—in trying to look more comprehensively at the range of education programs that are available. I think that some mapping of the programs that are available, what they are specifically trying to achieve and how they fit together would be desirable. Certainly the research is saying that reinforcement—bringing the messages to young people in different ways—is a more effective way of ultimately arriving at behaviour change. So, yes, there is value in looking at a coordinated approach but that is not to say there should just be one program trying to do everything.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I was not suggesting that.



**Miss DEANS:** No.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Therefore, are you suggesting that it would be a good idea for the RTA to catalogue and put together a resource so that all the people involved could see who else is involved? What about the idea of the RTA bringing about a small forum so that you groups could talk to each other across the table, like we are doing now, about what to do? Would there be any value in that?

**Miss DEANS:** It would depend upon how it was structured, the objectives and that sort of thing. But I think investigating measures that can better identify exactly who is doing what, how it could be better coordinated, getting better communication between some of those programs—as I said, we certainly have communications with a number of those community-based programs—and certainly looking at some basic standards would be appropriate.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Do you see the RTA as being cooperative in what you are trying to do?

**Miss DEANS:** Absolutely—certainly the people who are our contacts at the RTA. We provide our annual action plans and we provide our quarterly progress reports to them. We have a quarterly progress meeting with them. We would be on the telephone at least weekly one way or another. They keep us updated about things that need attention or check on something with us. We let them know what sorts of things are coming up from the community. It is a very regular, open and constructive working relationship.

**CHAIR:** You said that you have credibility in talking to groups because you are a parent. I am in the same boat but, contrary to you, I think young people are excellent organisers. My two eldest boys are aged 26 and 29. My youngest fellow is 23 and my daughter is 18 and still on her green Ps. I never had to worry about any of them. We live 70 kilometres out of Sydney on the urban fringe at Camden. They would organise a designated driver, three of their mates would hop in their little Festiva—they could not go fast because of the weight—and get home safely.

The only worry I have had with my daughter is picking her up at 4.30 a.m. when she phones to say that she has just got off the safe bus instead of the train. I find that young people are excellent organisers: they know what they are going to do. In the regional areas they have to organise themselves in advance—this is a point that Mr Maguire made—but all that organising might be for nothing if they have restrictions and they cannot carry extra people. You mentioned that you need new strategies. My final question is: How do you think we can involve young drivers in the design of those strategies?

**Miss DEANS:** One of our resources in the pack is “Consulting with young people”. I agree that young people are very good at organising their social calendars and so forth. But they have not necessarily thought about some of the consequences and some of the planning issues with respect to safety. They still enjoy a degree of spontaneity in what they do. But, yes, having measures and strategies that work with young people, engaging them and having a sense of ownership on their part, is an important way to move ahead.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing before the Committee this morning and for giving us your submission. We appreciate it.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**CARMEL MARY DONNELLY**, Deputy General Manager, Motor Accidents Authority, Level 25, 580 George Street, Sydney, affirmed and examined:

**DIMITRA TAPSAS**, Acting Principal Advisor—Road Safety, Motor Accidents Authority, 580 George Street, Sydney, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing today to provide evidence on the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into young driver safety and education programs. The Committee has received your submission. Unless there are any objections, it is proposed that your submission will be authorised for publication. Is there any objection?

**Ms DONNELLY:** No objection.

**CHAIR:** There being no objection, I so order. Do you have any further documentation you wish to table to form part of the evidence today?

**Ms DONNELLY:** No.

**Ms TAPSAS:** No.

**CHAIR:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of Legislative Assembly standing orders 291, 292 and 293, which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege. You are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result from the information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute contempt of Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Thank you, I would. As the Committee would be aware, the Motor Accidents Authority regulates the compulsory third party insurance scheme for motor vehicles in New South Wales. Some of the things that we aim to do, while keeping premiums affordable, are to encourage early and appropriate treatment and rehabilitation for people who are injured in motor vehicle accidents and to ensure that there is a competitive and sustainable and fair and prompt compensation system.

Our Act, the Motor Accidents Compensation Act, includes a role for the Motor Accidents Authority [MAA] to provide funding for measures to prevent and minimise injuries from motor accidents and also safety education. That goes to our involvement and interest in the Staysafe Committee's inquiry. While the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] is the lead agency in the State Plan priority for reducing the road toll, we aim to complement its work and we work closely with them. For example, I am a member, with the RTA and NRMA and some others, of the Road Safety Task Force for New South Wales.

At present, in the context of the State Plan and the establishment within the RTA of the Centre for Road Safety and also the introduction of quite a number of safety measures, like the graduated licensing scheme initiatives, the MAA is currently reviewing its injury prevention program strategy. I think it is important that the Committee know that: it is actually quite a window of opportunity. We are looking at developing a new strategy for the 2008-11 period. Some of the things that we are interested in doing at the moment are scanning to see where the at-risk groups are now and where we can profitably play a part for the community, complementing the other players, and looking at where we can segment at-risk groups and target programs.

I think the Committee will be interested to know that we can confirm that that strategy will include young drivers as a priority group. That is based on some of the data, some of which is in the submission. I will highlight a couple of things that come out of our experience. Young people 17 to 25

years represent 16 per cent of licensed drivers but actually 27 per cent of the at-fault drivers that come before the compulsory third party scheme. Of those at-fault drivers, 67 per cent are male. Young people are also heavily represented as claimants—as people who are not the drivers, but who are otherwise injured in motor vehicle accidents. In fact they represent 20 per cent of CTP claimants. It is not just the drivers who are 27 per cent the cause of accidents, but there is a high representation of young people among the injured. Sixty-five per cent of those young claimants are in the metropolitan area of New South Wales.

Young drivers are more likely to have injured passengers when they have an accident in their own vehicle. Drivers under 26 are associated with higher costs of claims from their passengers. Just to give you an indication, the average cost of a claim for a driver under 26 years \$88,000 whereas for an over-25 person, it is \$71,000. Within that young group the average cost of claims for male drivers is also higher than that for female drivers. There is also a high proportion of the claims where there is catastrophic injury. I am talking about spinal and brain injury and very severe injury: both the higher costs and that fact indicate the severity of injuries being a factor. To just stand back from that a little and look at it from the MAA perspective only, young drivers tend to injure others, not just young people, and there are higher social costs—both the tragedy and the economic costs associated with that. That is another reason why we are very keen to see if we can bring that down, or work with others to bring it down. In closing, the MAA will continue to monitor this data as part of evaluating safety initiatives. It is another view on how well we are going in terms of bringing the risk down. That is probably all I have to say.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** I was very interested to read in your submission about the Lismore Aboriginal Drivers Education Program. Particularly in my area, a lot of indigenous youth now are driving unlicensed. I am keen to know the number of participants that the program has had to date and whether the parents of the young drivers are involved. A lot of indigenous people do not own a car, or not very many in my area own a car. That program is also linked to literacy and computer skills they need to gain their licence. Could you tell me about the program? I am very interested in extending it beyond the Lismore area.

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes, you are right, the MAA has been a founding partner since 2002 in that project and we are committing \$40,000 to it, ongoing. It was evaluated in 2005. I know that some of the key findings were that the program was both accessing the target Aboriginal communities and also had assisted in facilitating people getting a number of licences of different sorts. I do not have the data here of how many people have gone through it.

It does assist people in a range of ways. It might assist them with obtaining a birth certificate if they do not have one, and that is one of the starting blocks you need before getting a licence. In any negotiations that people have with the State Debt Recovery Office, that is a barrier for them. It improves their access to the driver knowledge test and provides assistance with literacy and computer skills when that is needed in order for them to access the resources. There is a driver mentor program so that there is a supervision component, as well as increasing the number of Aboriginal justices of the peace who are around to assist with certifying paperwork. There is community networking. I am not sure about the involvement with parents. I would be quite happy to take some of that on notice.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** How did you identify them—through the school? The schools might be a problem too, although the numbers are increasing, judging by those who are going through the school system. How do you identify people who will access participation in the program?

**Ms DONNELLY:** The program was developed and is administered by the adult education agency. It is through them and also through the other funding partner, Attorney General's, so the local courts there would be identifying people who would be suitable.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** You have been funding the program since 2005?

**Ms DONNELLY:** We have been funding it since 2002. It was evaluated in 2005.

**CHAIR:** I wish to ask a question that we have been asking most groups. We understand that until recently the MAA provided funding for the Road Safety Officer Program in councils. Before I go any further, is that correct?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I am not aware that we have. I was under the impression that the RTA has been funding that.

**CHAIR:** That solves that question. Your submission refers to the fact that young drivers comprise 16 per cent of licensed drivers, 24 per cent of drivers involved in fatal crashes and 26 per cent of drivers involved in injury crashes. Do you consider there is not enough emphasis on current policies on injuries as a result of road accidents?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I definitely think we need to be focusing on injuries. I know that I have raised the need for us to continue to focus on injuries as well as fatalities at the Road Safety Task Force, and that was received very well. We have another partnership with both the RTA and the Department of Health where we fund the Injury Risk Management Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. We have been doing that for five years and we are signing up for another five years. That is one area where the researchers and the experts are not just focusing on fatalities: they are looking at injury and severity of injury as well. I think, yes, there needs to be concern for reducing injuries as well as fatalities, but I also think that that is happening.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** We are also getting a pattern that there are a lot of organisations that are delivering a wide range of opportunities for driver education. Your submission talks about the Motor Accidents Authority being involved in a range of young driver education programs.

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Your submission also stresses that young driver public education programs should be combined with enforcement. Do you see a role in any way of some of these courses actually being part of the process to get a licence, or mandatory if you have offended? Do you see there is value in actually formalising the accreditation, evaluation and delivery of these courses to actually link more closely with the activity of getting a licence, or, as I said, of being an offender.

**Ms DONNELLY:** There is a lot in that question.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Yes.

**Ms DONNELLY:** If I miss something, pull me up. I certainly agree. One way of describing the best approach to road safety is to say that there needs to be an ecology, if you like a system, of a range of different interventions. Yes, I would agree that enforcement has a place and education has a place as well as engineering, whether it is around roads or vehicles. What we are aiming to do is understand what the RTA as the lead agency is doing and then understand best where there are remaining gaps or opportunities. Some of what we do is give out grants and so on to different groups, recognising that risk is not evenly distributed. Different communities may be at different stages in managing a risk and there may be ideas coming from different communities. For instance, we have had one program around youth where we have already funded about 70 small local projects.

In terms of your question about coordination, we very much believe there needs to be an evidence base where that is possible, and there needs to be evaluation. I would characterise it as—and here I am probably drawing on my experience of many years in emergency services—you often have a situation where people are not too aware of the risk. Something quite terrible happens and galvanises a community to take some action. We need to take the benefit of that energy that comes forward from the community. But at the same time we need to balance it so that they are not going down a path that at worst does harm or at best is using a lot of the community's time and energy, and there it is not the evidence that it works.

I think it is a balancing act because some of the interventions in injury prevention can be quite difficult to evaluate, particularly if they are in local areas and the data is not there. But there is an international evidence base, and it is growing all the time. That will show that some programs work better than others. Where we know that, I think we have a duty of care to move the projects toward what is known to work. It is a balancing act. It does not mean that people will not come up with new ideas that we would from time to time support and say yes but we want to have it evaluated. In terms of education, I think there is some evidence around how to have well-designed curricula. Certainly the

Roads and Traffic Authority put out guidelines about how to do that in schools, and that is available so that people can say that this is shown to work and this does not.

I have seen quite a lot of coordination. Certainly I know we fund through the Injury Risk Management Research Centre and the Australian College of Road Safety seminars that are available to people working in that area where they can come along. There might be a particular risk group that they are interested in and they can hear the latest evidence on what works and what does not. That is a level of collaboration that is quite positive. I have also experienced with the Road Safety Task Force that there are discussions that occurred about the different sectors—community, business, government, non-government organisations—how they will work in together.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Going back to your comments about engineering, in particular, vehicle engineering, are you aware of the intelligent speed adaptation concept that is being developed certainly around the world but also at Monash University in Victoria in its crash research laboratory where the vehicle speed is controlled by GPS and the car is simply not able to go above a certain speed limit? I think it has been implemented in Norway for young drivers. What is your view on that technology? Do you think this Committee should push harder for that technology to be implemented?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I would have to start by saying that I am not an engineer but I do have an interest. In fact, there was a conference last year, an international conference, at which one of the members of the Motor Accidents Council, which is our advisory council, attended and gave us a very good summary and presentation. I am aware that all the time there are advances in vehicle engineering and safety that the experts here are watching. In terms of whether they should be applied here, I am probably going beyond the bounds of my expertise but I am pretty confident in saying that there is a very strong watching brief over what is happening internationally certainly and also an awareness that as we go through trying to influence, for instance, vehicle manufacturers about the availability of devices we need to be working in concert with other jurisdictions, we need to be looking at there being standards and so on. So there is an engineering side to it. Whether it should be explored for particular targeted drivers, I am not aware of any research work that has been used that way myself. My general attitude is that if there can be some piloting and evaluation to test that and if it is happening somewhere else in the world, that would help us to know whether to go down that path or not.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Have you had a look at the work that Monash is doing?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Not that particular case, no, I have not.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Ms Donnelly, I have a couple of questions relating to the rolling out of your next three-year program. You mentioned that it was current, 2008 to 2011?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** So obviously you have just started?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Before I do that, could you give me a rough idea of how much money the Motor Accidents Authority spends on either public or specific education on road safety a year, just a ballpark figure?

**Ms DONNELLY:** As a ballpark, including some research projects, some of the very small grants, some sponsorships or advertising in local areas to get their safety messages out, all of that sort of thing, it is generally around \$3 million to \$4 million per annum. It is not necessarily a set budget. We work to a board that will approve the budget. One of the things that we would be doing with this strategy, as always, is look at the priorities and look at where we can make a case that it is a good investment and we take that up to our board.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I note that some figures are broken down into female, male and total per person per annum per crash. Can you give me a rough ballpark figure of the cost of motor accidents to the insurer?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I am sure that I can. I am not sure if I can right now.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I am more interested within that figure as to the cost related to the subject we are discussing.

**Ms DONNELLY:** To young drivers?

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** To young drivers. Would you take that question on notice if you cannot answer now?

**Ms DONNELLY:** To give you a ballpark, if 27 per cent of the drivers are at fault, they are generating 27 per cent of the claims and they tend to cost \$10,000 or \$15,000 more than everybody else on average, so they are more likely to be somewhere around 30 per cent of costs, I would say. I can confirm that later, if you would like.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I would like to hear a dollar figure to compare what you are spending on advertising to costs.

**Ms DONNELLY:** I do not have the precise figure with me. I would be happy to get it.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** In relation to the strategy that you are going to roll out, firstly, will you be undertaking consultations specifically with young driver groups or reference groups? Secondly, will you be undertaking consultation with the four or five community-based groups that so far have made presentations to us that are providing youth driver education? I refer to the RYDA scheme, SKYDS, AAMI has its own education program, a lady presented this morning from Youthsafe and I am sure there are a couple more. Will you be talking to those groups to see what they are doing or do you believe that it is more the role of the Roads and Traffic Authority to coordinate that?

**Ms DONNELLY:** No. In fact, there are some youth representatives on the Road Safety Task Force. So whenever we are meeting and dealing with issues there we are consulting. I would certainly be putting our draft strategy through that group. There are a number of groups that we work or consult with on some of our existing projects or I will meet with them on a regular basis and get their views. I am certainly happy to have a look at the stakeholders who have come before the Committee and contact them.

**CHAIR:** The question you have taken on notice relates to advertising and research.

**Ms DONNELLY:** The whole lot.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Ms Donnelly, in your submission you made reference to the percentage of claims based on location of accidents. We are constantly being told that country drivers are at a far greater risk. Do you have any data on why the number of claims in metropolitan New South Wales is twice as high as in regional areas?

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** And what do you define as "metropolitan"?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I am trying to recall the definition.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** The greater metropolitan area of Sydney plus the local government areas of Newcastle and Wollongong would be the one I would go for.

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes, it is likely to include Newcastle and Wollongong. I would be happy to confirm it. I do not have that with me at the moment.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** You might like to add this as well. In your submission you say:

The proportion of claims involving catastrophic injury is significantly higher in the under-25 years category.

What are the primary factors involved in higher claim costs for younger drivers? We would like that information as well.

**Ms DONNELLY:** I would expect that they are going to be the same as the factors that are in the evidence base already in terms of being factors like speed and alcohol, fatigue and so on. But I am happy to take that on notice and see if we have got some other data that confirms that, particularly around the claims.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Would you have information in that regard as to where the greater percentage of accidents occur in that category, that is, a more defined breakup of information as to catastrophic injuries?

**Ms DONNELLY:** The geographic areas?

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Yes, geographically.

**Ms DONNELLY:** I can look for that.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** You talked about the need for evidence-based evaluation of education. How effective are mass media campaigns targeting young drivers? Have they been evidence-based or evaluated?

**Ms DONNELLY:** In recent times I am not aware of the Motor Accidents Authority having funded mass media campaigns. It tends to be something that the Roads and Traffic Authority does. I have not been involved in evaluating those.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** How effective do you think they are?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I guess I am hesitant to give an opinion. I would prefer to be looking at a mass media campaign where you have tracked the results and you have some data. I do think when you look at behaviour change and the research around what is needed for behaviour change for safer behaviours, there are a number of factors that come out. One of them is that it is perceived by a person to be a greater social pressure to undertake the safe behaviour rather than the risky behaviour, whether it is peer pressure or the community's expectation or social norms. I think that a lot of the advertising campaigns, signage and promotion of safety messages are trying to build that critical mass of message in the environment that this is what is acceptable and risky behaviour is not.

