

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

**INQUIRY INTO REDUCING TRAUMA ON LOCAL ROADS IN NSW**

**At Jubilee Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Friday 7 August 2020.**

**The Committee met at 9:00.**

**PRESENT**

The Hon. Lou Amato (Chair)

Mr Stephen Bromhead

Mr Roy Butler

Mr Christopher Gulaptis

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

Ms Robyn Preston (Deputy Chair)

**The CHAIR:** Good morning, everyone. I declare the first public hearing for the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into reducing trauma on local roads in New South Wales open. I am Lou Amato, Chair of the Committee. With me today are Mr Stephen Bromhead, the member for Myall Lakes; Mr Chris Gulaptis, the member for Clarence; Mr Roy Butler, the member for Barwon; Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, a member of the Legislative Council; and Ms Robyn Preston, the member for Hawkesbury. Mr Daniel Mookhey, a member of the Legislative Council will join us via Webex.

We will today hear from the majority of witnesses by videoconference. There will be one witness attending in person in Parliament House. The hearing is being broadcast to the public via the Parliament's website. Today is the first of two public hearings for this inquiry. The second hearing will be held on 14 August. I thank everyone who is appearing before the Committee today. The Committee appreciates the flexibility of everyone involved in today's proceedings, particularly those attending via videoconference.

**MICHAEL FRANCIS SAVAGE**, Technical Resources Manager, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW), before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

**ARJAN RENSEN**, Roads and Transport Directorate Manager, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW), before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our first witnesses, Mr Mick Savage and Mr Arjan Rensen, from the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW). Before we proceed, do you have any questions about the hearing process?

**Mr SAVAGE:** I am fine, thank you.

**Mr RENSEN:** No questions from me, no.

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

**Mr SAVAGE:** I will start on that. The submission we put forward is fairly detailed. It puts forward the issues that we are aware of as far as local government is concerned. Just as an overview of that, the issues that are of concern to us in no doubt to you and the community, are the number of fatalities and serious injuries occurring on roads under their care, control and management of local government. Depending on how you look at the accident statistics, that is about two-thirds and very broadly there is deciding between the built-up areas in what are virtually metropolitan areas and what is under the care, control and management of local government. However you look at it the accident statistics have not been declining and there is obviously a problem that we all need to deal with. Having said that, over the last six months with fewer vehicles on the road and fewer people driving, there has been a decrease in fatalities and serious injuries. The decrease in fatalities year on year is around about 30 when I looked this morning.

The second issue I would like to draw attention to is the length of road that local government is responsible for in proportion to the total road network within New South Wales. There is a table on page 10 of our submission. The critical factors are total local roads of about 165,000 kilometres made up of 83,000 kilometres sealed and 81,000 unsealed. The State road network, which is administered by Transport for NSW, is about 18,000 sealed kilometres and 3,000 unsealed kilometres. Of the total 186,000 kilometres of road in New South Wales, about 165,000 kilometres is under the care, control and management of local government.

One of the other factors that raises is that while there are a lot of fatalities and serious injuries, they are widely distributed and by and large do not all occur at a small number of locations. That makes dealing with this issue very, very difficult. In addition to that there is a question about the technical capacity and the resources available to local government to effectively deal with this problem. It is not just a physical road network problem. There are also drivers' capacities and drivers' attitudes, particularly when there are a lot of kilometres driven over long distances. In more recent years the use of mobile phones has become an increasing problem. I noticed an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* earlier this week drawing attention to the number of fines that have been issued for drivers using their mobile phones while driving. There are lots of various issues that need to be addressed to make a positive impact on the road toll and, just as importantly, the serious injuries.

There are two other things in this overview. Firstly, there are some questions about who is responsible for road safety on the whole road network. Our submission points to a document that Transport for NSW operates under, previously both the Road Transport Authority [RTA] and Roads and Maritime Services [RMS], which clearly states that they are responsible for road safety within New South Wales. That is probably as it should be. There needs to be consistency across the State for users of the network.