I just think that area is very, very difficult to measure. Because there are a number of interventions that are happening at any time, you may be able to track community opinion from one year to five years or 10 years later in community surveys but it is very hard to know whether it is any particular one advertising campaign or a net effect of the whole. In some ways there is a presumption that we are better off to be prudent and try and saturate the messages instead of waiting to know whether in five years time we should have.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** You said that you no longer funded those mass media campaigns. That surprises me because I have a very clear memory of the program sponsored by the Motor Traffic Authority and the Motor Accidents Authority. When did that stop?

**Ms DONNELLY:** It may be a question of definition. We certainly are responsible for having safety messages and signage in public places and at different events. Particularly we try to target them to where there are going to be young people. There are times where we partner with the Roads and Traffic Authority.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** You still do that?

**Ms DONNELLY:** On occasion, yes. In general, in terms of mass media, television advertising and that sort of thing, that is more their role than ours.

**CHAIR:** I note that you sponsor five national rugby league teams. I am certainly glad to see Wests Tigers amongst them. Do those national rugby league clubs provide first graders, who can act

as a very good example to young men particularly, to go to schools and present those messages that the Motor Accidents Authority wants delivered?

**Ms DONNELLY:** The NRL program is one of a number of projects we have under the Arrive Alive banner, which has been going on for some years. Those projects cover sport, as you have mentioned, and also music, arts, youth week. There are a range of things we are involved to try to come through different angles and reach the same audience. As well as the NRL we have sponsorships in women's soccer, wheelchair sports, basketball and the Arrive Alive Cup. That usually gives us a number of avenues to get to young people, such as signage at the game, "Never text while you drive".

Also, the presenters do go into schools. It is run with a lesson plan that has been developed with the PDHPE curriculum in mind. It has been developed in consultation with the Department of Education and Training and the Catholic and independent schools associations. It involves a facilitator who ensures there is consistency across the presentations. It has some interactive components. It also involves a police youth liaison officer. So it is an opportunity for a local police officer who is interested in the youth group to also make contact with the school students and gives an opportunity for them to ask questions where they maybe unclear about information.

**CHAIR:** My experience is that you do not usually get first-grade players turning up at schools. They send under 21s or fringe players. In my view the bigger benefit would be if first graders turned up at schools. If the Motor Accidents Authority is paying national rugby league clubs sponsorship we should certainly expect that at least on some occasions we get first-grade players attending.

**Ms DONNELLY:** We do want to see a first grader and perhaps a junior as well. Wherever we are aware that is not happening we bring it up.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** How much is that sponsorship worth?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I do not have the specific figures with me but I am happy to provide them.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Would you please take that on notice?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I can, yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Would you tell us how much you expend across all of your programs involving sponsorship with the various entities?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Sure.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Is there any evaluation as to whether or not funding those programs is much more advantageous than say funding Youthsafe?

**Ms DONNELLY:** We certainly have had components of the Arrive Alive projects evaluated to take the feedback from that into improving those programs. As far as I am aware we have not done a comparison between what the Roads and Traffic Authority is funding Youthsafe to do and what we are doing, but we would tend to try to not overlap with what is already funded.

**CHAIR:** I think Arrive alive has a very good message and is a good way to do it, but if you are providing sponsorship to those groups surely they can provide their top echelon players? Maybe next year they might consider the Central Coast Mariners?

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** No, the Central Coast Mariners are part of the program and they actually do go to the schools. We also have the Central Coast Arrive Alive surf classic coming up in March and the pro-surfers are going to be ambassadors to schools as well.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Where does the sponsorship and the programming extend to?

**Ms DONNELLY:** In geographic areas?



**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Yes.

**Ms DONNELLY:** A fairly good coverage over metropolitan areas. If I remember correctly, the wheelchair athletes tend to move more into the rural areas. Part of what we are doing with our review strategy is looking at where is the risk geographically and do we need to target some additional areas?

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** How do you assess the risk geographically? What statistics are you using to do that?

**Ms DONNELLY:** We are using both our statistics and then what is available from the Roads and Traffic Authority.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** So you would use the material you have referred to here in regard to the amount of claims, plus the Roads and Transport Authority statistics as well?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** If you took this as gospel, you are saying that the claims are far greater in metropolitan New South Wales and you would focus on metropolitan New South Wales to a greater degree?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Certainly.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Unless, of course, the Roads and Traffic Authority figures showed differently?

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** I think that they do. The message I get is that regional drivers and country drivers are at far greater risk and have more catastrophic accidents than in the metropolitan area.

**Ms DONNELLY:** I suppose I would add that we are clearly just not looking at fatalities and even severe injuries. We are covering all injury claims. One of the other things that we take into account are the injuries of which there might be a high frequency, they might be less severe but they are still generating a very large social cost. Things like whiplash, which people can certainly have their lives disrupted by, in larger numbers.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Whiplash is more of a metropolitan than a country thing?

**Ms DONNELLY:** In terms of the claims, I would expect so.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** We have heard of various programs but are you addressing the hoon element at all? In saying that, we have a major problem at the moment in Sydney with car racing. Are they picked up by the court at all and referred to any programs that help with that because it is a great danger?

**Ms DONNELLY:** There are some programs around for traffic offenders through the justice sector but we are not involved in those. As we renew our strategy I would be quite willing to have a look at whether or not there are some segments there in terms of, as you have called them, hoons—

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** I mean the car racing, side by side?

**Ms DONNELLY:** —if there is an ability to target those. But I do not think that is the way we are approaching it at the moment. That said, I think one of the things we are offering by having sporting people available to go into schools—clearly it is not mandatory for schools to pick up our programs but there are situations obviously where the teachers in schools see someone who is an elite athlete or a local athlete as a voice that they think this particular demographic of kids will listen to.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** They are picked up at school before they start driving but a lot of these offenders are past school age?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** I would like to confirm that it has been taken on notice that we get some dollar amounts on the various programs that are listed here in your submission?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** In particular, some understanding as to those whole-of-government programs that may be delivered by a number of departments or by a department, for example, the Department of Corrective Services in the Sober Driver Program?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Okay.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** And how that is funded? Who funds it? How much?

**Ms DONNELLY:** I am happy to take on notice information that is in the Motor Accidents Authority. I am not sure if what you are saying is I will bring back information about what the Department of Corrective Services and the Attorney Generals Department do?

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** But it is listed here in your submission and I was interested—

**Ms DONNELLY:** That we have partnerships with those.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Within that partnership I assume there must be some dollar amount?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Of how much we contribute?

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Certainly, yes.

**CHAIR:** In relation to the CTP scheme, can you explain the community rating which cross subsidises the low and high-risk community groups? Also, is there any information so far on the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Certainly. Essentially as the regulator for the CTP scheme we approve a band of pricing; we do put a cap on how high it can go so that is around the \$600 mark. Within that there is flexibility for insurers to reward people who are a lower risk with a lower price. The flip side of it is that where you have drivers that are of higher risk, for instance young drivers, we are not letting them charge what the full risk might in fact imply for the price. What that means is that there is a community rating in which the lower risk drivers are contributing towards the cost of compensation for accidents caused by younger drivers. That is an explicit policy in order to make the scheme affordable and to enable young drivers to have compensation so that people who are unfortunately injured are covered. That is the way that it works. It does add to the impetus for focusing on young drivers because that is the key lever for bringing the costs of the scheme down.

In terms of Lifetime Care, which is a new scheme introduced for adults from 1 October last year and for children from 1 October the year before for people who are catastrophically injured: spinal injuries, severe brain injuries, multiple amputations, severe burns and those sorts of injuries, they are automatically covered by the scheme whether or not they are at fault for their treatment, rehabilitation and support for life. It is a scheme that takes some of the worries off families about how this person will be cared for going forward and enables some certainty that resources will be there for them for their lifetime. The data as to what is happening in that scheme and for young drivers is still in very early days.

Those of us who are cautious about interpreting statistics would be very cautious with this because the data I have seen is up to about 4½ months of taking adults. From what I recall, there is a reasonable representation of people in the 16 to 25 age group of the adults that have come into the scheme. There are a number where it is single vehicle accidents—over half of them. From memory there are not any people who were drivers themselves but there are passengers—except in the case of

motorcycles where the person is the driver. So, yes, we have had some people in this age group come into the scheme in the last few months and that is an ongoing concern.

**CHAIR:** Just out of idle curiosity, do they keep a record of the type of cars involved, to see if they are older cars or no airbags or whatever?

**Ms DONNELLY:** For the Lifetime Care?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms DONNELLY:** For Lifetime Care the scheme is still in very early days and really we have been talking about whether or not we need to do some research, looking at them as case histories, to learn as much as we can from those. There is a fair bit of information around. Obviously there is information from the Roads and Traffic Authority and the police as well, because they have been quite major accidents, which can feed into research.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** On the funding issue, can I ask a further clarification on notice?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Certainly.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** With the Sober Driving Program I have just noticed on page 8 of your submission that the Authority and the Roads and Traffic Authority jointly funded that particular program until June 2007?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** The program is now solely funded by the Roads and Traffic Authority?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** It is administered by the Department of Corrective Services?

**Ms DONNELLY:** Yes.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** I would like to get some understanding from you on notice as to how that could possibly be coordinated? Who will leads that program in any fundamental way if the Department of Corrective Services is not funding it?

**Ms DONNELLY:** If they are not funding it, okay. I will take that on notice. I cannot give you an answer now.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**GILLIAN ELIZABETH CALVERT**, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing today to provide evidence on the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into young driver safety and education programs. The Committee has received your submission and, unless there are any objections, it is proposed that your submission be authorised for publication. I know you have it already on your own website, so I assume there are no objections.

**Ms CALVERT:** No, there is not.

**CHAIR:** There being no objection, it is so ordered. Do you have any further documentation that you wish to table to form part of your evidence here today?

**Ms CALVERT:** No.

**CHAIR:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 291, 292 and 293, which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Ms CALVERT:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should point out also that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of the Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Ms CALVERT:** I would. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about this important issue of driver safety for the young people of New South Wales. Before I start, I would like to acknowledge in the public gallery Mr Bernard McDonald, who is the Deputy Ombudsman for the Children's Ombudsman in the Republic of Ireland, who is visiting New South Wales to learn about our Child Death Review Team and also about our youth participation work. At the Commission for Children and Young People we have conducted extensive consultations with young drivers under 18 years to discover what issues are important to them and what they think should be done to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities involving young drivers. We are also in the final stages of the New South Wales Child Death Review Team's major statistical study on trends in deaths of children and young people in New South Wales over the past 10 years from 1996 to 2005.

The studies' findings, we hope, will improve our knowledge of trends in deaths from a range of causes, including transport fatalities and the factors that influence those trends. We hope that this information will assist committees like Staysafe and others working to help prevent or reduce deaths of children and young people. We are expecting to have the findings of the study ready for tabling in the middle of this year. So, while it is not going to be completed in time for this Committee, I think in the long term it will be useful for Staysafe because it is a unique data holding of all the deaths of all children, including causes of death from motor vehicle accidents, looking at what is happening over that 10-year period, is it going up, is it going down, do we have changes in the gender makeup of the deaths, and trying to understand what might be impacting on some of those trends. So, I think this will be a particularly valuable collection for the Staysafe Committee, and I will ensure that the Committee receives a copy through the Chair.

In our consultations with young people and in our listening to young people, they have told us that learning to drive is an important rite of passage in their lives. I suspect if you reflect on your own lives, you will recall what an important rite of passage it was for them. It is seen as one of the major steps forward towards adulthood and it signifies the move towards adulthood. Driving also gives young people the freedom to move around; it gives them more opportunities to earn money and very often more ways to contribute to their social life, their families and their communities. It is particularly important also to young people in regional and rural areas where there is often limited public transport and long distances to travel. Young people do recognise the importance of good driver training. They support improvements in access to affordable supervised driving and they are

open also to new ways for delivering driver training: in fact, they are asking for new ways of delivering driver training. School-based driver training has been widely canvassed, but we believe the jury is still out on how effective are school-based programs.

Many people, when they think of school-based driver training programs, have an image in their minds of the United States model, which is witches hats in car parks and kids learning how to do cornering, braking and so on. This image is somewhat misleading; it is not the model of school-based driver education that has been delivered in New South Wales. What we most often hear discussed in New South Wales is classroom-based driver education programs, including computer-assisted driver education programs. Although the image of witches hats in parking lots is appealing for many, I am not sure there is the capacity to incorporate practical driving experience into the senior school curriculum in New South Wales. The point we want to make is that before committing large investments in any new program we have to know that it works.

Something we do know that works is that parents have a big influence on how their children drive, both as driving teachers and through the example they set as drivers starting, I suspect, when they come home from hospital. Supporting parents in their role as driver trainers and mentors is something we should be looking at if we want to improve driver training in New South Wales. Any changes to driver training and licensing regulations need to take into account also what is happening with young people developmentally. Young people's brains are still developing; they do not have adult level abilities in controlling risk-taking impulses or in considering the consequences of their actions. The brains of young men also develop these capacities later than the brains of young women. So, we need to take into account the different needs and the different developing abilities of young people and then the different developing abilities of young men and women.

Importantly, I think we need to recognise that the decision we make on how and when young people have access to a car will affect their lives in many ways, beyond the confines of the car itself. We often just focus on the confines of the car itself but, in fact, access to the car affects their lives way beyond the confines of the car. In focusing on safety we need to be very mindful of the overall effect of what we are doing on the lives of young people and young drivers. When we are evaluating the impact of proposed changes to young drivers it is vital that we include the impact of the wider context of their lives, and that includes their families and their communities: we need to evaluate the impact beyond the specific activity of driving a car. We need to be aware that putting restrictions on young people's access to driving may also result in restrictions being placed on their safety, for young women; it may also result in restrictions being placed on the capacity to engage in work; and it may impact also on their capacity to participate in their communities and to care for family members.

I think these require the wisdom of Solomon, but I think that we cannot ignore that when we place restrictions on young people's access to driving we are impacting also on a much wider part of their lives. I think all of these consequences need to be considered and weighed up against the likely gains in road safety itself. We think a positive way to do this is by bringing young people into our confidence and including them in any decisions we might make so that they can articulate for us what are the impacts on their lives of the decisions we are making on their behalf. In our media campaigns on driver safety in framing new laws and regulations or in establishing new programs I support young people being involved in their development, and that we support and use the communication streams that young people themselves use. Driver safety is an important issue for young people, but so is the capacity to drive an important issue for young people because of the impact it has on their lives.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** In your submission you stated that you had involvement in extensive consultations with groups and young people into the Government policy of graduated licensing systems. What further consultation since the implementation of the licensing system have you had and do you have any anecdotal information that that system has failings?

**Ms CALVERT:** We have not had any further consultations with young people since we did that original consultation that you referred to. We consulted then with 130 young people aged between 14 and 19 years through small focus groups and we held focus groups in a number of areas—Condobolin, Parkes, Manly, Bankstown. We went out also to the Western Sydney International Dragway and spoke with young people out there. We spoke also with indigenous young people who had had their licences suspended, and also our Young People's Reference Group spoke with their friends and brought their knowledge back.

So, we did a fairly comprehensive consultation then; we have not done once since. I am aware that on the task force that advised the Government on these most recent changes—restricted passengers—there was discussion of an evaluation being undertaken of the impact of those changes, and the committee certainly recommended that there be an evaluation; I am not aware that any evaluation has been commenced. Let me say, though, that in conducting such an evaluation I think it is really critical that we do more than just evaluate the impact on crashes; that if we are to evaluate the impact of these legislative changes, then we need to evaluate the full impact. So, we would like to see questions such as, have the changes impacted on young people's economic participation? Have the changes impacted on young people's social lives both in cities and rural areas, and has there been a differential impact between that? How have parents been affected and how have they responded? Has there been any impact on the designated driver scheme: that had quite a lot of support amongst young people.

Have the passenger restrictions resulted in more cars being on the road and more driving hours being undertaken by young people? I would also be quite interested—I do not know whether you could do this—in exploring whether or not in trying to stop young males driving in a risky manner, because it is predominantly young males, we have inadvertently raised the risk for young women in night-time restrictions, restricting their access to cars, and being able to get home. I do not know whether you can do that but I think it is a particularly important issue.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** I can confirm that some of the things you are saying are occurring. In particular, I concur with your statement that young women are at risk. That is occurring and young drivers are sharing motor vehicles until 11.00 p.m. and they are then congregating, going back to their cars and there are more cars on the roads. It is also having an impact on younger people who are out and who need to get home. Multiple trips are now occurring, in particular, in country areas where there is no public transport.

Getting back to the issue of a review, you suggested in your recommendation that there should be an independent monitoring and evaluation. We would be interested to know who you think should carry out that independent monitoring and evaluation. The other point I wanted to raise relates to your focus groups. You interviewed a number of people. I think you referred to interviewing a couple of hundred people.

**Ms CALVERT:** I interviewed 130, yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** I have about 1,500 submissions that you are welcome to review. I surveyed young drivers and I intend to do it again because there are lots of examples of the issues that you have raised.

**Ms CALVERT:** Another question we would probably be interested in is: Are young people engaging in further risky behaviour in order to get around the restrictions?

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** They are moving their P-plates, they are hiding kids in boots and they are doing all sorts of things.

**Ms CALVERT:** I guess those are the reasons why we argue that there should be an independent evaluation. I am sure that the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] has in place mechanisms for selecting the most appropriate and independent people to conduct that evaluation. Putting on another hat that I wear when I am not speaking in this capacity, which is chair of the New South Wales Injury Risk Management Research Centre, of which the RTA is a partner, as is the Department of Health and the Motor Accidents Authority, that might be one body that could undertake such an evaluation.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Do you think that the changes that were introduced with graduating licences reflected the views of the young people you consulted?

**Ms CALVERT:** I think a lot of aspects did, but some aspects did not.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** What aspects did not?

**Ms CALVERT:** The passenger restrictions. There were concerns about passenger restrictions, which was one aspect. I think there was also concern about some of the weight and power restrictions that were put in place.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Were the passenger numbers universal across metropolitan and rural areas, or was it more of a concern in rural areas where there was no access to efficient public transport?

**Ms CALVERT:** Any restriction on driving is more of a concern in rural and regional areas because of the public transport issue. I have not gone out and consulted with young people subsequent to that decision being made, but I anticipate that it would be more of an issue in outer areas, rural and regional areas, because of the public transport issue.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** I want to stay on that topic as a bit of a sociologist, a bit of a psychologist and a bit of a commentator. Although I appreciate that you recommended an independent review be done—thank you for that recommendation; we want a few witnesses to make actual recommendations to us—I would still like to hear your opinion, in particular, drilling down to this number of people in a vehicle. I think you alluded to the designated driver problem and you asked whether it would be better, therefore, to have more cars on the road. Is that a better outcome?

Drilling down even further than that, if you have one designated driver out of five it is plausible and it kind of works, whereas if you have only two people that 50 per cent chance of one having drinks and the other not having drinks becomes socially unworkable and, therefore, the whole scheme becomes unworkable and they do the sorts of things that have been established by Mr Maguire's survey. That aspect really worries me as I have a country perspective. I understand that, but it is no different to outer metropolitan areas or even some areas such as the Central Coast, the South Coast and so on. So it is not just that.

I have a great worry when young people are going to the NRL grand final. They drive their car to Lidcombe and then catch the train. That means a car journey from Lidcombe back home at 11.30 p.m. or midnight as the game ends at 10.30 p.m., and on it goes. What are we doing? Do you think we are adding risk in the hope that we are eliminating risk, or are we just adding risk?

**Ms CALVERT:** Those are precisely the questions that I think need to be answered by an independent evaluation. I can anticipate and think, "Yes, that might be the case" but I might be talking to kids who are biased. We really need to have proper data. In fact, road safety has made good use of data and information in designing laws, programs and so on—much more than do some other social issues and social problems. I think we need to continue to do that. I do not think we had sufficient data to make a decision about restricting passengers. We had data that was from countries that had quite different graduated licensing schemes and had quite different teachers to New South Wales.

We were unable to find any data where those other countries had evaluated the wider impact on young people of imposing passenger restrictions. So we brought in a legislative change with, I think, weak data on the basis of weak information. If we are to continue with that law when we have anecdotal evidence of the sort that has been discussed here today, I think it is essential that we have an independent evaluation of the impact on that law—the broad impact of that law on young people.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** An earlier witness, no less than one from the Roads and Traffic Authority, suggested—I am staying on this number of people in the car—that if a driver who has not had any drinks is in a car with three or four other drivers who are drunk the driver will behave like a drunk. To me that was a hostile remark because I know that the designated driver scheme has saved many lives. I would like to hear your opinion. Is that a plausible scenario?

**Ms CALVERT:** I think it is a plausible scenario.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** Are these scenarios in the minority, or is this an average type scenario?

**Ms CALVERT:** It would depend on whether a girl is driving or a boy is driving. If a boy is driving he will probably have less brain development than a girl. He will be behind in his brain development and have less capacity to assess risk. He would not necessarily have less capacity; his brain would not have developed as much. I am pointing to my head because that is the part of the brain, the frontal lobe.

**The Hon. GEORGE SOURIS:** Next time around I am going to marry an older woman.

**Ms CALVERT:** You need to marry someone six years older. You may find that young women can resist it more than young men. Young men want to show their masculinity and their lack of brain development, or whatever, kicks in. So you may have differences, depending on whether you have girls driving or boys driving as the designated driver.

**The Hon. GEORGE SOURIS:** Surely only a minority of blokes behave that way when there are others egging them on—this peer thing. Surely that is a minority. Do you think that? I want you to think that.

**Ms CALVERT:** I think some young people will be egged on and some young people will be able to resist peer pressure.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** It will be the school captains who resist it. Commissioner Calvert, I agree with my colleague Mr Souris that this is one of the submissions that make very firm recommendations. I congratulate you on that because it means we will probably take some notice of it. You made a couple of statements in your submission. In one of those statements you give us references but in the other you do not. One of the statements is that research has identified that there is a cultural risk of blame in looking at this issue. The second assertion you made in your submission is as follows:

Whilst suggestions have been made that such education—

we are talking about school education—

of pre-drivers should be delivered in schools, research suggests that such programs have as yet demonstrated little efficiency.

Can you take that question on notice and give us the references for the research?

**Ms CALVERT:** I will take that question on notice.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Specifically, you are very strong on this idea of doing further research into all these factors. I am not sure whether you answered the question, but would you make a firm recommendation as to what in your opinion, or in the opinion of the commission, would be the appropriate body to carry out and coordinate such research? Go out and put it out there. What strategies would you recommend to encourage more involvement by young people in such research activities? Bear in mind, as the Chair has pointed out, that we have received submissions from four, five or six community-based bodies, all who all have their opinions as to how this should be done, all delivering their own programs, probably with some form of government subsidy or help. Primarily, all are related to the issue of education and attitude change rather than, as you put it, some skills training. Could you comment on an appropriate body and how you get those young people to talk to those appropriate bodies?

**Ms CALVERT:** I think there is probably an earlier more important question, which is: What is it that you are going to research? What is the research question? Who conducts the research is critical. If we do not ask the right question we will not get the right answer.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** The question you postulated is: What are the factors that influence young drivers?

**Ms CALVERT:** Yes. You probably want to refine that a bit more for research. Referring to who should conduct it, my experience, as someone who commissions research, is that you are much better off letting the process of tendering make the selection. The reason why we undertake public



tendering, or we put it out for people to put themselves forward, is that you can get some people applying that you might not have expected to apply to undertake the research, and they come up with some quite innovative ideas.

I think that competitive process, if you like, of tendering is probably the best way to select who conducts the research. A number of institutes and organisations are particularly interested in road safety or in injury. All those organisations would be more than capable of undertaking this research, and they are often located in universities, for example, the George Institute, the Monash Accident Institute and the one I chair, which is the Injury Risk Management Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. Any of them and a range of other people would be able to undertake it as well. But I think the critical thing is what is your research question and then let the competitive tendering process select.

One of the things you would be putting in as part of the tender is for the tenderer to demonstrate how he or she was going to involve young people in research. Tenderers would then have to demonstrate how they were going to do that. You would then need someone on the selection panel who had the capacity to interrogate and assess the quality of the answer that the tenderer put forward. The commission would be more than happy to assist whoever was making that selection process to assess whether or not what people were proposing would encourage young people to participate in the research.

In all our research we involve young people and children, both as subjects of research, that is, we do the research on them, but we also involve young people in designing, conducting and making sense of the research. We are really trying to develop that aspect of research so it is much more inclusive of young people. We would be more than happy to share our experiences.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** On page 9 of your submission, at 5.2, the Child Death Review Team found an increase in transport fatalities from 2.7 to 4.1. This was used as part of the justification for the increased restrictions that you mentioned. I have reservations as to the statistical significance of that change but I am interested in your view.

**Ms CALVERT:** The rate certainly changed. How significant it is we will not be able to comment on until we do our 10-year data analysis, which is what we are currently doing. We will then look at what the increases have been over the 10-year period and we will be able to see if there is any significance in the increase and when or whether this impact was a blip, if you like, a random series of events. So, that 10-year data study should be able to help the Staysafe Committee answer questions like that.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** It has been acknowledged we have already received a number of submissions from driver education program people. Looking at your submission about little efficiency in the programs delivered in schools, and you mentioned you had been to Parkes and were speaking with young people, how many of those young people participated in driver education programs? You might not have the figure off the top of your head now. In my area they really have to get dragged into those programs. We have all this government money being spread out there, so I am interested in knowing, from your discussions with young people, had many put their hands up, yes they will do it?

**Ms CALVERT:** Certainly some of them had been to them and they had been to different types of programs. It was interesting that some really responded to the discussion about the physics of crashes because they were scientifically minded; other young people responded to the practical side of driver training, and others responded to the behavioural side of it. So, it really varied. I cannot give you a figure about how many had participated in it.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** Do you feel that these programs are adequately reaching a large content yet?

**Ms CALVERT:** No, I do not think so. I think most young people learn to drive by a friend or relative teaching them, supplemented with lessons. I would just take this opportunity to talk about the importance of parents in the process of learning how to drive and that it does not stop once they have got their licence. There is real opportunity for us to ramp up parental involvement and supporting parents to become better—to do several things. One is to better model their behaviour to be conscious

that when you have a seven-year-old in the back of your car and you are driving that they are learning about driving from what you are doing. I think parents forget that. I know I struggle at times to remember that I am teaching as I am doing.

The second thing is that we could support parents more in how to be better teachers of driving skills and driving attitudes with their children as they prepare to get their licences. I think the first thing we can do is to help parents understand that their responsibility or, probably more importantly, their influence does not stop once the child gets their red Ps. Their influence continues for some time after the young person gets their licence and they can play an active role in helping to continue to shape those young drivers' attitudes and driving skills and they can also do things like give them a safe car, even though it might be the more expensive car. I think perhaps the parents' role has been underutilised in driver education.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** I might just add a constituent of mine claims—there is a file back in my office—that some other countries have a post licence and once you get that you do other courses after that. We might need to look at that.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Most of us would think we are very good drivers and very capable of teaching our children to drive. I put it to you that if any of us were to sit for a test we would probably fail. Therefore, we are handing on bad habits that have been taught to us by others and there is really room to have a more professional approach to teaching young people to drive, meaning there are professionals who are skilled in it, and I suggest we are part of the problem by passing on those bad habits?

**Ms CALVERT:** I think we are probably part of the problem and I think that, in a sense, if we are to improve young driver behaviour we need to really improve all driver behaviour. If we do that, young drivers will also lift their game. They will always be a greater risk because of the brain development issue and the developmental issues that arise with adolescents. The issue about professionals is certainly an important one but I think we need to remember that a lot of people cannot afford professional training and that we need to find some way of giving them access to professional training.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** What about shared responsibility? When you have a driver who is driving in an erratic manner or whatever and you have a passenger, it is the driver who has a fine but the passenger allows the driver to drive irresponsibly. What about the notion of shared responsibility and penalties?

**Ms CALVERT:** I think we could do a lot more to teach young people, either through modelling our own behaviour or through our role as parents about appropriate passenger behaviour. We teach young kids how to cross roads and be pedestrians. We teach them how to be drivers. We should also be teaching them how to be passengers. Again, that is another underutilised area that we might make more use of in our work around young driver safety.

In relation to the issue of professionals, the other thing I would be quite interested in knowing, and I am not aware of any research specifically around driver behaviour, is whether parenting influences more than the teacher, the professional influence. We know, for example, in other areas of children's lives that nothing overrides parental influence. No matter what you do, parental influence is the thing that determines behaviour. I suspect it may well be the same with driver behaviour, that nothing overrides or it is very hard to override the influence of parental attitude and parental behaviour. If that is the case, and there is a little bit of evidence that shows that I am a driver and my parent drives in a particular way, I am going to have elevated crash levels, and so on. If that is the case, then focusing on parents driving throughout their entire driving life becomes a critical road safety option for us.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** My question follows the line in relation to training. In your view, do you think young drivers have a sufficient level of technical skill—there has been a lot of talk about attitudinal and behavioural skills, and they need to be addressed—to be safe drivers?

**Ms CALVERT:** I would not be in a position to answer that. Probably I would need to find out first of all, in terms of crashes or driver safety, because of technical skills, how much of that is

because of the condition of the road and the car and how much is to do with attitudes and behaviours. I think in the past the road safety research community has focused on technical road safety and engineering type responses, and there is certainly an argument for focusing much more on the behavioural aspects and attitudinal aspects of driver behaviour. That would be something I would encourage.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I will ask my question on notice. Your submission, I think rightly, says most people already recognise young people involved in accidents are already breaking the current laws, so further restrictions probably are not going to make a lot of difference. Do you have any view on strengthening the position of educational programs, the behavioural side, in the licensing process? You do not have to answer that now, you can think about it.

**Ms CALVERT:** I will take that on notice.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** On the question of mass media campaigns you recommended that partnerships be involved. I am mindful of the fact that most of these campaigns are ordered by people well over 25. I wonder whether you have a view on whether the current crop of mass media campaigns that go for the graphic shock treatment are penetrating the target audience or not?

**Ms CALVERT:** Certainly young people say that sort of shocking image pulls them up and influences them. That is self-report. Whether it changes their behaviour or not, I do not know. I think the little pinkie campaign starts to go in the right direction because it is gendered—it addresses young men—and I think it really captured the imagination of young people. So, I think that is heading in the right direction. I certainly think you are going to have a better mass media campaign if young people are truly there as partners in the process of developing the campaign. They should not determine it, because as adults we have a responsibility to make those decisions, but to do so in the absence of young people's involvement seems to me to be wasting an incredibly valuable resource that the community has.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**ANNE MORPHETT**, Senior Policy Adviser—Road Safety, NRMA Motoring and Services, level 23, 388 George Street, Sydney, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** The Committee has received your submission. Unless there are any objections, it is proposed that the submission be authorised for publication. Do you have any objection?

**Ms MORPHETT:** No objection.

**CHAIR:** There being no objection, it is so ordered. Do you have any further documentation you wish to table to form part of your evidence here today?

**Ms MORPHETT:** I am going to read an address and I will table that at the end of it, and I am very happy to answer questions following that.

**CHAIR:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also with a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 291, 292 and 293, which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Ms MORPHETT:** That is correct.

**CHAIR:** I draw to your attention the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes, thank you. NRMA Motoring and Services welcomes the opportunity to discuss the issue of young driver safety and educational programs with the Staysafe Committee. This inquiry provides a welcome opportunity to stakeholders and the community to state their views on young driver safety issues and to suggest measures and strategies to address the issue. NRMA appreciates that the issue of balancing the road safety of all road users and the mobility of individuals is complex. No-one wants to see young people continue to be injured or killed on our roads. NRMA encourages the Staysafe Committee to ensure that any measures considered are research based, equitable, practical, enforceable and the best use of existing resources.

NRMA suggests that the only way to improve the safety of young people on the roads is through a comprehensive regime of measures. In our submission to the Committee we outlined some suggested areas. These include improving the range of education and information resources and increase their accessibility—this could include brochures, websites, CDs, DVDs, programs and activities for young people and also their parents—looking at transport equity, reviewing the impact of peer passenger restrictions introduced in 2007, identifying the issues for young people using existing public transport, reviewing community transport schemes or other options for urban and regional areas, and addressing the issue of police enforcement. NRMA has consistently called for greater visible police presence on New South Wales roads. Increasing police presence immediately improves the safety of all road users.

The Traffic Offenders Program exists in New South Wales but it is ad hoc. It is not currently supported by a structure under the auspice of either the Attorney General's Department or the RTA. NRMA has supported this program for the reason that clearly just penalising a driver by a fine or loss of licence does not provide them with any new information. A more effective measure would be a combination of penalty and education—that is, information that enables offenders to see how their behaviour exposes them and other road users to harm. NRMA continues to support this program but, given the quantity of issues involved, we would welcome independent review of the program. It currently covers young drivers as well as other drivers.

On the issue of resources, the NRMA submission referenced various reports, including from the OECD, about the overrepresentation of young males in crashes. For the age group 15 to 17 years young males are twice as likely as females to end up as a traffic fatality, and for the 18-to-24 age group males are three and a half times more likely than females to end up as a traffic fatality. These

differences are principally due to differences in behaviour. The OECD research found that even in the best-performing road safety countries in the world—Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom—very significant gender differences remain. This gender differences need to be considered in the context of New South Wales crash rates and in relation to all measures considered by Staysafe and the Government. Given the overwhelming data on gender differences in crashes, NRMA would like to see as part of the Committee's investigations establishing whether programs are being developed specifically for young males as a preventative measure or for offenders.

There are limited road safety resources in the community but in New South Wales we have road safety officers. These officers are based in local councils but have some funds provided to them by the RTA. We believe that some road safety officers may have made submissions to the Committee. In terms of their role, we find them to be highly valuable. They are the face of road safety in local communities and they are able to work with all local stakeholders. One of the strengths of these officers is that they can develop local solutions for local road safety problems. What these safety officers need is a structure that can maximise their reach into the community and respond to the community's requests as appropriate. Our concern is that the current situation does not allow them to do this effectively. NRMA would like to congratulate the Committee on undertaking this important inquiry. We thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear before it, and I am happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** I refer you to page 11 of your submission about controlling speeds, which is something I have had at the back of my mind. Heavy vehicles have speed controllers and I think it might be the way forward for younger people. The submission says that it may be many years before we see their widespread use in the types of vehicles that young people purchase. You state various other avenues that may be available. Has there been any costing of this program and how it could be rolled out? How much research have you carried out on this issue?

**Ms MORPHETT:** I will take the question on notice and provide some other references. Our concern is that intelligent transport schemes—and this kind of data and these kinds of mechanisms are being trialled in some areas—will not we believe be a solution to the problem in the short term. A lot of the time people see technology as an answer. I think when it comes to the young driver safety issue attitudes and influencing factors—be it the parents or their peers—are some of the things that need to be addressed. I think technology will provide some solutions in the future but from the research we have seen it is not going to be the immediate future.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** I do not believe every young person should have a device fitted in their vehicle but it certainly could be quite beneficial for someone who has been convicted of an offence.