**The CHAIR:** In your submission, you mentioned that any significant reduction of fatalities in New South Wales cannot be achieved without assistance from local government, as local government is responsible for almost 89 per cent of the total road network. Can you elaborate a little bit more on that one?

**Mr SAVAGE:** As I just said, the table on page 10 of our submission shows that it is about 80 per cent. Roughly two-thirds of the fatalities and serious injuries are occurring on the part of the network that is managed by the local government. Local government has been working really hard over the last 10, 15 to 20 years to address this problem. It cannot do that without adequate resources. I will not go into the problems of rate capping and other budgetary constraints. Dollars is part of the problem but not the whole problem. The other part of the problem is community understanding and understanding of staff employed in local government. That is not just engineers, it is everybody that has anything to do with the road network. I hope that addresses the question that you have just asked.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Thank you, Mr Savage.

**Mr SAVAGE:** Following on from the question of responsibility for road safety, one of the difficulties—and this follows on from the answer to that previous question—is that responsibility for implementing road safety on local roads has, in a lot of cases, been delegated to local government. There are some things like speed limits and traffic signals and a few other things that have not been delegated. A delegation without resources means that local government just does not have the physical capacity to do what is really needed.

The second arm to that issue is the Federal report on road safety, which resulted in the establishment of the Federal Office of Road Safety, also suggests that the Federal Government has a responsibility for road safety on all roads, including local roads. Again, attached to that there is not dedicated funding that allows the establishment of adequate capability and the implementation of road safety improvements on a scale that is really necessary for us to reduce the road death toll and the serious injuries. That is a reasonable summation of the submission that we have made. Both Mr Rensen and I are more than happy to answer any further questions that the Committee might have.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Following up on that last point that Mr Savage was making about the dedicated funding—have you made any estimate of what funding you would require in local government from the State?

**Mr SAVAGE:** Not specifically in relation to road safety. Every couple of years we do reports. We collect information from local government and benchmark the general requirement for roads—that is road maintenance—and there is a deficit in that general area. What proportion of that—if all of our roads were up to what the community expects as a satisfactory standard, we would have a reduction in the road death toll. No question about that. The lack of adequate ongoing maintenance is a part of this problem but that also provides part of the solution.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Listening to your comments there, and having 12 years of local government experience, there are different councils that place different priorities on road maintenance and upgrades. How do you think the State Government should audit and prioritise where that funding should be spent in local government, because some councils are very good at it and some are not?

**Mr SAVAGE:** That is a great question. I think that is a really significant problem within local government. Some of the variability is based on the view of the elected council as to what is important. Some of it comes from the community through local representatives. Some of it comes through people employed within the council to carry out certain functions. You are right, that is certainly quite variable across the State. I don't know whether auditing of what has been done is the solution, but it might very well provide part of the solution. There is funding available that needs to be spent on roads. Whether or not individual councils and communities are getting best value for that expenditure is something that is not really measured and that may in fact provide some part of this solution.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Sometimes I have noticed that individual councillors will advocate and champion particular intersection upgrades on local roads and shift funding. There are so many variables, as you said, but trying to get a consistency of dedicated funding in local government at all councils could be one way of guaranteeing some upgrades on particular roads that are suffering in different local government areas.

**Mr SAVAGE:** I agree with that.

**Mr RENSEN:** Mr Savage mentioned the benchmarking reports, which started in 2006. Every second year, available funding is investigated and mapped against the required funding. The funding gap has gone down but it is still sitting on almost \$400 million annually. In the benchmarking exercise, one thing that we realised is the capacity of local government is declining—the capacity of asset management. That is all about asset planning and putting more emphasis on the administrative process. To better plan and better report on asset condition requires building capacity of local government to actually be able to deliver on that work.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Is there any evidence that the unsealed roads contribute towards more accidents than the sealed roads? In other words, are the unsealed roads dangerous for drivers?

**Mr SAVAGE:** That is an excellent question. I wish I could say yes. The data that is collected and reported on accidents does not clearly define whether there is a significant issue with unsealed roads or not. Balancing the fact that unsealed roads, I suppose, to be safely used should be driven on at a slower speed—balancing that safety concern is the fact that there are less vehicles using unsealed roads, by and large, but it would be useful information to know whether there are more, particularly, fatalities on unsealed roads, because that would suggest to us we either need to spend additional resources on sealing those roads or maybe look at implementing other facilities that make them less unsafe. The simple answer to your question is no.

**The CHAIR:** You mentioned in your submission that the quality and quantity of crash data can be improved. How can crash data be improved and how do you see this reducing trauma on local roads?

**Mr SAVAGE:** There are two parts to my answer to that question. One of the difficulties is that several years ago the requirement to report even relatively minor accidents to the police was removed. There are currently a lot of accidents that do not result in death or serious injury that are occurring that nobody knows about. I do not like saying it, but maybe we should go back to the requirement for reporting all accidents with a damage value of over a thousand bucks or whatever. The second part—

**The CHAIR:** If you go back to those days, did they collect and keep that data?

**Mr SAVAGE:** They did. Whether or not in the same detail as we expect now, I am not sure, but, yes, it was available. As an example of how this is failing us, I was talking to a traffic engineer on the Central Coast a couple of months ago and he said to me, "This is a problem for us." He said, "I only became aware of an accident at a particular location on a curve in our shire." And he said, "I happened to be there at the time the tow truck driver was removing the vehicle and he said to me, 'This is the fourth vehicle I have pulled out of here in the last 12 months.'" Going back to the accident statistics, there was nothing reported, there was no one seriously injured. The drivers have obviously said, "My problem," rung the tow truck operator and had the vehicle removed, but no record of that. This engineer said, "If I had known that, I could have gone and looked at that location and maybe put in some wire rope barrier, put some signs up—whatever."

So, no doubt, he is not Robinson Crusoe in having had that experience. One of the things that we have pursued is the capacity for councils to carry out road safety audits, and the advantage of carrying out road safety audits across the network is that it allows us—if they are properly done—to identify problem sites before they become accident clusters. This is an example of how better information could lead to us being more proactive in providing facilities and reducing the likelihood of accidents resulting in serious injuries or fatalities.

**The CHAIR:** How can all three levels of government work better together to reduce trauma on local roads?

**Mr SAVAGE:** It is interesting that the national Office of Road Safety has been established, and there was a report done—probably two years ago now—that suggested that there needs to be \$3 billion made available to addressing problems on the road network, and that is an annual \$3 billion. That might sound like a lot of money but the estimate is that over \$30 billion is the cost of fatalities and serious injuries on the network. I would hope that that recommendation might be taken up and a distribution of funding on a national basis through the States to local government, but with ongoing knowledge of where we can best spend that money. I suppose, the simple answer to your question is all three levels of government need to come together to identify the best way forward, the best value for money, if you like, in reducing our road toll and working collaboratively to achieve better results than we are at present. Part of this probably goes back to the question I was asked earlier about the variability of councils.

**Mr RENSEN:** I think, in addition to what Mick just said, with the current funding models, councils have to compete for funding. A lot of work goes into making submissions for project funding and we hear more and more from councils who do not even put projects forward because the success rate is too low and the amount of effort that goes into preparing these submissions is just too large. A good solution would be, in our three levels of government that work together, to change the funding model, provide funding and just let local government go with the job and make improvements.