**Ms MORPHETT:** In the future I think people are looking in terms of the alcohol interlock program, involving repeat offenders with alcohol. If you are looking to the future you would probably say that repeat offenders convicted of speed offences might have the option to have one fitted as part of their sentence. That would probably be welcome.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** On page 15 of your submission the NRMA states that driver training without an emphasis on driver attitude does not reduce crash involvement. Of the range of young driver education programs currently provided through schools and community settings, such as RYDA and SKYDS, first, which ones are you familiar with; and, secondly, would you support a statewide approach to young driver education incorporating the optimal elements of all these current programs?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes, I am familiar with the range of young driver programs in the State, both community based and ones that involve a range of stakeholders. Most of the programs that are offered use the same principles—they are concerned with driver behaviour and a combination of car handling skills and the influence of peers. All of them have merit. I think the confusing thing in New South Wales is that they vary about who is involved. They are not supported under one particular infrastructure. Some of the messages contained in the programs may be at conflict with some of the opinions of the RTA. One of the most controversial issues is designated drivers, which is not always supported by the RTA. It is something that NRMA has strongly supported because we believe there is

merit in getting young people to take responsibility for their behaviour and to be supportive as passengers and as drivers.

In our submission you will see statements from young people about how widely they use designated driver programs. As a researcher, one of the things I struggle with when we have discussed this issue with the RTA is that we currently measure in our crash data who crashes and how they crash—so gender, sex, age, type of road and type of crash, such as head-on or run off road. We measure all of that data but we do not measure who gets home safely, and why. One of the arguments we have come up against is when we survey young people and parents we know that a lot of the time people are getting home safely because young people are taking responsibility for their behaviour. We have spent decades getting the community to change its attitude towards alcohol and driving, and I think it has been a very successful measure. Now we have a generation of drivers who are taking on that message but we are now saying, "We'll limit the number of passengers that you can carry". I think that is where the research is quite weak.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Thank you.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** You are a researcher. On page 5 of the submission you say that the 2006 young driver crashes did not represent an increasing trend in young deaths. Have you found that statement?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** I have reservations myself about the statistical significance of that. Have you done any studies of the statistical significance of that increase?

**Ms MORPHETT:** We use the RTA data; it is the only data available. One of the concerns that we had—and we were on the Government's Young Drivers Advisory Panel—and one of the things that we took to that panel was a concern that 2006 was an abnormal year in the statistics for young people. There have been enormous gains in road safety for that age group. It is a complex and challenging age group to work with but we have made gains. Amongst the data we can say that it is a downward trend statistically. There was enormous media pressure to do something. The fact that you can have two or three multiple fatalities in one year changes the way that year appears. All crashes are tragic but I think what we have seen is all young people penalised for a couple of tragic crashes. We would suggest that some of the legislative changes lacked sufficient evidence.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** Which were the most inequitable?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Like the Commissioner for Children and Young People, we have surveyed young people and run focus groups. We are particularly concerned with the impact on young people and safety in urban areas, but particularly in regional areas. Many regional families, both young people and parents, are concerned with not sharing the driving. For fuel costs alone, the types of distances driven and the fact that many young people have responsibility for their siblings and often pick up neighbours' children as they travel through properties, they tend to car pool. Interestingly, some of the young people came back and said in their surveys to us that they found it a road safety contradiction in that we are encouraging people to share the drive and to avoid fatigue so young people who were driving to university and car pooling said, "We're splitting the driving up but now you're saying we can't have this many people in the car". That is a contradiction. The legislation's objective was to reduce the toll but in fact we are having overexposure: we are having more cars on the road with fewer young people in them. We are sending contradictory messages, and I think that is a problem for young people.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Ms Morphett, I was very interested in the comments in your submission about vehicle technology and so on, in particular the intelligent speed adaptation. You comment that it will be many years before we see some of these clever systems in widespread use. Why does the NRMA hold that view?

**Ms MORPHETT:** We fund quite a lot of research projects and work in partnership with some universities and with the RTA. So we put money into these projects. A range of people have come to us with ideas for piloting programs. There are substantial costs. You need to do proper

research to justify why you might introduce different measures. We would welcome the Committee addressing those issues. I listened to what was said with the Commissioner, and you demonstrated an interest in what type of research would bring some gains. I think a commitment from the Government to some of the schemes would be worthy of funding because I think we need to look at a range of research—both at human behaviour as well as the question of where technology can provide a reduction in injuries and fatalities.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** This Committee has looked at the intelligent speed adaptation technology. In fact, at least three members of the Committee have driven those vehicles both in Australia and overseas. The technology is relatively cheap to install in this day and age. In fact, in Norway—I think it is Norway; I stand to be corrected—it is compulsory to have that technology installed in young drivers' cars.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** And France.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Is it France? I thought it was Norway. At least one overseas country has it. The other thing that I think has great potential is the concept of the smart card ignition system, which could be incorporated into a licence. You have to put your licence into the slot before the car starts, and that automatically sets the speed limit for the car. Do you think this Committee should be making recommendations to the Government to progress the research and implementation of those sorts of technologies, particularly for young drivers?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes to the first part of the question. I think we should be trialling some of those schemes that are in operation in other places because each jurisdiction—Norway is a very different environment to New South Wales. I do think that there has been a huge emphasis on speed as a contributing factor to crashes. One of the things that we know, and we are involved in all the crash testing and used car safety ratings of vehicles, is that enormous safety gains have come from improvements in safety features in vehicles. But with young people, although from the media's point of view they are all high-speed crashes, a lot of fatal crashes and serious injury crashes happen at under 80 kilometres an hour, so it is not necessarily limiting their speed; it is also the type of vehicle, when they crash, or the vehicle they run into. That is complex.

That said, I hate to think we should be running some trials within New South Wales of large numbers. I think at this point it would be good to have a voluntary scheme. It may be something that parents and young people could sign up for to be part of the large scale because I do not think it would do any harm for parents to be speed limited either. Again it is providing a positive role model to young people about driver behaviour.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** The other matter that you raised just then, which I think is also important, is the safety rating of motor vehicles, the Australasian New Car Assessment Program [ANCAP]. I believe that that information should be more readily available to car buyers, particularly new car buyers. It is available. If you ask for it, you can get it. My daughter recently bought a new car and I asked the dealer about the ANCAP rating on that particular vehicle. He was able to pull it off the Net very quickly for us. I think the community needs to be made aware that that sort of information is available, if they want it. In fact it probably should be compulsory for all new car sales to have that ANCAP label attached to them. I know that motor vehicle manufacturers certainly do not want that.

**Ms MORPHETT:** We and the Australian Automobile Association [AAA] and all the motoring clubs are working on the communication packages. We do as much as we can. In New South Wales, NRMA is one of the funders. It is the RTA's laboratory and the RTA is one of the biggest funders. But what we find is that people are often unaware of what a difference the vehicle safety rating makes to possible crash outcomes. We are looking at one of the influencing factors on buyers: is it for safety, colour, comfort and those types of things? We try to survey members as to what are their car-buying priorities. We have done things like creative-interactive so that you can click on an interactive screen and actually watch the crash test footage. All of the crashes are filmed by the Crash Lab so you can see in slow motion the vehicle you are considering buying—this is how it looks.

Anecdotally, I have shown that footage to a lot of people and it does change their mind about what safety factors they will think about when they buy cars. I think you are correct: anyone involved in motor vehicle safety. But what we do not realise is how many people out in the community

understand vehicle safety features. We would encourage any mechanisms to be used, including probably the RTA's website. That said, broadly for young people as a communication channel, that is probably a weak area.

**CHAIR:** Do you think the NRMA would recommend to this Committee that the New South Wales Government introduce mirror legislation as proposed in Victoria which will bring in, by 2011 I think, complete curtain airbags and so on?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Are you aware of those recent Victorian issues?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes. I think one of the things that affects the outcome of crashes is the age of the fleet. The sooner those changes are made—it could take 10 years for the impact across the whole of the State fleet to come into being.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** It is a bit like seat belts, though, is it not?

**Ms MORPHETT:** It is.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** It is the same thing.

**Ms MORPHETT:** It is. Again, the commissioner has said this, and it is something that we say all the time to parents—and we do a lot of work with parents and young people—one of the things we say it is put the young person in the safest vehicle. I think unless the adults understand vehicle safety features, they do not realise; they think about their insurance. Those airbags make an enormous difference. If the young person is more at risk within the first 18 months or three years of their driving, then they should be in the safest vehicle you can afford.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Further to what has just been discussed about ANCAP, my understanding is that it is currently a voluntary scheme and that car manufacturers actually choose which level of vehicle they put in to be tested. Is that a correct assumption?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes, it is voluntary. The motoring clubs are the ones who are the driving force behind ANCAP and now actually the manufacturers use the crash test rating as a selling feature of vehicles.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Further to that, in terms of legislative change down the track, most young people would probably be able to afford base models of vehicles, and they generally have a lot of the safety features as options. They get a false idea with the rating on it because the vehicles that get rated are usually the ones that have all the safety features whereas a lot of the base models do not. I think Subaru does the whole range now, but quite a few of the others do not. Do you see any role in advertising to young people specific vehicles just so that they know? There is a perception that if you buy a car, whether it is the base model or not, you get the whole deal, whereas that is not actually the case. So you may not actually be buying a safe vehicle with that model. You have to actually buy the model that has all the safety features.

**Ms MORPHETT:** I think that gets back to the earlier question around what vehicle manufacturers should have to state as the features of the vehicle, and should that be compulsory. I think the clearer the information provided at the time of purchase, the more accurate will be the choice.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** It would be good if there was a star rating similar to what they have on fridges.

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** There is. They have a star rating.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** But it is not compulsory, is it?



**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** No. It is on the Net.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** But it should be on the car in the form of a sticker.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Do you know where the website is?

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** Yes, it is ANCAP.

**CHAIR:** One the comment I would like to make is that I was fortunately able to be at the NRMA motoring dinner last Wednesday night with Minister Roozendaal and shadow Minister Gay, and I just saw the President of the NRMA walked past the door here a minute ago. At that dinner Mr Evans was talking about the NRMA's program for training young drivers, and he said that he is proud of it. We all are. I might be verballing him, but I am sure he said at that dinner that the aim of the program is to ensure that young people come out of it with the 20 core competencies necessary for successful driving. I would just be interested to know at some stage what are those 20 core competencies.

**Ms MORPHETT:** I will take on notice the 20 core competencies so that I can give you the list, but one of the things that we have done with the safer driving schools is we developed them because of the requests from our members about what they want to see and where they would have confidence in the content. But the key objective of those driving schools is not that the young person passes the test, but that they become a better driver for life. An enormous amount of time is spent on attitudes. The driving instructors also try to work with the parents so that they offer them an opportunity to debrief at the end of the sessions or sit in the vehicle during the course of instruction.

I will just make a reference to an earlier comment on something said while the commissioner was speaking. There is not any research that shows that professional instruction provides a higher safety outcome for young people. Anywhere in the world, it is something that people believe would be logically correct: that if you are having professional instruction, it is better than being taught by your parents because, as we drive, we all determine our idiosyncrasies and they may not be correct. If we were tested now, we may not pass. The driver's study, which is a large piece of research being undertaken by the George Institute—I believe they made a submission to the Committee—is the largest piece of research in the Southern Hemisphere with participation by 20,000 young people. They are looking at those 20,000.

They did not look at driver instruction and parent instruction and they are looking at the crash outcomes of those two groups. They may address the Committee and talk about the early findings but at the moment there is not any research that says that professional is better than parental. Certainly in New South Wales what we find is that most people have a few professional lessons, and it depends on the economic situation of their parents. But for most young people who are trained, there is a percentage of lessons that are professional, and a high percentage of lessons, and then the 120 hours is generally supervised by their parent.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** We heard earlier from the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Gillian Calvert. What seemed to be coming through is this whole issue of whole-of-government society, mentoring, ownership, rites of passage, the importance of the issue of somebody getting a licence, and the need for us to be possibly putting more importance on the issue in terms of ongoing education and just how it is viewed by the community at large and how it is dealt with by the community at large as opposed to professionals, or putting the matter to one side as though it is something to be done by someone else. Has the NRMA got any thoughts or recommendations on that whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach?

**Ms MORPHETT:** Yes. I think one of the problems is that culturally, because it is a rite of passage and because we are a country where most adults hold a driving licence and it is taken for granted, most people do not understand that driving is probably one of the most risky things that you will undertake in your life, and driving does not take your full attention. Much of the driving task and behaviour is taken from granted owing to the amount of attention that it requires. That cultural driving is not something that the Government can mandate or change legislation to improve. I think something that all aspects of society need to take on board is that road safety should not just be seen as the

responsibility of a few. It is the responsibility of all. Therefore, anything that is done should be to encourage the discussion of driving, responsibility, the role of the parent, the role of passengers and their influence.

A lot of the work that we are doing is talking to young people also about their role and responsibilities as passengers. Again I think what we are looking at is using different channels to engage with young people. Their opinions are important. They need to be part of the discussion. I know, as a road safety adviser, it is often seen as dull and boring. It is being told, "Don't, don't, don't", and penalising you rather than engaging with you and looking at you as a responsible individual, as a driver, what you can do, how you can improve. So we would recommend that if we are to improve road safety from young people, we involve them in the discussion and in the debate and we listen to what they are saying. We use channels with which they are familiar. A lot of the earlier question from one of the panel was around mass media campaigns. What we are looking at now is getting young people to create their own messages for their peers because they know the language of their peers. They understand the best way to reach them.

I have been involved in research for the University of Western Sydney looking at the cultural influences, looking at what people are running throughout the world in terms of advertising, and I think we have been quite conservative. We have looked at shock tactics. We have not addressed things in terms of gender and subgroups of communities. That is where it is, like we suggest, local solutions in geographic communities, but we also suggest that among subgroups of drivers we look at involving them in messages to encourage better driving.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for coming here today. I thank the NRMA for its submission. We look forward to your responses to some of those questions on notice.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**ANGELA JANE VERNICOS**, Road Safety Officer, Baulkham Hills Shire Council, 129 Showground Road, Castle Hill, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing today to provide evidence on the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into young driver safety and education programs. The Committee has received your submission. Unless there are any objections, it is proposed that your submission be authorised for publication. Do you have any objections?

**Ms VERNICOS:** No.

**CHAIR:** There being no objection, it is so ordered. Do you have any further documentation that you wish to table to form part of your evidence here today?

**Ms VERNICOS:** No.

**CHAIR:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 291, 292 and 293, which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute contempt of the Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Ms VERNICOS:** No.

**CHAIR:** Motor vehicle ownership in your area is higher than average. We also note that young people are overrepresented in crashes involving speed, alcohol and driver fatigue in the Baulkham Hills local government area. The statistics provided in your submission indicate that crash casualties in the 17-to-20 years category seem to be trending down and those in the 21-to-25 years category are increasing. Do you have any further details about these trends?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Just to say that perhaps it relates to the graduated licensing scheme. In the time I have been there I have noticed the downward trend since the implementation of that scheme with the 17-to-20 year olds. But you are right, for the 21-to-25 year olds it has not had the same impact. That is probably the only thing I could comment on.

**CHAIR:** Similarly, 91 per cent of crashes for young drivers in 2006 occurred on urban roads in the local government area. Have you had an opportunity to do a further analysis of those figures?

**Ms VERNICOS:** We had an analysis done of the roads probably a few years ago. I think the figure was 65 per cent on State roads and 35 per cent on the roads that we maintain. Our top State roads were roads like Windsor Road, Showground Road and the Old Northern Road. I think those figures were done in about 2003 or 2004, but more recently no.

**CHAIR:** You probably have a vested interest in this question. We have asked many organisations that have come before us about the effectiveness of road safety officers and the funding. How much funding do you get? Are you the only road safety officer at Baulkham Hills?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** How much funding does council put in and how much money do the Roads and Traffic Authority and other organisations put towards your funding?

**Ms VERNICOS:** There is a salary component of which the Roads and Traffic Authority funds 50 per cent, which is \$37,500 at present, and the council funds the other amount to make up my

salary. Then there is the project funding, which has reduced dramatically in the last few years. We used to get about \$17,500 from the Roads and Traffic Authority, now we get \$10,000 a year to run specific projects that they provide grants for. We can seek grants from external agencies as we choose throughout the year. It might be the Institute of Public Works and Engineering Association [IPWEA] or the Motor Accidents Authority [MAA]. Whoever is offering grants we can access those as well.

**CHAIR:** This may be an unfair question. As a road safety officer do you feel the money is well spent in local councils? Perhaps you could ignore your own position for a moment.

**Ms VERNICOS:** I do. I have worked in this role for seven years and I feel because road safety in local government covers a wide range of areas, from input into development applications, at that level, to access issues, to working across community services with seniors, youth, development and so on. It is quite broad ranging. It has a unique ability to cross a broad range of areas and to make a difference in the way council does its business in relation to road safety. I think without that role, unless individual departments had it as their core business—and I cannot speak for other councils—I do not know whether it would be driven the way it is now.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** I am interested in the high number of drivers charged with drink-driving, that is, 33 per cent. Is that from drinking in private premises or mainly Thursday, Friday, Saturday night incidents? I am thinking about the road safety officer, the work that is being done in Dubbo, where I live, and the liquor accord. We have a bus to keep those people off the roads. Is it a weekend occurrence? Do you have programs in place to address that?

**Ms VERNICOS:** In relation to in-venue private drinking, I am the secretary of our Hills accord. Most of the drinking is in licensed premises. I work with our highway patrol and I have more figures to show that the trend particularly for males charged with prescribed concentration of alcohol [PCA] is moving upwards, particularly in that special novice range of alcohol. Obviously, they should not be consuming any of alcohol but they are consuming alcohol because they are being booked. It obviously requires more work on my part to make sure that young people realise that they have a zero alcohol limit while they are on their Ls and Ps. I work with our accord to look at different issues.