**The CHAIR:** I wonder how much it costs a council to put forward a project for funding. That is interesting.

**Mr RENSEN:** We hear quite often that councils just do not have the capacity to compete for these projects.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** In terms of my electorate of Barwon, it has 13 local government areas. One of my local government areas is the largest geographical council in the State with only a rate base of 2,000 people, currently only 50 per cent of whom are actually able to pay their rates. You can imagine the road network is largely unsealed. The council itself is currently in administration and therefore does not have the capacity to do a lot of the grant writing applications that would be required. The other thing to keep in mind is that we also have the unincorporated area—93,000 square kilometres up in the top corner of New South Wales where there is no local government, it is just the village committees and the State. Again, a lot of unsealed roads. Thankfully we just had a large portion of the Tibooburra to Broken Hill sealed, but there are outliers, I suppose, within councils and areas that do not even have council that come into this as well, and it is important not to forget them.

**The CHAIR:** That is a good point, Mr Butler. Earlier in your submission, Mr Savage, you mentioned that in the last six months the fatalities have been reduced. We have had COVID for the last six months, but, if you have the stats on it, do we know how much less volume of traffic has been on the road and what the percentage of fatalities and injuries have been reduced by? Do we know what the comparison is? So, less traffic versus less fatalities and less injuries.

**Mr SAVAGE:** I can answer part of the question, but not the critical part. The reduction in fatalities year on year is about 30 in 300. As of this morning we have had 30 fewer fatalities out of 300 after the same time last year. There are, I understand, statistics—certainly within metropolitan areas—on the reduction in travel, particularly on the State network. I am not aware that the accident rate per kilometre travelled, for example, is currently available, but I am sure the Centre for Road Safety would be able to provide such comparisons in due course.

**The CHAIR:** It would be interesting to see what the stats are.

**Mr SAVAGE:** Yes, it would.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** It is Chris Gulaptis here, Mr Savage. I thank you and Mr Rensen for joining us this morning. That really is an interesting statistic, because we constantly hear that two-thirds of accidents or the fatalities happen on local roads and one-third happen on State roads, but from what you have told us today local roads constitute 90 per cent of the road network. That statistic would be really interesting to find out so that we can actually look at where best to direct our funding to reduce those fatalities.

Obviously there is no doubt about it—I am a country member and I live in Clarence, and I know what the local road network is. You have to drive to the conditions of the road. I think one of the big reasons that we have those high fatality rates in the country is that people do not drive to the conditions of the road. I know that many local people take the fact that they have driven along that road a thousand times for granted and they know exactly how to negotiate the corners and what speed they can travel on safely, but unfortunately it is not safe. Those statistics are really important if we want to bring down the fatality rate: to see what the fatality per kilometre is on local roads as opposed to State roads.

**Mr SAVAGE:** Yes. We provide a couple of charts on page 12 of our submission that show casualty rates per hundred million vehicle kilometres. They have been decreasing, but this is over the whole network. What we need to be looking at is the State network, probably the regional network and the local network to see whether that trend is true in all cases or whether we need to be concentrating on, say, unsealed roads—as per the question earlier—or whether our current high level of spending on the State network is in fact providing us good outcomes.

**Mr RENSEN:** We did a calculation and we looked at the amount of kilometres per fatality, just to understand the magnitude of the change. If you look at fatalities on State roads there is one fatality on every 120 kilometres of road—that is each year. On regional roads it is 257 kilometres. On local roads—both regional roads and local roads are under the control of local government—but on the roads classified as "local roads" it is 1,400 kilometres per fatality. The magnitude of the challenge is really different and we believe the solutions should also be really different.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Any further questions?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I draw your attention to page 11 of your submission and your comments that casualty rates have continued to trend downwards over the 10-year period. Can you elaborate on why you think that is the case?

**Mr SAVAGE:** I found it very interesting. In the 10 years—so 2005, roughly, to 2014—there was an ongoing downward trend in terms of fatalities. But from 2014 to 2018-19 that downward trend ceased and to some extent it started to increase very slightly. We gave some thought to this a couple of years ago. The thing that we identified that had changed was mobile phone use—so, distraction. There was no data available at that stage to confirm that that might have been a possible cause of us having more fatalities. But as I said earlier, the information that was reported in the Herald earlier this week on the number of tickets issued for drivers—and these are all drivers mainly in the metropolitan area—using mobile phones is astonishing. That was one thing.

The other thing that I found really hard to come to grips with is that the annual accident statistics show that about, last time I looked, 9 per cent or 10 per cent of fatalities were either drivers or occupants without seatbelts on. I just find that astonishing given that the introduction of seatbelts was one of the major things that started saving lives on our roads.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Do we need to revisit that as a promotional campaign?

**Mr SAVAGE:** I do not think that would do any harm—both seatbelts and mobile phone use. Anything that distracts drivers from the fairly onerous task of negotiating the road network I think would be good value.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any more questions from the Committee?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Just a quick one. Obviously in the country areas there are less police. In the metropolitan area if you are using a mobile phone you are almost certainly going to get booked, but in the rural areas there would not be the same police coverage. They could be getting—as you said, Mr Savage, they are using their mobile phones, but there are no prosecutions.

**Mr SAVAGE:** Yes. One of the difficulties with this issue is that I do not feel that policing, by and large, is a major part of the solution. We need to start looking at providing infrastructure that looks after drivers who do the wrong thing. I do not think we can afford to put enough police or cameras around the whole of the network to make sure that everyone does everything correctly at all times. We need to start looking at whether we can better build safety into our network rather than looking at policing as a major part of that solution. I will not say it is not useful, particularly if things change in various areas, but it is not a full-time ongoing part of the solution.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I have one last question. In regards to the statistics, I have noticed one thing has not ever been brought up: The amount of road users has increased over the years. Is that taken into consideration? You are talking about back in 2004 versus now in 2020. I know with the massive immigration that has come into particularly the metropolitan area—is that taken into consideration? There are a lot more road users versus deaths and fatalities, and maybe some of these people are not aware of all the rules that we have here in New South Wales.

**Mr SAVAGE:** Yes. Look, certainly there are statistics—

**The CHAIR:** Particularly with seatbelts and all that.

**Mr SAVAGE:** There are statistics available that show fatalities per billion kilometres driven and various other statistics that take that into consideration. And yes, if you looked at what was happening in 2004 against today, the fatalities per kilometre driven or billion kilometres driven would be fewer, I would think. Simply because, as you stated, there are more drivers doing more kilometres. The other side of that coin, however, is that we are still killing 380 people per year on our road network, and that is 380 too many.

**The CHAIR:** Absolutely.

**Mr SAVAGE:** We can start to say, yes, we are doing a good job because the fatalities per kilometre driven have not increased, but we are still killing those 380-odd people. My view—and I go back to the previous comment—that we need to be better at building safety into our network.

**The CHAIR:** I am sure all the Committee members agree on that view. Thank you very much, Mr Savage and Mr Rensen, for appearing before the Committee today. We may send you some additional questions in writing, and your replies will form part of your evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Mr SAVAGE:** We certainly would.

**Mr RENSEN:** Certainly. We would also be happy to provide a copy of the benchmarking findings report, for your information.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, if you would like to forward it on, we would be happy to take it. Thank you for appearing today.

**Mr SAVAGE:** Thank you for the opportunity.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**DAVID McTIERNAN**, National Leader Transport Safety, Australian Road Research Board, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**ALAN HAY**, NSW State Technical Leader, Australian Road Research Board, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** For the benefit of the Committee, I acknowledge that I have known Mr Hay for quite a number of years. Thank you both for appearing today. Could I start by asking you both to make an opening statement?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** I will start and then hand over to Mr Hay. Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our submission on local government road safety. My name is David McTiernan and I am the national leader for transport safety at the Australian Road Research Board [ARRB]. My colleague Alan Hay is the New South Wales State technical leader at ARRB. I am a civil engineer with almost 30 years' experience investigating road crashes, developing solutions to mitigate road crash risk and to prevent the death and serious injury that those crashes cause on our roads. Before joining ARRB I worked in local government for over 16 years, operating on a daily basis in road design, traffic management, road safety on State and local roads that operated in my council areas.