We have a big issue with drink-driving across all age groups. If you are familiar with our area, we have some very large clubs and we have almost no night-time transport or, at best, very limited. I think we have three taxis in the area. We have tried a variety of different schemes, such as taxi vouchers and so on. Our venues are not at the point of wanting to share any sort of bus network. They all have their own courtesy buses or have arrangements with taxi companies. But it is an ongoing issue. We also have a very active police force at present in relation to drink-driving because it is shown as quite an issue in our area, in particular. Obviously, that will be something we need to look at further and address.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** As to those premises that have their own community bus network, are they all members of the accord?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes, all our main premises are members of our accord. All our premises have breathalysers; all our premises have courtesy buses. If they do not have a courtesy bus, they utilise maxi cabs where they will pay a number of maxi cabs to come. We have a problem in that one of our venues has 2,500 people leaving on a Saturday night. They are based in Rouse Hill. If you are familiar with that area, it is a lot of people to get out in a short space of time. Between 2.00 a.m. and 3.00 a.m. it is a lot of people to move out in an area that does not have much infrastructure. It does not even have a footpath. That leads to drink-walking.

**CHAIR:** Is that the Mean Fiddler?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes. Our area is in an unusual position in that it has so much development but perhaps some of the infrastructure has not kept up with that development. Hopefully, over time it will. I have been liaising with the new Rouse Hill shopping centre, a huge shopping centre that is next door to the Mean Fiddler. They are paying the Ministry of Transport for the next 18 months for late-night transport to service the cinemas and restaurants that they will be opening on 6 March in the second stage of their shopping centre. We are hoping the Mean Fiddler can tap into that later night bus service. Unfortunately, when the T-way was opened out there the Ministry of Transport did not take it

on board. We did raise the issue of late-night transport particularly for there, but they did not factor it into their timetabling, unfortunately.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** It will be interesting to see if it comes on board the 33 per cent figure is reduced?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Hopefully. Our big venues are our main players, obviously, in relation to PCAs, and the police target accordingly.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** With regards to the PCA offences and young drivers, do you have any statistical information as to how far they were over?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Like mid-range, high-range?

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Yes.

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes, I do. I have a few figures. I have a major breakdown.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Age and numbers.

**Ms VERNICOS:** I am not sure if I am allowed to make this public. I have just brought this to read for myself. I have been given it by our police in relation to another thing I was doing.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** I am interested in the number of young drivers that have been apprehended and the range, because the tolerance is nil. How many of those people were in the range of low, medium or high?

**Ms VERNICOS:** The way our police have done it is up to the age of 21. They have looked at that age range. For example, in 2007 there were 18 males with special range, which means they should not be drinking anything. It should be zero. That is the novice or P-plater range. Obviously females do not feature as highly. It is definitely the males who feature more highly in PCAs. The next age group they looked at is 22 to 30. Mid-range is more significant in that age group. So in the age group up to 21 years, because obviously a large proportion or all of those realistically should not be consuming any alcohol, most of them feature in the special range.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** How many was it?

**Ms VERNICOS:** It was 18 in 2007, which is an increase from 2006 of 17. There was only one in 2006.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Because of the zero tolerance in the new graduated licence?

**Ms VERNICOS:** No, the zero tolerance was in 2006 as well.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** What has changed? Why has it rocketed?

**Ms VERNICOS:** I have got no idea. I do not know whether our police have targeted it more. I know that they do target young drivers because they know it is an issue in our area. PCAs generally across all age groups are an ongoing issue. I know that they do work hard to address that as part of their business. I have literally just got these figures and I am not sure what the answer is.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** How many young drivers are in your local government area?

**Ms VERNICOS:** I do not think I have got a figure for the exact number. I have only got young people, I have not got licensing. I have not got current licensing information.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** In an area like mine I think there are about 5,000 what you would regard as young drivers, so you would have to have at least that plus more.

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** I would suggest to have 18 apprehensions over 12 months is low.

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes, but comparative to other age groups it is high—

**CHAIR:** What is the total?

**Ms VERNICOS:** —considering they should not be drinking at all, to even register. That is an issue for me in education. Do people know it? Do they choose to go against it? Are they just not aware that they perhaps may be able to be drinking? That is something I obviously need to look at. In the two-year period 2006-07, 635 people were charged with drink driving in the Hills Local Area Command.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Were all the 18 under 21-year-olds?

**Ms VERNICOS:** No, that is 18 males in the special range. About 37 were.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** I am interested in the concept of ongoing ownership of the issue. I am interested in your thoughts and recommendations on the possible feeling that with you as the road safety officer the council might think, "We have funded a road safety officer, it is her problem now and she is going to fix it." The issue of ownership is coming up from various people that are giving us their expertise. The question of the community owning the issue, involving the young drivers and ensuring that there is ongoing commitment as opposed to you—with all due respect to road safety officers—putting your finger in the bowl and turning it around and then you take it out et cetera. Do you have any thoughts or feelings as to whether in the Baulkham Hills area you are getting a sense that the community is taking ownership of the issue, and appreciating the importance of the rite of passage of licences for young people to drive cars?

**Ms VERNICOS:** In our area we have a history of that. In 2000 we had a very high profile accident where four young boys were killed in a car in Dural and there was also another two people killed. We had six young drivers killed within about a three-week period. Out of that came a very big community push to do something and our council is still involved in it. The Rotary Youth Driver Awareness Committee was formed and pulled a program from Moss Vale called the U-Turn the Wheel program. We became heavily involved in that and piloted it. It has gone on to bigger and better things now but it does still run very strongly in our area. About 90 per cent of our high schools are involved on an annual basis with their year 11 students. We have had that sort of community push. I would not say it is still going on. I guess because our statistics have reduced generally in relation to fatal crashes, and perhaps because it does take something fairly high profile to move people sometimes to actually want to jump on board and do something, I do not feel at the present time that is an area that people are really talking about.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** People are taking ownership of the emotional issue of crashes? They are determining the ownership on that basis rather than a community ownership of the issue of young people coming of age?

**Ms VERNICOS:** If you are talking about parents, I run workshops. I know that in some areas the Roads and Traffic Authority helping learner driver workshops are having difficulty getting people to attend. I have got no issues getting parents and families wanting to help the young drivers, wanting to do what they can, trying to be responsible, implementing rules in relation to their driving even before some of the licensing laws were implemented in relation to mobile phones and speeding et cetera. I am lucky in that I work in an area where most people are fairly responsible in relation to their young drivers but I guess because of the volume of people in cars in our area—realistically once young people get their licences a large proportion of them are straight into cars because of the distances they need to travel and because of the lack of other options—

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Would I be off the mark to be thinking that maybe the evaluation of the data of the success in this area may be misdirected? We may be just looking at the number of crashes and if there is a reduction in crashes therefore we have succeeded? As opposed to other evaluations like young people feeling they are part of the community at large and they have ownership of this rite of passage and are not some separate entity?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes. I am conscious because a lot of our issues are not about young drivers; they are general driving issues. The older age groups are also highly shown in my statistics and are actually increasing, whereas in some respects the young drivers have decreased. I do think sometimes that it is not a whole community looking at it. It is more about young drivers being left. I think sometimes people are not sure how to address it or what to do.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** My question relates to your usage of the RYDA program. You mentioned that primarily the reason why Baulkham Hills Shire Council is doing what it is doing is because of a community catastrophic event. It seems to me what you are saying is that coincidentally RYDA came up with solution so you continued. This Committee has heard representation from about four or five similar bodies, who all seem to offer similar sorts of programs but different. Given that there are a range of other community programs, and given that you are on a limited budget, have you looked at other programs as well as RYDA? Have you conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness and benefits of the RYDA program versus what may be offered by other programs?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Just to fill you in on how our council operates. Our council puts in \$25,000 to the RYDA program annually. It is outside of my road safety budget. RYDA went to our council when it first came about and lobbied separately for that money. That money just rolls over every year and is our council's financial contribution. When it first started in 2001 I was heavily involved. I presented and I was working there. Now that the program has expanded quite dramatically across the State, and even overseas, I am not involved in that manner any more.

In relation to your question about evaluation and why we went with that program, we went with that program because it was our local Rotary, Kenthurst Rotary, who started the push and we fall within district 9680. They were the ones that came up and said, "Let's do this." They lobbied our council for support and that is where I came in. I was initially heavily involved. The financial support has continued. I did continue with some administrative support for some years but it has got so big with quite a lot of corporate sponsorship, Roads and Transport Authority funding et cetera. The decision to continue with that program is really out of my hands because the decision has been made at a higher level to fund this program over an ongoing number of years.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** The program has been running for six years, has it?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes, since 2001.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** You are not aware of—

**Ms VERNICOS:** I should clarify that they have evaluated. They have paid a person to evaluate. So they do have evaluation data, yes.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Are you aware of what the evaluation said or what the results were?

**Ms VERNICOS:** I have seen them but they are probably a couple of years old and I could not talk off the top of my head to them right now. From memory, I think they were a little bit inconclusive. I would not say it was a definite yes; this is the way to go. I think obviously one day road safety may not have the long-term recall that other things might.

**CHAIR:** On the figures concerning young drivers and alcohol, I know that my daughter drives over there once a month, so not necessarily all the drivers who are being caught are from your local government area. I would be interested to know how the local publicans react. Do they do linking data?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes, linking data.

**CHAIR:** Are they irritated about it or are they supportive?

**Ms VERNICOS:** No, we have a very effective accord and our venues have very good relationships. Our crime inspector, our commander and our licensing sergeant attend our accord. The data is given by the licensing sergeant in private to the relevant venues. Obviously, the biggest venues are the venues with the biggest issues; our smaller ones have less. I am the secretary of our accord and I do not deal directly with that information, although I do get that information for my own records. I have never seen any examples of bad relationships between the publicans, the police, the accord. They are all very supportive of anything I want to do and anything that improves transport or reduces drink driving from their venues. They appear to be very responsible.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Given that you have been in your job now for seven years, and I note from your submission that you work also with Hornsby and Hawkesbury City Councils, have you any recommendations for the Committee in terms of what education programs you suggest the Committee should focus on?

**Ms VERNICOS:** From my observation, especially in relation to the RYDA program, the crossroads section of the PDHPE curriculum is something that, for whatever reason, does not get the emphasis that perhaps it should. I know that schools have a lot to get through at that time of the curriculum with Years 11 and 12 being very busy. The RYDA program was very popular because basically a lot of schools could tick a box and say they had done ex-number of hours on the crossroads and see you later we have done it. I do not know what the answer to that is because I understand that in terms of priorities at that time of their lives it probably is not up there. I do not know whether there is scope to do that at a local government level.

As I said, I do not have a lot of funds to do things and I am limited. The Roads and Traffic Authority grants I can apply for are very stringent. Realistically now we follow State messages—it is not personalised to our area any more. It has become quite different in the time I have worked in that role. I know a lot of consultation has been done with young people but perhaps the key is to go back to basics and that sort of thing. Even a bit more research into the recidivist drivers as to what might work with the repeat offenders in the area.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Have you conducted any surveys in your local government area with young drivers to ascertain what effect the new graduated licensing and the new regulations implemented by the Minister are having? I am also interested in your comment to the effect that most drinking occurs in licensed premises when there is a suggestion that in fact takeaway alcohol sales are delivering different outcomes because people are drinking at home and then going out to venues.

**Ms VERNICOS:** To answer your last question first, if I base where people are drinking on some of the linking data that we get it is the last place they drank. So they could be drunk at home and then at a club. You are right.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** That is the flaw in the linking data.

**Ms VERNICOS:** It is. That is right. It links only to a venue.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Because they could be technically almost at the point of intoxication.

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** And two more drinks at a licensed venue.

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** That is the last place on the linking.

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** That is why I was interested in your comment.



**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes, but that is the only information I have. So we did do some research a number of years ago, but the information is a little bit out of date. At that point we had about 30 per cent of drinking in the home, because we did do some projects with in-home drinking rather than targeting venues, just for a change. That was across western Sydney that we did that. In our area it possibly still sits at that amount because we do not have a lot of venues and, as I said, people do have to travel a little bit further to get to them and they might not bother; they might stay home and drink because it is easier. What was your other question?

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** It was about purchasing alcohol through bottle shops and consuming them at home and if you have actually done any surveys with young drivers on the graduated licensing system or the effect of the Minister's new decrees?

**Ms VERNICOS:** I have not, no. But I would love to see—

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Do you intend to?

**Ms VERNICOS:** I do not have the funds. My project work is pretty tightly bound by the grants I apply for through the RTA and also projects that the council anticipate I run.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** You just made the comment that you did the in-home drinking "just for a change"?

**Ms VERNICOS:** Yes.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Do you have that information available?

**Ms VERNICOS:** We actually did across the WESROC area, western Sydney, which is about 11 council areas, of which one is Camden—it was a few years ago—we actually did at home party packs. That was when there was information about standard drinks, which has now gone; we are not allowed to promote that any more. We had information about people's requirements in relation to when they serve alcohol to people in their home: what the legal requirements are in relation to someone leaving your home, getting in the car and travelling home. So, we provided that. I still have all that. It was just in a party pack and we distributed it through bottle shops, through our police, who distributed obviously their party information, and community centres, et cetera, even through our own workplace and different workplaces.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**ALLAN GEORGE PORTER**, Executive Director, Australian Driver Trainers Association, P.O. Box 706, Avalon, NSW, 2107, and

**JEFFERY RELPH McDOUGALL**, President, Australian Driver Trainers Association, 21 Kennedy Place, Bayview, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing today to provide evidence on the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into young driver safety and education programs. The Committee has received your submission and, unless there are any objections, it is proposed that your submission be authorised for publication. Do you have any objection?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** No.

**CHAIR:** There being no objection, it is so ordered. Do you have any further documentation that you wish to table to form part of your evidence here today?

**Mr PORTER:** We brought some documentation that we anticipate might be useful in general discussions that we will probably refer to if the debate goes that way.

**CHAIR:** Fine. I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 291, 292 and 293, which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr PORTER:** Correct.

**CHAIR:** I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should point out also that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of the Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Mr PORTER:** I think just to restate that our organisation is the representative body of driving instructors and driving schools in New South Wales. We are an organisation that has some 50 years' history and it has been our objective to ensure, more often in recent times, that we adopt quality control measures that help our members, who provide all forms of training and education for all types of vehicles from motorcycles right through to heavy trucks, buses and road trains. We work closely in conjunction with the licensing authority in this State; we work closely with the Federal authorities such as the Australasian Transport Safety Bureau; and as individuals we also hold positions on many committees and groups that are all associated with training and education. My colleague Mr McDougall is a member of the National Executive of the Australasian College of Road Safety. We all maintain very close connections and contacts with academics and researchers who have a role to play in ensuring that our members are providing the best possible services to ensure the highest possible level of road safety.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** This question probably is calling for your opinion but we have been hearing yesterday and today that there are a lot of educational programs out in communities dealing with a lot of behavioural issues. In your opinion do young people seem to have a better understanding of road issues when they actually get into the car and do the learning through your schools or are you not seeing a translation across from all of that learning that is going on to the actual art of driving?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** I think it is a lot better than it was when I first started in the industry, which is 30 years ago. Now, with all the preparation they have to do with the graduated licensing system, for example, they are a lot better prepared by the time they start to drive anyway. When they do start to drive, of course, the issue of the logbooks and so on has been a bit of a problem and there are, I think, pretty good reasons for that. So, I think it is better than it used to be, that is for sure. And I think you are probably seeing that in the stats for the crashes. Really, I think the crashes are better now than they were before the 2000 changes.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Can you run through the procedure if I brought my lad to you to learn how to drive and he had never been behind the wheel of a car before? What sort of programs do you put them through right from the word go?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** Well, of course, individual driving schools have individual programs, but normally speaking there would be a program which would start with just normal control use, which is sort of sitting in the back streets and working through just getting the car going and steering, gear changing and that sort of thing. Then you are moving into procedural type issues like how to approach corners properly, and also stop and giveaway sign procedures, hill starts, those sorts of issues. Then you get into the lighter traffic type situations where they are learning how to drive on laned roads, observe signs and that sort of thing. Then it gets up into the more secondary traffic type areas where they are learning how to lane change, turn right at lights and those sorts of things, plus an open road sort of finish off period at the end.

Now, right across that there is the manoeuvring part of it, the three-point turns, parking and things like that. They sort of work into the program. There is a scoresheet that keeps track of the learning on the way through; I have brought along an example, a generic one the ADTA provides, but individual schools have them as well. They are a tracking mechanism to show people how they are going through the course. Coupled with the log book either the 50-hour log book, which is now going to become obsolete of course, and the 120-hour log book there is a pretty good tracking mechanism now for when they start and tracking their way through. You know that there has been a fair amount of logbook fraud. One of the reasons for it is that parents and young people generally kind of leave things because they do not know or do not have time to get started or they find that they are a bit nervous about taking them out and they just keep putting off the evil day, if you like.

Five or six or seven months pass and then they start to think, "Oh, gee, I had better get around and do something about this licence." Then they start to do it, but then they are running out of time and so they go and whack in a few extra entries just to keep filling up the logbook. I think that is what is causing most of the problem. If they could be encouraged to get on to the job and get up to a really high standard in the first three months where they could be more or less left to their devices to be able to drive, parents will be much more liable to throw them the keys and say, "You drive." So, whenever they go out, it might be at night-time or they might be driving on a trip up the coast or something, they are much more liable to let them drive if they have got to that level quickly. Then that will help to give the right kind of experience.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Generally they are all one-on-one type programs in the dual-control vehicles?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** In dual-control vehicles, yes.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Do your members provide any more advanced skills, such as exercises on parking areas with witches hats, cornering, braking and just those sorts of things?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** No, not generally. Incidentally, I would not criticise those courses, but a one-day course in doing kind of skidding around witches hats and so on may have a fairly detrimental effect rather than a beneficial effect because learning how to control skids and so on takes a lot of practice. Just doing it on one day we think has the effect of giving some people—not all of them but certainly some people—that kind of extra confidence that makes them think, "Well, if it works out there, I can now do it on the arterial road down at St Ives."