**The CHAIR:** I should get you to name them, shouldn't I?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** In joining ARRB I decided to apply my practical experience in an effort to improve the safety of our roads by undertaking research, developing best-practice guidelines and sharing my knowledge with road practitioners, not just in New South Wales but across Australia. ARRB is Australia's national transport research organisation. It was set up 60 years ago by an Australia's Government agencies, not as a new government agency, but as a not-for-profit organisation with the purpose of undertaking applied research into road management. Our purpose is to develop Australian expertise and knowledge, and to provide the country's road practitioners with an understanding and technical guidance to allow them to do their work more efficiently. In support of that purpose, ARRB's role in road safety has very much been the development of practical knowledge and working with practitioners such as local government, engineers and the like.

Turning to the terms of reference of the inquiry, I highlight a few key points, which you will obviously all have from our submission, so I will not go into further detail. But I certainly some welcome questions on them. It is our view that local roads—i.e. the roads that are under the care and control of local councils—are critical to New South Wales achieving its vision of zero deaths and serious injuries on our roads. The reasons for that are simple: The experience nationally is reflected in New South Wales—up to 52 per cent of all casualty crashes occur on local roads and, of that, 40 per cent of all road fatalities. I note that Transport for NSW has quite a comprehensive analysis of data for local government roads, so I will not go into detail, but certainly refer to that. A closer look at the data highlights the seriousness of the problem.

Crashes on local roads are more likely to involve more serious types of crashes—head-on crashes, the run off road into objects crashes, involving pedestrians and cyclists. In the regions they are more likely to occur at high speed, which increases the potential for the most serious outcomes to occur. It is also evident from the data that inappropriate road user behaviour is more likely to be a factor. That is a very broad term, but includes everything from inappropriate speed through to distraction, drink driving and drug driving, et cetera. As I said earlier, it is clear that New South Wales cannot achieve its vision of zero unless local government is intimately involved in the answer. Road safety training and action in New South Wales for local government is largely—and this is disappointing, in my experience—a voluntary activity.

I know that road safety in local government generally lacks the priority of other program areas. Therefore, it is struggling to make an effective and sustained contribution to achieving vision zero. In our view this is largely because there is no requirement for local government to actively develop a road safety strategy or to include road safety in their corporate or community plans. As a result—and I heard some of the evidence from the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia [IPWEA] a bit earlier—a survey by them identifies that of the councils that responded—121 out of 128—only 34 per cent had a road safety plan at the time, and around half of those had not been reviewed for more than two years. The situation is quite different in other jurisdictions. In Victoria, in particular, its Road Management Act explicitly lays out what is expected of road authorities in delivering road safety, as well as the other road management functions.

Turning to opportunities for improving safety planning, when I started in local government in 1992 it was around the same time that the first road safety officer had been installed in local government with the support of the then RTA. I worked alongside that first road safety officer and since that time have worked with many others and interacted with them at a professional level to try to solve some of their road safety problems. An earlier



project of mine when I first joined ARRB was to review the New South Wales Local Government Road Safety Program set up for road safety to identify potential areas for change and improvement. While there are many good examples of community-focused work considering important road safety messages to change community attitudes and inform them about their contribution to road safety, only some councils have adopted elements of road safety into their organisation and embedded them as business as usual. Unfortunately, the program has not really fundamentally changed since first applied in 1992.

At a personal level, the impact of road trauma is incalculable. The devastation of losing a loved one or the lifelong impact of suffering serious brain injury or needing a carer, are obvious. The society and economic impacts are unsustainable. In New South Wales, if we look at the proportion of fatal crashes that occur on local roads, there is an estimated \$2 billion to \$3 billion worth of costs due to road trauma each year, impacting local communities. Therefore, the role of local government in road safety is fundamental. There are a number of other relevant matters and I appreciate we are running a little bit late because of the connection issues. I refer you to our proposal in our submission for that.

Certainly, some of the key areas include improving awareness of local government; modifying or adapting the Black Spot model program and the funding model, which I note the IPWEA touched on, as well; improving local government practitioner skills and capabilities; ensuring that the consulting and developer industries are involved in that, because they deliver a lot of the road improvements and new roads at a local level; and, not forgetting the future—and the not-too-distant future—the preparedness of local government to welcome connected and automated vehicle technology. With that, I hand over to Mr Hay and a welcome further questions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr McTiernan. Mr Hay?

**Mr HAY:** Echoing the sentiment of Mr McTiernan and the statement he has made, with ARRB having been the national transport research organisation for over 60 years, our strongly held opinion is that the success of any Commonwealth or State road safety initiative is tempered by the affirmation and capability of local government. We not only have to engage local government, taking them on the journey, but energise and support, providing knowledge transfer and guidance in the language of local government. We must assist local government in understanding their network pertaining to road safety. We have undertaken a risk assessment of our State roads but that is yet to be applied to local government roads.

Are we being proactive or reactive? Are we doing justice to the memory of lives lost and lives ruined on our roads by learning all we can from the fatal and serious incidents that occur? Are we gaining optimum outcomes and efficiencies from the focus and investment being made? ARRB would argue that much has been done but statistics would suggest that there is still much more to do. And as Mr McTiernan mentioned, we are happy to take questions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Hay. Mr Bromhead?

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** My question is to Alan Hay. Mr Hay, if you could introduce one thing to reduce road trauma in New South Wales, what would it be?

**Mr HAY:** That is a difficult question because there is no silver bullet. There is a number of factors involved but, as I alluded to before, every other form of major transport has holistic, blameless investigation that takes place when an incident occurs. If you look at the actual road safety statistics, you would find that it is equivalent to 3 airliners crashing in Australia every year. We apply blameless accident investigation or review in a holistic way to everything else, anything involving public transport—trains, airlines—but the area that we fail to cover is personal passenger vehicles. We are not learning sufficiently from the incidents that do occur and applying that to our knowledge base. And we are certainly not delivering the information and results of accident investigation to the use of practitioners in a timely manner.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Hay. In your submission you state that there needs to be a change in how State Government works with local government to support councils and local communities to understand what needs to be done for road safety and how best to do it within the context of their local area. What could the State Government do to work better with local government in this area?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** Thanks for that. Fundamentally I think the approach between the State and local government levels needs to be a partnership approach. Local government, I think, will always be needing more funding but there are other areas that may need assistance as well. I touched on it in the opening statement and in our submission. And that includes developing their skills and capabilities. The local and regional road network is extensive. The councils have a very different level of problem compared to the State highway network and they are not necessarily equipped with either the resources or the skills and the research but there is so much that the State Government has available to it that they can readily work with local government and that is happening. That has certainly been a focus in the last couple of years of the State Government and Transport for NSW to

assist. But as I alluded to, the road safety officer program, for example, is still very much the original model of short-term rolling funding for an education officer in local government. After 30 years it still has not embedded road safety into local government so I would certainly encourage a greater partnership between local government and State government.

**Mr HAY:** If I could also add, Chair, we have found in the development of the best practice guides for local government, which is undertaken on behalf of the Commonwealth, we have to create a new narrative in talking to and dealing with local governments. And that goes down to the guidance that we provide. Local government has particular challenges and limitations that the State Government does not have. I think it is important that when communicating with local government it is not about just providing dictates which can encourage just box-ticking but actually taking them on the journey.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Alan. Do members have any questions?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Just earlier the witness said one of the major factors in fatalities was high speed. Could that be dealt with by introducing more speed cameras and having the State Government provide the funding for the speed cameras for regional areas?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** It is a good question and one that obviously engages the community. Enforcement is a very different aspect of delivering road safety to the broader speed management. It is a key element and enforcement is very much about compliance. The major concern, as an engineer, that I have for local roads is ensuring that the speed limit on roads is appropriate to their own environment and vice versa—that the road environment is appropriate to the speed limit. We know from endless experience and research that speed introduces energy into a crash and it is the exchange of that energy to the occupants of the vehicle or pedestrian that causes the serious injury or the death. So speed management is fundamental to ensuring people survive a crash with minimal injury.