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** What happens to young drivers if they find themselves in a situation when they have the licence if they do not have any skills in those sorts of areas?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** Well, I think the problem there is that even if they have been a few times to those things they really just have not had enough practice of being able to control it. The issue really is to try to educate them to see the hazardous situations early and then take the necessary action before they actually get into the situation where they cannot control it. I tell you what, if they have a lot of practice even at those types of courses, they will still have a lot of trouble controlling it if they lose control, and that is a real issue. The other thing is that they are far more liable to go too quickly into corners and so on after they have done those kinds of skidding around things because they realise

then that the car can do things they did not realise it could do. Then they go and try it out, and it goes wrong.

**Mr PORTER:** If I could just add, there has always been a great belief that the whole thrust of training and education in such situations as we are discussing should be one that teaches people how not to get into a difficult situation, rather than teaching them how to get out of it. As a body we have kept a close watch on developments, tests and assessments of all of these procedures over a long period of time. There is a role to play I think for some of the schools and organisations that provide such correctional tuition, particularly for drivers who have had a problem in the corporate world. In the corporate world drivers are very much under the pressure of their fleet manager perhaps to show that they are upholding all of the virtues of safe driving, and where there is an element that perhaps indicates that their driving is not so flash, you might say, then they are detailed into attending one of the courses that endeavours to correct their ways.

One of the things we have been very closely associated with over a long period is the low-risk approach to training and education, which moves the issue away from just the car itself into looking at the whole environment—car craft verses road craft as it is referred to in jargon. That means that if we can influence a driver to be totally aware of the environment, no matter what it is—whether it is a metropolitan environment on a wet day, or a country rural or regional environment on a dry and dusty road, or whatever—at least they have had some experience in knowing what are the problems in driving a car safely in such situations.

The 120-hour logbook was not an easy grasp at all. It involved a lot of us, including Mr McDougall and me, over a long period just to adjudicate what was coming through research, mainly through centres such as Monash University Research Centre in Victoria, the University of Sydney, as well as other independents who had monitored systems in other parts of the world and to see a logbook, which was fairly demanding—much more demanding these days than when I got my licence many years ago—at least prepare drivers for driving on today's roads and give most, if not all, the benefit of knowing the conditions when they encounter them. So it is really just an awareness procedure all the way through.

We helped produce, with the licensing authority in New South Wales, what became known as the "Beyond Test Routes Folder". You might be talking to Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] representatives who will talk about this document in more detail than we can. We were happy, over a long period, to be associated with the compilation of this document that, as its title states, takes new drivers away from just expecting that they can manoeuvre the controls to drive a car, and it gives them much more of what is involved in driving the car from up here rather than just through the hands and feet. If you have not seen this document I am happy to leave some samples.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Do you think there is room in training programs to incorporate some better skills training in conjunction with that attitudinal or behavioural type stuff that I also acknowledge is extremely important?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** In skills training are you talking about skid control?

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Raising the standard of the skills training in conjunction with the attitudinal and behavioural type of training.

**Mr McDOUGALL:** Yes. Just being able to control the motorcar, it often takes a long time for many people to get up to any kind of reasonable area of control. You might get somebody who will be able to drive quite satisfactorily after 10 lessons, for example, but to get to the same standard with another person might take 100 lessons. There is a lot of that sort of difference in people. But having good control over a car is good. The most important thing is to be able to see the hazards coming up and then to take the necessary action to stop the hazards becoming a problem.

**Mr PORTER:** Just adding to that, this is an important issue. The whole process of establishing and maintaining a good partnership so far as the delivery of a service is concerned is very important, which is why the three-way partnership of the new driver, parents or guardian, and the

instructor or the driving school, is significant in being able to identify areas where additional supervisory practice can be made by the parent or the guardian in the process of tuition. In the work that we have done in recent times we have noticed that that has a tremendously beneficial effect.

It is also encouraging as well, through our own office, to monitor the support that is forthcoming from parents when they see what is involved, bearing in mind that when they got their licence, probably like when I got mine, it was fairly easy and now they are facing a situation where the partnership between themselves, the driving instructor and the novice is one where there are reporting mechanisms. There are structured reporting mechanisms, which we encourage and for which we support and provide materials for driving instructors to ensure that they are getting that message across and focusing on all the driving conditions and situations that are represented in the new 120-hour logbook.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Going on from that, I guess you could say that my name is Dorothy from the question I am about to ask you. You made reference to logbooks and to deficiencies in the system. Can you elaborate on that? Are there things that you have not mentioned, other than the fact that they are being forged? I put it to you, as I did to other people who made submissions today, that as parents and guardians we pass on many bad driving habits that perhaps we have been taught, et cetera. I am of the school of thought that there must be more professional driver education. Over many years we have influenced young drivers in a negative way with our bad habits, et cetera. Can you expand on that? Would your industry be able to offer advice to fix both those problems—first, the logbook and, second, the fact that parents as teachers, whilst they are influential, can improve that?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** One of the things with the new 120-hour logbook is that there are now odometer readings in it, which I think will go a long way towards helping to keep it honest. Trying to fill it in the night before the driving test will be much more difficult if you have to put in odometer readings because you can see whether they are the wrong kinds of readings. That is one thing that is good. One of the things that we have suggested—we have put this in as a suggestion—when the new 120-hour logbook came in was that one lesson with a professional driving instructor might take three hours out of a logbook up to a maximum of 10 professional lessons.

They have introduced that in Queensland; it is happening up there. We think that would be a good thing because it would help to keep the logbook honest. We would have driving instructors checking on the entries and making sure that they were up to scratch, provided the 10 lessons were spread—we are saying that it is 10—particularly if there were four or five in the early stages and then the others were spread out through the year. By the way, parents would not just be held to 10; it would be just what they would need to help to keep it on track. But it would also help to get the young driver up to a higher standard earlier, which would then enable parents not to feel quite so worried about doing the job.

Children start learning habits from the age of three onwards, so there is an onus on parents, when they have children in the car, to try to improve the way they behave when they are driving, because children pick that up pretty quickly. We felt that if that system were to come in that would help a lot to help keep things honest and it would not detract too much from the amount of practice that they were supposed to get. In fact, it might enhance that because they would be much more ready earlier to get the practice.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** But the fact still remains that in New South Wales many people who have migrated and have driven in other countries have obtained drivers licences in conditions different to the conditions that exist in New South Wales. How do you then pass on skills to their children to ensure that they become good and safe drivers in our environment?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** Yes, and it is difficult to do that. We have been running some programs for parents. We have parents coming in. I ran a program at Ku-ring-gai council on Monday night, and about 100 people came in for that. We give them clues on what they can do to help get young people off on the right foot and the kind of training they need to do, for example, how to plan a driving lesson, what to put in the lesson, and so on. We have been running quite a lot of those programs. If there were more of that kind of thing where driving instructors could help parents learn what they were supposed to know it would be good. Were you aware that road safety officers were running those programs as well? They were running workshops for parents and it was in logbook tuition and so on.

That was particularly helpful to people with ethnic backgrounds that had to learn how to cope with a logbook and so on. I think the only way it can be done is to get them in face to face and show them what to do and how to go about it.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Following the same theme, a lot of submissions from councils, not just from geographic areas but also from socioeconomic groups, were of the opinion that the 120-hour logbook disadvantaged certain groups. Has that concern been raised with you? You just talked about the logbook discount incentive, so we have covered that issue. You refer in your submission to a proposal by the Australian Automobile Association [AAA] to offer free professional training to learner drivers who have an adult supervisor present in the car. Would you like to expand on that? Have you been approached about this?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** We have, yes. The idea is that after the young driver has two or three lessons the invitation would then be extended to a parent to come and sit in the back—a specially designed lesson that would promote what the parent needs to know in order to be able to continue the training and practice in the background.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** That would be like your seven-hour training, only done on a one-to-one basis?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** Done on a one-to-one basis with a parent in the back. The AAA is looking at a program called Keys to Drive. It approached the Federal Government before the election and I think there was a promise of some money to come and put that into practice. That would be one free lesson that would give encouragement to go ahead and learn that. We would want only accredited driving instructors to be able to do it. We are working on an accreditation scheme as we speak. The code of practice is already done up—we are just about ready to let it roll—and we will get accreditation going. Therefore, it would be available to accredited instructors to do rather than just to ordinary driving instructors.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** And the idea would be for that to take place early in the cycle?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** Exactly, yes, preferably as soon as possible after the learner licence is obtained, as I said before, to get them going on the project as quickly as possible so they can use the full 12 months for the training.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Have you or anybody else discussed that issue with the RTA?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** They know about it, yes.

**Mr PORTER:** They are aware of it through our discussions. It was an issue that was driven by the AAA to start with. We met with the AAA in Canberra only last week to look at the fine details of the proposal thus far. Like another Federal initiative, the assessment of some 28,000 young drivers, half in New South Wales and half in Victoria, will assess their competency within, say, 60 or 90 days after going solo, in other words, after going onto their red P-plates in New South Wales. That project will also have a significant impact on how future programs are brought together.

In my view the AAA proposal was excellent because we are an organisation—the only one of its kind—that runs a full-time office. We have a profile now that attracts a lot of inquiries from parents and young people, mainly parents, who are looking for something so that they can be satisfied in knowing their son or daughter is going out onto the road. They want the feedback and the involvement in some way that assures them they are part of the whole process.

**CHAIR:** All of my sons drive utes but one had never driven in the rain. The first time he drove in the rain, despite all the warnings about driving utes in the rain, he went straight into a barrier. Someone driving in Wagga Wagga might not have seen rain for a couple of years. A lot of kids who have been driving over the past two years have never driven in rain.

**Mr McDOUGALL:** That is right.

**CHAIR:** That is just by the by. I am very supportive and amenable to any suggestion that people get a discount and, as you suggested, three hours to a maximum of 10 for taking professional driving lessons. But that leads to the obvious question of the accreditation that you have just touched upon. Some driving instructors are there just to teach people how to pass at the RTA and others are there to teach people how to drive.

**Mr McDOUGALL:** Exactly.

**CHAIR:** I would not be prepared to recommend any discount unless we had in place an accreditation scheme and we knew that all driving instructors were reaching a certain standard. Who should do that accreditation? Should it be industry-based or government-based?

**Mr McDOUGALL:** We think a little bit in partnership with the RTA. It is very keen to support us in putting this accreditation scheme in place. We have done the hard yards on it, it has been there. We tried to put it together back in the late 1990s but it was too complicated at that time. A driving instructor is a certain type of person who sits in a car all day long and is able to teach people to drive, and we need to have a scheme that will be effective for them to be able not only to understand it but also to do it properly. That is what we think we have now. We even have an auditor sorted out who we think will do the job and we are champing at the bit to get it going.

One of the other issues was that the driving test itself has always been the benchmark for whatever training and education somebody gets. We now have a new driving test—which, incidentally, we 100 per cent support—where the focus is on the five major crash types. I believe that is the first time that has ever been done anywhere—certainly in this country—and that has raised the benchmark so the training has to aim for better people to pass through that test.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, gentlemen, for your appearance here today. A couple of questions we did not have time to ask you will come to you and we would appreciate it if you give a reply to those.

**Mr PORTER:** We brought some material that might be of interest to members of the Committee. It was put together by us and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. We have some samples we can leave to show what supporting documentation is provided.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**PAUL JAMES RILEY**, Road Safety Project Manager, Institute of Public Works Engineering, level 12, 447 Kent Street, Sydney, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** The Committee has received your submission and unless you have any objections, we propose that the submission be authorised for publication.

**Mr RILEY:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** There being no objection, it is so ordered. Do you have any further documentation you wish to table to form part of your evidence here today?

**Mr RILEY:** No.

**CHAIR:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's standing orders 291, 292 and 293, which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr RILEY:** That is correct.

**CHAIR:** I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Mr RILEY:** I would, thank you. Firstly, thank you very much for the opportunity to present to you. I admire your temerity in being able to sit through so much and be able to sift through the facts and what you need in such a worthwhile cause. I want to let you know a little of my history in the next couple of minutes so you can see where I am coming from. I have a history starting as a motor mechanic as a young and enthusiastic person who loved cars.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Another petrol head!

**Mr RILEY:** Another petrol head. I worked in design and testing, doing mechanical engineering, and also in training. I left the automotive world and have been a paramedic for the past 19 years, up until August last year. During that time I worked in rescue, training other paramedics in researching trauma and the effects of the trauma or the way the Ambulance Service could deal with trauma better, and also was an instructor for motorcycle paramedics with New South Wales Police. I am the only person to have ever ridden a motorcycle in the dining room of this building.

I was also the driving standards coordinator for the Ambulance Service up until the time I left. During that time with the Ambulance Service I became involved in the traffic offender program and the U Turn the Wheel program, which I have alluded to in my submission. I was asked to do that by a colleague and saw incredible worth in those programs. I was also involved in Survive the Drive program, which is run in conjunction with traffic offenders at some of the police citizens youth clubs. I could see the Traffic Offender Program was fairly disjointed. It was not a consistent approach anywhere. Although it was called the same thing, it was obviously very much not the same thing in a lot of places. So I devised a program that was available and I made available to all ambulance officers across the State, which many used, and the NRMA was very supportive of this and was in a position where it could fund ambulance officers because ambulance officers were not getting paid to do this, they were expected to do it in their own time. So, the NRMA was very good in that regard.

I have taken this position with the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia as the local government road safety program deals with road safety, obviously, and with road safety officers who I have learned a lot about and have a tremendous respect for now. I can see that road safety officers have a lot to do with the PCYCs with a lot of these sorts of programs that are already in place. A lot of what I could see from my early—only a few months—involvement has been that a lot of key people are already there, there is just not all the pieces working together in some areas and in some programs.



Two things encouraged me to write to you people. One was working as a paramedic for so long and seeing so many wasted lives. There is nothing worse as a paramedic than dragging the dying body of the child or a young person, or anybody for that matter, out of a vehicle. I worked it out once that as a paramedic you see a dead person, on average, once a week—not always from a car crash, but that is the average for a paramedic. I also wanted to present this because my involvement with the Traffic Offender Program has seen what I believe are real and tangible results. So, often after a session somebody, a young person almost always, would come up and say how much they appreciated it. These people have gone there because they are trying to mitigate their own circumstances but so often people will ask why is this not done for everyone, why is everybody not being made to do this? The obvious answer is that not everyone does something wrong on the road.

I believe there is a possibility for a lot of these people—police officers, ambulance officers, road safety officers—to all work together at something like this and I see incredible value from data that has been gathered at one of the PCYCs. I believe the Traffic Offender Program is a great benefit because it improves decision-making skills, it encourages conversation, and the communications that are made come from credible people from respected positions. So, that is basically where I am coming from.

**CHAIR:** Can you provide the Committee with more information about your involvement with the Road Safety Panel and the work of this body? Does the panel have a more significant advisory or practical role in relation to road safety education?

**Mr RILEY:** I have just come from a Road Safety Panel meeting today. My first involvement with the panel was about a month after I started at the institute. The Road Safety Panel is made up of all key players in road safety—people from traffic or transport management, from private consultancies, from the RTA, the MAA, road safety officers and us. I can see that so much of what the panel was doing was sharing a lot of information—which is what it was intended to do—but it has also made recommendations in the past to committees such as this. I put it to the panel that I would like to make this submission, and various people on the panel did not believe it was up to the Road Safety Panel to do it. So I have kind of done it as the road safety project manager but not on behalf of the Road Safety Panel. I believe that having all the resources there would be a great benefit to any program that was introduced across the State, because we have contact through all the local governments, all the councils everywhere across the State, so anything that could be put into place could be managed, even by me or at least have input into such a plan.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** In the section of your submission dealing with learner driver programs you note that a multitude of factors contribute to young driver risk including personality development, driving behaviour and the perceived environment. It further notes that not all of these are amenable to change. I also make the observation in reading your submission that most of the subject matter you discussed is related to what I would call skill aspects, the training aspects, post-training reviews, et cetera. Almost all of the submissions received over the past two days, or certainly the majority of them, have concentrated on attitudinal issues, saying that it does not matter how much skill the driver has, if he is young, if he is full of testosterone and has the wrong attitude, he is going to have crashes.

In relation to your comments on the overall training schemes, the RTA notes that in relation to driver education programs there is extensive scientific literature to suggest there are no road safety benefits from these courses. Do you agree with that statement? It appears you may do. You refer to the Federal novice driver trial. Can you describe the components of that program? You also refer in your submission to the critical importance of the timing of commencing driver education. You say that if it is started too early it is a waste of time. All these other submissions we have been hearing say it should start in schools in year 7. Would you like to comment on that please?

**Mr RILEY:** I would. Can I address that one first? My experience has been that I have been asked by the NRMA on occasions to present various road safety talks in my capacity as a paramedic. Quite often it was for year 10 and it was because a particular school was after something on road safety because it was trying to prepare young people. If it is an isolated, in and out, hit like that I do not see a lot of benefit in year 10 because they are still not interested in learning to drive. It is still a year away. I will say year 9 rather than year 10, because some year 10 kids can drive. A year before

they are going to get their licence, many kids could not care less. So, it was a very difficult and different audience to kids who went a year later. When you are talking with kids who are about to get their licences is a very different animal because they are so much more interested in the whole driving thing. It becomes a bit more pertinent to them.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I am sorry: I think I asked you a question I was not supposed to ask you.

**Mr RILEY:** I could not remember writing one of them. That said, a year's difference in the age of the student makes all the difference. That is not the same as having an education program that begins at the start of school. I know this is happening in other countries. I was talking to a lady in Darwin last week who said that in some Asian countries they are now mandating that road safety is a big aspect of school from year 1. They know it will be a couple of generations before it yields benefit, but they believe it will. So in terms of just going in for one lesson, talking about road safety and coming out, it can make a significant difference in year 11 but in years 10 or 9, very little. It has to be something more consistent in that regard. I have forgotten the other part of the question.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Do not worry about it.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** I was interested in your comment that in the year they apply for their licence students become more interested because it is a valuable asset. Why do you think once they obtain their driver's licence some young people have a change of attitude and drive erratically or behave in an unacceptable manner on the roads?

**Mr RILEY:** Speaking from experience, as a 17-year-old—which a lot of these people are and, but for the grace of God, I would have gone there too—it is a sense of freedom. I can still remember the first day I got my licence and I did not have somebody in the car with me. It was a tremendous sense of freedom. Safety is not something you think about when you are 17. It has already been shown—and I mentioned it in the article I wrote—in a research paper in the United Kingdom only a few years ago that only 18 per cent of people thought of safety as one of the things that was important to them in terms of driving.

It has to do with the cognitive part of the brain. It has been researched and found to be true that it is not until somebody is in their early to mid-twenties that the risk assessment part of the brain is fully developed. My wife reckons it is mid-seventies, but I will not go there. It has been shown to be in the early to mid-twenties. Many years ago a lady from the RTA asked me what I would do to stop young people from dying, and I said I would raise the age substantially. The 120 hours and graduated licence system has addressed that to a degree. I think it could probably go back even further but nobody is going to do that.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** What is your recommendation?

**Mr RILEY:** Do not let people drive until they are much older—and that comes from somebody who was absolutely champing at the bit to get their licence by the time they were 17.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** What age do you recommend?

**Mr RILEY:** I would say you should not start until you are at least 20.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Your institute provides strong support for the Traffic Offenders Program [TOP] that is run by PCYCs. I have seen television items about it. Do you think it is the best model and are you aware that some magistrates are not referring people into the program?

**Mr RILEY:** And a lot are because they know about the success of some. Because it is not a well-established and uniform program a lot depends on the person who is running it. My first experience was with the one at Sutherland. I suggested that the police officer from Sutherland make a submission to the inquiry. I do not know whether she got around to it. She is brilliant and she runs an incredibly good program. Years ago she went back through the licences of the 1,500 people who had been through the course—it was a random audit—and she found that the reoffence rate was

considerably lower than for the general populous. That is probably not solid research but it was something to go on.

There are many variables. The biggest variable that I saw from the ambulance point of view is that an ambulance officer was asked to turn up. They would normally ring the media section of the Ambulance Service, and it became a bit of a problem for them because they did not have anything to give them. So they would ring someone and say, "Look, you've done it for us in the past. How about you go around and do this?" It was tantamount to saying, "Because of your position in society you're an expert and you can go and do it". That really is not good enough educationally because what a lot of people thought they should do, and what some did, was tell war stories. That is not good enough because telling horrible stories out of context does not do anything. When I went into it they were showing a video that was 20-something years old. It was ugly, it was horrible and it was pointless. I took things out. I only showed photos—I did not even show any video—only in a context that was required. You do not need to go in telling horrible war stories. There is a lot more you can do.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** With regard to the Traffic Offenders Program—I know you are here representing the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia—what has the road safety panel done about it? If there is a concern that magistrates are not referring offenders to the program have any steps being taken in that regard?

**Mr RILEY:** No. The Traffic Offenders Program would only be known to them via me and anything I would have brought up. I have not had the opportunity to discuss it, apart from discussing it today, with them at that level. Probably the point of contact I have is road safety officers. Their specific work is not necessarily with the Traffic Offenders Program but quite often, because of their liaison with PCYCs, they are involved in different ways in different places.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Would they be a mechanism for broadening inclusion in the offenders program in the education curriculum for schools?

**Mr RILEY:** There are people who are funded by the RTA in schools as road safety education people. They are teachers funded for that role. But they quite often call on road safety officers to do that sort of work because they are overwhelmed by the amount of work and the number of schools that want it. I see the number of road safety officers around as great—I am probably talking out of turn because they do not all get involved. In the City of Sydney there are two road safety officers and they have a heck of a lot of work already regardless of all the traffic offenders programs. We probably need more.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** So you are saying that it is successful but it is under funded.

**Mr RILEY:** It is not funded at all. I believe it could be successful if you could measure what it is doing. Unfortunately, there has been no consistency. In the country it is an eight-hour course so people turn up for a day and hear different lecturers. Getting lecturers from a spinal unit—somebody who has recovered from a spinal injury—would be very difficult in some country areas. Getting the resources you need to make up a core Traffic Offenders Program could be quite difficult. The police and ambulance could always be resourced in a town. But one of the things that I said people had to do was have a training qualification in order to do it so they were not just going and telling war stories. They would be some of the difficulties, but that is where I believe road safety officers would be able to put some of the pieces together. They could draw on their knowledge of the community to bring people together—if you had a core course.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** We have heard that some road safety officers and the programs they run have been reduced in funding. That has got to have a detrimental effect.

**Mr RILEY:** Absolutely.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** So obviously they need more funding.

**Mr RILEY:** Yes. With the Traffic Offenders Program, what was happening from the ambulance point of view was it started off with a few in Sydney and a few in the country. I put together a program and then advertised it across the State to all ambulance officers. So when they

were contacted by somebody in a town like Wagga Wagga all they would have to do is contact me and then I could send them the resources. There was a quiz they had to do and a lesson plan—all the resources they needed. All they had to do was demonstrate to me that they had training skills, such as certificate IV workplace training and assessing. It was not real hard to coordinate. The greatest saving grace in all of this was the NRMA, because they were willing to fund this. So every time somebody went they would be paid. The Ambulance Service was not; it would not pay for anybody. The compensation in this was that they would allow you to wear your uniform, and that was all. They would not pay for anything.

I do not hold that against them because they are not budgeted for that. It would be a totally separate thing they would have to fund and they were not given funding for it. I understand that is how it worked. Every ambulance officer saw it differently and would see that it should have been funded because it is what they were supposed to do. Certainly I do not think the funding of it would even be that expensive. In the last two years it cost the NRMA about \$7,000 or \$8,000 a year to fund, and that was just for one speaker at 40 or 50 traffic offenders programs—maybe a few more. So you would need that much for each speaker each time if you were going to fund it that way. But the coordination of it could be done by road safety officers or their contacts in the community.

The funding issue is a big one but it is not the biggest. The biggest issue is getting consistency of the program and what it is. I know the Attorney General's Department was looking into it, but they were saying that the Traffic Offenders Program is either an eight-hour or a 16-hour program. They are very different animals. How do you gauge the benefits of something like that when you have such a huge discrepancy in the amount of time that is allotted to subjects and when they are not even the same subjects?

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** I refer you to the RYDA program. You talked about years 10 and 11. The Traffic Offenders Program is prescribed for people who have offended and is well accepted by those who have completed it. I would think a large number of people who do the TOP have never attended the RYDA program because they leave before year 11. That is one of the reasons they are so enthusiastic: they have never heard the message before. Is that true?

**Mr RILEY:** It could be. I do not know a lot about the RYDA program. My involvement with U-Turn the Wheel is a similar sort of thing.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** How many people doing TOPs have not attended year 11?

**Mr RILEY:** I do not know whether that is the sort of information that is gathered. It would probably be very worthwhile.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** TOPs are well accepted. People say, "This has changed my life". Is there any evidence that you are aware of that it has changed behaviour six or 12 months down the track—apart from your friend?

**Mr RILEY:** Yes. I mentioned it in the article. The only evidence I could provide would be that there is a possible lessening of the reoffence rate compared with the normal populous. I mentioned this to somebody from the Attorney General's Department once and they said, "No, it is comparing apples and oranges; it's not the same thing". I could not understand that. To me, it seems like it was comparing because you are looking at the general populous and these people who have offended and probably will not reoffend. The only other evidence I could offer is anecdotal. This is what keeps ambulance officers, and police officers I am sure, going back to do these programs.

I will give an example. An 18-year-old came up to me one night and said, "You know, this program has been incredible." He said, "I was doing 180"—they always want to tell you what speed they were doing—"on General Holmes Drive at three o'clock in the morning with nothing around and my car was great; I realise how stupid I was, but I didn't until now." He said, "I will never do that again". Perhaps that was just something that was said to me or perhaps it did change his life. I do not think too many people have to say that or have that experience as 18-year-olds before we say that a program has worked.

**CHAIR:** Mr Riley, thank you for appearing before the Committee today and thank you for your submission. We appreciate it very much.

**Mr RILEY:** Thank you very much.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**RAPHAEL GRZEBIETA**, President, Australasian College of Road Safety, New South Wales Injury Risk Management Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Building G2, Western Campus, UNSW Sydney, 2052, and

**TERESA SENSERRICK**, Consultant, Australasian College of Road Safety, Building 1, Pearce Community Centre, Collett Place, Hodgson Crescent, Pearce, NSW 2000, and

**REBECCA IVERS**, Director, Injury Division, George Institute Building 1, Pearce Community Centre, Collett Place, Hodgson Crescent, Pearce, NSW 2000, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing to provide evidence before the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into young driver safety and education programs. The Committee has received your submission. Unless there are any objections, it is proposed that your submission will be authorised for publication. Do you have any objection?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** We have an update to it. Unfortunately, in my haste, I submitted an older version. We would like to at least have the ability to update that.

**CHAIR:** Certainly. You have no objection to that being incorporated?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** No.

**CHAIR:** There being no objection, it is so ordered. Do you have any further documentation that you wish to table to form part of your evidence today?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** We do have a quick presentation which summarises the key points. We would like to submit that.

**CHAIR:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and a copy of the Legislative Assembly's standing orders 291, 292 and 293 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are protected from any legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute contempt of Parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** First of all I would just like to outline the Australasian College of Road Safety and who we represent. I am President of the Australasian College of Road Safety. Our patron is the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. The college was established in 1988 as an association for individuals and organisations working in or interested in supporting road safety. The college is multidisciplinary in its membership and values experience as much as academic qualifications, so we have a broad network, not only of those who are expert in the area but also to the broad community.

Members cover a wide range of disciplines—engineers, epidemiologists, road trauma specialists, researchers, driver trainers, enforcement agencies, policymakers, industry representatives, motor associations, insurance companies and quite a number of others who have a stake in road safety. We had membership on the National Road Safety Strategy panel that is run by the ATSB. Until recently we reported directly to the Australian Transport Commission. Now there is another layer.

Aims and missions are to improve road safety throughout Australia, to link, through one association, all the individuals and organisations in Australasia who work or are interested in road safety in order to facilitate the efficient interchange of ideas. We do not hold back any ideas: Anyone can present an idea, and then we challenge it. We do not challenge it, but we effectively review and analyse it in the context of evidence that is available as a result of work that has been done within the

industry and state-of-the-art practice. We encourage strong networking. In other words, anyone who is from the community and has a particular issue or an idea, we then allow them access. We arrange access through seminars, conferences and access to the people who are the decision makers. That is our role. I have thought I would just present that to you in the initial stages.

Our response to the inquiry in fact is summarised in the document that has been prepared by Tereza. The way we prepared this document was that we contracted the George Institute to assist us in compiling this because effectively there was not really anyone in the college who was prepared to put their hand up and voluntarily give their time. It requires a considerable amount of effort. What we did is we built our resources and then we provided funding to get that information. What we decided to do then is to get that base document and send it out to all of the membership. We then asked for comments and information to come back to us. We then included all of the comments that came back from various executive committees from all around Australia. We had a chapter in each of the States and each of those chapters is active, running seminars, conferences, et cetera, and looking at road safety issues. We got those comments back and incorporated them into that document.

The main issues that effectively came out of the investigation and the document were that effectively learner-driver initiatives, such as one-on-one lessons, are effective, as are teaching vehicle management skills, demonstrating road laws, passing licence tests and minimising crashes as a learner. However, there are some issues concerning approving higher order skills and attitudes. In other words we are a little bit concerned about some of the performance-based driver-training courses that are provided by various companies because they can create a different sort of attitude towards risk taking within the vehicle. Reducing crash risk is an issue once our driver has a licence, so we are concerned about that as well. The classroom, in-vehicle and off-road structures improve the knowledge of road laws, improve awareness of safety issues, and demonstrate safe following and stopping distances, which probably will not have an effect on changing driver behaviour and reducing crashes once licensed.

Advanced emergency skills training can increase crashes. Lessons at night may reduce night-time crashes, but probably some of the other initiatives that have been introduced are probably more effective; in other words, restricting passengers, and curfews. Hazard perception training improves perception skills and improves hazard detection skills, just as licence tests increase awareness and motivation skills, but there is a problem with reducing crashes once licensed, and there is a lack of research in that regard. Graduated driver licensing increases the length of the learner-driving period and is effective. Increasing hours of private supervised practice is effective, reducing crashes once licensed by a truly defensive individualised on-road program. The Australian Competency Based Training Assessment of Program needs further evaluation. That gets to the crux of a submission—the evaluation process of some of these things that are presented.

In regard to effectiveness of provisional driver initiatives, that is, classroom, in-vehicle and off-road, improving awareness and knowledge of safety issues seems to be effective as are demonstrating safe following and stopping distances, but changing driver behaviour and reducing crashes do not appear to be affected. Hazard perception training in the United Kingdom was demonstrated in an in-vehicle program. It improves hazard detection times but it does not reduce crashes. There is no research outcome from that. Graduated driver licensing reduces crashes by an average of somewhere between 20 to 60 per cent. Passenger restrictions certainly have an effect. Night-time restrictions have an effect, as do the defensive, individualised on-road programs. Once again, the Australian Competency Based Training Assessment programs need further evaluation. The Australian diversionary and educational programs for young offenders need further evaluation. The EU recommended target age-group specific issues and specific effects.

Conclusions and implications were that the quality of research is important. There is a difference between a lack of evidence, that is, something that shows no effect, versus poor evaluation, which means there are no appropriate studies. You need correct experts to be doing this work. If you do not have the experts who are trained, such as at the George Institute and the Injury Risk Management Research Centre—there are a number of other centres, such as the Accident Research Centre at Monash University, the Queensland University of Technology CARRS-Q and research Centre. You need the right people doing the evaluations.

There is a lack of rigorous research as well in the design studies—for example, poor response rates, small samples, and conclusions being drawn from such studies. It is non-randomised—in other words, it is a biased sample—and there are short time frames. There is a lack of significant testing. There are a few good studies in other countries. They may not transfer to the Australian context. We have a totally different culture here. We need to ensure that we target what happens in our backyard, rather than in someone else's backyard. It may not necessarily transfer. There is a public desire/political response for education and training programs, but there is no evidence that it works. We get a lot of ideas coming forward from a number of people. As president, I see it coming across my email continuously—"Why don't we introduce this driver education program? Why don't we train them to be better on the roads?" There is no direct evidence to which we can point to show that that assists.

The Federal Novice Driver Trial was a national cooperative effort. Rigorous evaluation has been carried out. The college is involved in that but, once again, in terms of best practice, it has potential for counterproductive outcomes, not necessarily cost neutral. These are very expensive programs when you start to go down the path of seeking education and training programs. Whether it is cost effective in reducing road trauma is questionable. We believe as a college that it should be targeted at properly evaluated proposals. The new local and graduated driver licensing and passenger restrictions offer an opportunity for comparative research across States and Territories to establish Australian best practice. When we sent this proposal round to the Australasian College of Road Safety members, they responded with the following: we do not have any evidence base that the 120 hours of supervised practice is working. That has to be evaluated. We need that desperately.

The process of determining why some programs are evaluated and not others is questioned. In other words, some programs take the view, "Don't worry about it. Implement it. It will be fine." They have not been evaluated, yet other programs that have been evaluated are shown to be cost-effective. I will give you an example: Speed enforcement. We strongly believe that speed enforcement needs to be implemented if you are going to reduce road trauma right across the general population. A factor that is appearing continuously is that speed is an issue.

The next one is the impact of public crash reporting on young driver expectations, behaviour and culture. We recently released a publication from the Injury Risk Management Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. We found that young drivers in comparison to older drivers were motivated for risky driving by experience seeking, excitement, sensation seeking, social influence, prestige seeking, confidence familiarity, underestimation of risk, irrelevance of risk, letting off steam and getting there quicker. That was based on a survey of 89 participants aged between 16 and 25 and 110 participants aged over 35 recruited outside motor registries. They completed a battery of questions, including measures of risk aversion, risk propensity, risk-related modus for risky driving, risk perception, speeding and drink-driving. That study was carried out by Julie Hatfield and Ralston Fernandes. They are quite willing to present evidence as well, if you require. That was based on a thorough evaluation as well.

There is a need to raise community awareness of real risks, what are effective programs and what are not effective programs. There are a lot of myths out there. There is a lot of perception about certain types of methods. For example, I heard in one particular instance some police officers who decided to take things into their own hands and run a particular day of driving skills on a football oval. They got some young bucks out there and let them do wheelies, skids and all that sort of thing, thinking they will let steam off. That actually has a counterproductive approach to it. It encourages it. Similarly, with the supernats. When I look at that I scratch my head and I think, "What are we doing here?" I think we are giving the wrong message.

**CHAIR:** Do you have many more points in your opening remarks?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** I am getting to the last bit. As to a best practice program, co-ordinated, multifaceted, community-based programs work involving young people, parents, families, local and broader communities, governments, police, vehicle manufacturers, insurance companies and advertisers. Get everyone working together and having ownership. It is really important. They should be based on current most promising elements, not necessarily seeking new silver bullets—so rigorous evaluation in an Australian context and based on strong graduated driver learning.



**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Your concluding statement rocked me because reading your submission and listening to what you said led me to believe that the college's view was that there is currently no evidence that the early intervention programs that are run in schools by five or six well-meaning community organisations work.

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** We have not evaluated them.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Exactly. The Roads and Traffic Authority is of the view that extensive scientific literature suggests no road safety benefit from these courses, meaning early education type courses in schools rather than driver training. What is the college's view on that statement?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** We would support that view.

**Dr SENSERRICK:** Can I just clarify? Road safety in terms of crashes, there is no evidence. But there is some evidence that it increases awareness and knowledge of the issues involved. It just does not change bad driving behaviour that might lead to crashes.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** In your concluding comment, do I get the message that you would think there is not enough coordination in the State of all these different programs?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** I think there is not enough effective evaluation of them. That is what we need. We need some funding to evaluate these programs, whether they are effective and whether they are going to work. We are raising awareness of road safety issues in the community. That is a good thing; we always want that. But is it actually reducing crashes and fatalities and serious injuries on the roads? When you come down to it, what we want to do is affect those criteria. After all, reducing the number of people dying on the roads and getting injured is what we want to have as an outcome.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Do you say there is no research being done to evaluate the programs? You are not saying research has been done that devalues the programs or concludes that they do not work? You are saying they have not been evaluated, is that right?

**Dr IVERS:** That is correct. I would like to also make the distinction about the different types of programs. School-based road safety education which is operated in primary schools and high schools is teaching generally about the principles of road safety awareness, pedestrian crossing behaviour. In terms of evaluating the impact of that on crashes, it is very difficult to do that. It is possible, but it is very difficult to do because it is a broad thing that you are looking at. Tying that to one tangible outcome is very difficult. Whether or not you want to do that is another question. Generally as a community we accept that people need to have education about general road safety. When you talk about the specific targeting of programs that may be addressed at high school students and aimed at having crash reduction benefits in novice drivers, that is a different question. There have been some evaluations of some of those programs, not necessarily good evaluations in the Australian context.

These courses and programs also differ quite dramatically. In many cases they spring up from a grassroots level—community organisations, police, schools and other well-meaning organisations whose intent is good. Again, because they are springing up in lots of different settings and they are small programs, it is difficult to evaluate them. It does not mean that they are worthless. It does mean at the moment that we do not really know what kind of road safety benefits they have. Largely the research that has been done in other settings for those kinds of programs would indicate that at the moment we do not really know what has got an impact on crashed reduction.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** My question generally relates to the type of person with behavioural and personality issues. You have referred to these matters in your submission. I understand the issue, as you see it, is that there ought to be strategies to try to moderate those personality and behavioural issues through driver training. We get examples of drivers who seem to be beyond any hope whatsoever and should be kept off the road. They exhibit extremely bad symptoms and have a bad history—they have been kicked out of schools, they have family troubles and all sorts of other troubles. I am painting an extremely negative picture for the purpose of the question. Do you

think there is a driver instruction method that could get rid of these personality issues or should the extreme Draconian option be taken that, like the RAAF, it just does not happen?

**Dr SENSERRICK:** I think that is a real issue. Driving is considered a rite of passage that everyone should be allowed to do. In fact, most licensing authorities would be frowned upon if their pass rate was very low. Often the tests for licence focus on management of a vehicle in traffic and road knowledge, which does not necessarily equate to having skills to keep you safe while you are doing it. That is something that only comes with experience. A lot of safe driving practices are very instinctive, such as the hazard perception skills where you are monitoring the environment and looking around you but not necessarily at a conscious level. You will automate a lot of how you drive a vehicle over time, so that you are not consciously thinking about changing your gears when you are braking. So there is a very heavy cognitive load on a new driver.

The starting point is that the tests do not deal with that. It would be difficult to create tests that do. If you had a personality test, then everyone would learn how to answer the questions correctly to pass the test. Then it comes back to the issue of enforcement and the diversionary program when you pick people up. There was a large European Commission-funded research done in Europe that suggested you just have young people together and you just focus on the specific charge. So if it is reckless driving, do not put them in an all age group where you focus on speed and alcohol. You should focus on: Why is it that being a new driver puts you at risk? Even drivers who are not being reckless and crazy are at risk because they do not have experience. There is certainly an element but we do not believe that is the largest element as to why there is such an overrepresentation of young people. It is certainly out there, but it is very hard to quantify. It might represent 20 per cent, for example, of young people who might be reckless, but that does not account for the other 80 per cent who are killed or injured.

You would then need to have additional programs. We believe there are programs you need to target for everyone. Then have additional programs, especially for the people who are offending or repeatedly offending very early in their licence. They are certainly marked for having further crashes when they are older. That turns towards needing enforcement programs. If they do not respond to those programs then their licence should be disqualified. We have a system for that, but it is hard to catch them in that net sometimes.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** You have pointed out two flaws. One, those sorts of people may not go to driving schools so they get missed and, two, is our system good enough to recognise psychiatric issues following a driver being picked up for an offence—and socially how could that be done—so as to arrest the behavioural problems and eliminate the risk. Even if it only eliminates 20 per cent, that is 20 per cent.

**Dr SENSERRICK:** Correct. That is a great challenge. You can take someone's licence away but if they are reckless and have risk behaviour they will still drive. You cannot govern everything with laws. A lot of the improvements to vehicle technologies are coming in to try to prevent vehicles from going excessively over the speed limit and trying to stop them from making erratic lateral movements. I think we have to turn in the extreme cases to engineers and improvements in technology to help add into those issues. Certainly there will always be a bad element that is very difficult to control. Again, we believe that is a small element and we still work towards trying to reduce that element.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** The increased rate of death in 2006, which you mentioned in your submission, was the rationale for the increased restrictions on young drivers. I have statistical issues with that. Did you think that was statistically significant, as researchers?

**Dr SENSERRICK:** We did not put that part in.

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** That was pointed out to us by other members of the executive and it was noted. It is an issue possibly of data collection, I believe, that comes to the fore on that.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** So we have changed all these people's lives without any real evidence, is that what you are saying?

**Dr SENSERRICK:** These changes have only been brought in very recently. So the impact of those changes have not been able to be accounted for.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** The rationale for them was the increased death rate.

**Dr SENSERRICK:** You tend to find at least a 15 per cent difference. There is a certain amount of variance or standard error as it is referred to in statistical analyses that you can account for its significance within that. Certainly plus or minus 15 percent you would not see that as being a dramatic change. That can just happen in variations.

**Dr IVERS:** You would expect that any change that comes about as a result of those reforms to the graduated licensing will have an impact over a period of time. Because there have been quite a few changes in the system over the last few years it is hard to evaluate the specific impact of each one of those. It is probably worth reflecting on why graduating licensing works and why those extra measures are important components of it. Just to put on the record about graduated licensing, we say that young drivers when they first get their drivers licence are at high risk of crashes because of inexperience. For some people it is due to recklessness, but for the most part it is due to inexperience. We know that with increased experience over the first 12 months to three years of driving the crash rate goes down quite dramatically.

The underlying philosophy is that you reduce their exposure to high-risk situations in those very early days where the crash rate is very high. For the learner driver the crash rate is like that, it goes up to that when people get their licence and then it comes down quite dramatically again over those first 12 months. Actually increasing restrictions during that time and gradually lessening them over the period as people become more experienced and less likely to crash is very important. That is very well documented that those systems are very effective. In fact, they are much more effective than changing people's behaviour and their crash risk than driver education and training. There is no real evidence that you can change people's behaviour by education and giving them more information. But there is a lot of evidence that you can change it by legislative change.

**Dr SENSERRICK:** Certainly in New South Wales that change was to put in a passenger restriction at night. It was not purely not driving at night between these hours unsupervised or not driving with passengers all day. You would need to analyse those crashes to see if there was a reduction during the night hours and crashes with passengers and that would prove the effectiveness of the initiative rather than just looking at the total number.

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** That is another issue. One of the issues raised by one of the members of the executive was evaluating what has happened in order to get a better handle on it. I just wanted to also make a comment in regards to what was asked previously, if I may, because I did not get a chance to respond to that. My approach to road safety has always been a safe systems approach. It is a multifaceted situation. You have got to have not only the programs which we know are evaluated as being good, such as driver restrictions in the initial period of driving, night curfew, et cetera, all of those initiatives, but you also have to have the enforcement supporting it and the advertisement in relation to what I mentioned in regards to driver excitement. We know that the advertisement that is going around seems to be having a bit of an effect there but we do not know; we have to evaluate it. It is certainly attention seeking, excitement, getting somewhere quickly but at the same time the driver not having the experience. We have to have a failsafe net.

I will relate you an experience that I personally had. I have triplet sons. My wife and I were concerned when they first got their licences. They are now 26 and all three of them are very safe drivers now. There was a period when one of my sons wound up losing his licence and, indeed, continued to drive without a licence to the horror of my wife and I. What saved the day was his getting caught, the system then dragging him to court and the judge effectively telling him if you do this again you will be in jail. We then sat down with him that evening and said, "What is next son? Is it visiting you in jail for a year or two in order to bring you cakes or whatever?" I think we need complete support in the whole system.

Also the vehicle itself needs to have the appropriate crash worthiness systems and feedback systems. We have got to be able to tell the driver what speed they are travelling at. For example, this recalcitrant son of mine who is now a very safe driver—safer than the other two—could not see the

speedometer and could not judge the speed. He was always going over the speed limit. It was not until we changed the vehicle and got a decent speedometer in large numbers that he could then assess how fast he was going. That changed everything and we suddenly saw a drop in his speeding behaviour. I think it is a number of areas that we need to bring into play, not just focusing on one thing and that is driver education.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** You talk about evaluating programs. I am interested in the criteria in evaluating the programs other than just a drop in the statistics. You can have a very good program in some remote area of New South Wales, that might be operating very well, but it is not going to be reflected in a drop in the statistics of deaths. Your son's situation is not reflected in deaths. I am interested in the criteria you would use to evaluate programs that look at the broader issue of rite of passage, community ownership et cetera, and bringing the youth in to ownership of the issue.

**Dr IVERS:** That is what becomes very difficult about evaluation. If you are going to rigorously evaluate a program like that you would have the program—again the gold standard design is to have what we call a giant experiment, like what is happening with the Federal Government's novice driver trial, where you randomly allocate people to receive a program or not and you follow them up to see whether they have a crash. To do that you need many people. You need not hundreds of thousands but 50,000 or 60,000 people in a trial like that to actually evaluate that effectively, if you are looking at police reported crashes as an outcome. Clearly you cannot do that to every program. Then you have to select other outcomes. You can look at community programs in a smaller setting. It depends on what you define as your outcome but measuring crash outcomes is very difficult. You also need to measure in some way the importance in the community.

Once we have a program that we know works, you do not need to keep re-evaluating it to see whether it actually does have an impact on crashes. You can implement it and then have a look to see whether it works well in that community or not. Unfortunately we are not at that point yet because we do not know what programs work to have an impact on crashes. Whenever we spend money on new programs we have to be very careful that they are in line with what is best practice, in terms of current knowledge about programs that work, and implement those kinds of programs. We do need to look at measuring some outcomes: it might be self reported crashes, it might be near misses, it might be offences—it is a lot easier to measure offences as an outcome because more offences occur than crashes. People get more tickets than they have crashes. Of course you cannot evaluate every single community-based program in that way and it is not cost-effective. When we are looking at resource to the community and the opportunity cost obviously that is not value for money either.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** When you say this one size fits all word evaluation, unless we have an understanding of the definition of evaluation it is a little bit like beauty in the eyes of the beholder or merits?

**Dr IVERS:** Well it is and there are objective criteria that you use for evaluation but it really just depends on what it is you are looking at. If you are evaluating whether the community supports something you will evaluate in a very different way. You go round and talk to the community and say, "What do you think?" You ask teachers, "Do you think this has got value?" and they tell you. But that is all very subjective and that is telling something about what that individual teacher thinks. What we try and do is lay out some objective criteria and say this program has been implemented in this community. Now you can say within the particular community of the Hunter region the crash rates for young drivers has gone down so therefore this program is working—

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Can you say that?

**Dr IVERS:** What we do not know is whether the crash rates in that community were going down anyway or whether there is some other great big campaign that is going on there, whether the local schools have got some road safety program and whether the people that enrolled in that program had voluntarily chosen to go in that program. We know that we have this thing called self-selection bias, which is people who are saver drivers—well, it is volunteer bias and it is across all sorts of research. People who are healthier, more middle-class and better educated are more likely to go into studies and therefore they might have better results. So if the people who enrol in a driver education program are better than others, you are going to get a better result. So you need to control for that.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** School captains.

**Dr IVERS:** School captains, that is right.

**CHAIR:** I was interested in your research paper, even though I understand there is a revised one on the way. A lot of what you have written, particularly in Scandinavian countries, backs up what we have got anecdotally over the past two days about the value of advanced training and people becoming overconfident. That is reflected I think in Norway or Denmark or one of those countries. I thank you for the paper. I do agree with what you said, Professor. Last year, for example, we had the lowest death toll from motor vehicle crashes.

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** Fantastic.

**CHAIR:** That is better roads, improved vehicle safety, maybe driver programs—let us hope they made some contribution—enforcement, promotion and advertising. There is a whole range of things. We cannot necessarily just say driver education. After your opening address I thought the answer is save all the money and do not do any driver education programs. Just forget about it. But we have had your top-down evaluation; we have had people here talking about bottom-up at the very basics of how to teach people to drive. It does not seem to me that there is any easy answer to all of it. In my view the group that preceded you, the Australian Driver Trainers Association, made a very relevant point, that professional trainers need to be accredited. I just wonder whether the college has an opinion on that?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** Absolutely, they should be. I draw a parallel to aircraft flying; it is no different. It is a complex process when you are out there driving. You know yourself when you are driving that so many things can go wrong. You need to have an awareness of the risk of the particular actions that you take as you are driving and manoeuvring through all those hazards that confront you. Now a young person who is inexperienced does not have that same skill. So how can we expect that of them? We need to have driver trainers who can turn around and explain to them, and make them aware, as they are going through the process of learning how to drive. Whether they get that message is another question entirely. I think you really only start to appreciate risk as you get more experienced in driving. You have a pedestrian who darts out and the next time you go past a shopping centre you know there could be someone that is about to dart out and you slow down. There are reasons for implementing different road safety strategies.

The thing that I would like to simply say is we have recognised this in the college. The Australian Automobile Association, who is one of our major sponsors and also promotes road safety—they are the one's who head up the new car assessment program—looks at the safe vehicle, the safe road and the safe driver. They look at all areas. We have to all work together, the engineers like myself, the behaviourist's that are sitting next to me, and the driver trainers. The college is promoting all of us working together to get this horrible trauma down.

**CHAIR:** I commend to you then, if you have got behaviourists here, the paper written by Blacktown City Council where someone who is not a behaviourist but a former WorkCover trainer has advanced a theory about conditioned response and driving.

**Dr SENSERRICK:** Can I add one little comment to?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Dr SENSERRICK:** I just thought I would let you know that in other places such as Sweden and the Scandinavian countries, and even in the United States, there are actually university-based courses that instructors need to complete before they can be trainers. It would not be without precedent to have an actual standardised program they must undertake.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Professor, in your opening speech you mentioned a piece of research in relation to the assessment of young drivers and you waived it around and then put it down.

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Can you make that reference available to the Committee?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** Certainly can.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** From the abstract you have got there. Did the researcher find that there was a bias towards male?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Professor, do you have any idea of how many programs are being delivered with regards to training drivers? Whether they are community-based or service-organisation based in New South Wales?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** No.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** Does anyone have any idea?

**Dr SENSERRICK:** You would probably have a couple of hundred members of the driver trainers. There are also the individuals that register and can take people out individually.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** The point I am making is that every second day someone comes to my office with an idea for a program that they think will solve the problems of the world—all well intentioned. What I want to know is, is there a repository somewhere for all of this information?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** It comes across our desk regularly. The Australian Driver Trainers Association are members of the college and, indeed, one of the members who provided evidence prior to us is a member of the executive. So they are well aware of it. We are aware of people that make submissions to the College of Surgeons, College of Road Safety, Institution of Engineers where a number of us are on various committees, and we get things coming passes all the time.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** But there is not a registry of programs that are operating in far-flung communities in different circumstances that are offering training?

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** Not that we are aware.

**Dr IVERS:** No, and there would be many, many programs being run because they are grassroots. I mean every local police citizens club has road safety programs and there are offender programs. Even offenders programs, which are really important to the novice drivers as well as older drivers, in terms of a systematised curricula there is not necessarily that either.

I know you said with the opening stating you thought we could throw it all away. When we look at what programs are available with road safety driving education—and there are many programs available—we have to consider that there is considerable research evidence telling us that such programs can actually have an adverse effect. It is not cost neutral. You can actually cause more people to die because you actually have driver education training programs. That is not a spurious finding. That has come out on quite a number of occasions. We do know that driver education training implemented with graduated driver licensing systems can be an effective way. We do know with graduated licensing systems, these system approaches are very effective and probably the most known effective methods of actually getting young driver crashes down.

Having driver training programs within such a system is good making sure that we do things such as not giving people credit so that they can get an early licence when they do driver training programs. There are various elements that we know are very well established. So, actually keeping to within those kinds of structures and that sort of research is important. It does not mean that driver training is worthless. What it means is that we think it works in particular settings. We think that it works in other settings, but what we also need to do is continue to develop new programs and evaluate them properly so that when we are spending money we are not actually causing more people to die and we know what the outcomes are going to be. So really I guess the focus would be that we do need to be mindful of the fact that we can do harm when we are actually looking at this area and make sure

that we do all that we can to make sure that we do not introduce the systems that may increase crashes.

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** If I could add one more comment. I think we need to educate the population as well in terms of the outcomes. The general community is just not aware that some of these programs need to be evaluated. So, there is an education process there. I would also put that on the table.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for taking the time to come here. We will incorporate the revised submission into our records.

**Professor GRZEBIETA:** I will have it forwarded later today.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(The Committee adjourned at 4.00 p.m.)**