It can also be a cause of a crash; so, inappropriate speed in inappropriate weather conditions. A member of the Committee touched on it earlier—that driving to the conditions is important. I think there is a community attitude out there that a speed limit is a target to achieve, rather than an advisory of what may be appropriate. And so I do not necessarily endorse putting more speed cameras out there to manage people's speed. I think there needs to be a fair degree of self-regulation, self-enforcement, and a fundamental part of road design is ensuring that the road communicates to the road user what is an appropriate and safe speed. Complementing all of that is, obviously, other road safety features that are needed. We have undivided roads, largely, on the local road network. We have less than 300 millimetres of white paint separating two vehicles travelling in opposite directions at potentially high speed.

So we need to address the infrastructure to ensure it suits the speed environment that is sought for by the community. There are long distances to travel; nobody wants to reduce speeds to inappropriate levels. But that then puts an onus back on ensuring the infrastructure is appropriate. Once we have got all that then certainly enforcement, whether it is by police or by cameras, is an important element of the road safety delivery.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Gentlemen, I am just listening to your comments and I am just wondering—a couple of points. Does the State Government need to incentivise local government to focus their budget on particular road upgrades?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** I am not sure if incentivisation will work without some assistance. Again, in our submission—and I allude to it in the opening statement—road safety is not business as usual or a high priority for local government. I do not mean that with disrespect to local government, certainly, having been a former local government engineer. It is competing with a multitude of other community and organisational demands. Traditionally road safety has been seen as, "Design the road to standard and it will be safe." That is not the case. We can design a road to meet all the standards that we have in place—all the Federal guidelines—and it can still be unsafe. Incentivisation needs to be through creating awareness in-house of what it means to have a safe road network.

As I said, there is a skills gap, there is a resourcing gap and, of course, there is a funding gap. I think all those things need to be addressed in partnership with the State Government. I think then the delivery of it will happen. I can see local government delivering what they need to do to make their communities safe.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I am just picking up on those points you raised and I am hearing that there is a variation in councils throughout New South Wales of the skills within the council with engineers and road designers, I suppose, in particular. How do you standardise that? Different councils have different abilities depending on the people they have working in those roles—and also, the relationship they have with designers who are developers coming into new areas and putting in road networks as well. You could be setting up a new estate, for example, and plugging into existing roads with someone from council who has not got the correct skill

set to be able to deliver that in an appropriate way. I would like your comments on that, please, Mr McTiernan or Mr Hay.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** Absolutely. I presented to the Federal Government's Joint Select Committee on Road Safety last week. It fundamentally comes down to the undergraduate training and education of our engineers and our practitioners. It is not just an engineering solution. There is the town planners involved. There are the decision-makers in Council, whether they are the elected officials, the general managers or managers. There needs to be a broad awareness of their roles and responsibilities with road safety. At a technical level there certainly needs to be some injection into the undergraduate course. There needs to be something more formal at a postgraduate level so that engineers like myself—when I joined there was no road safety training. It has all been on the job.

That has improved slightly. ARRB has certainly been a key developer of knowledge transfer training and postgraduate and professional development opportunities. So, that is where it starts. Overlapping with that is clearly the gap in available resources. I left local government after 16 years. I never thought I would leave local government. That was the career choice for me. I was going to be in local government until I retired—but I left. I got to a point in my career in council where I was doing the same thing over and over. There was no career progression opportunity, so I left. There has been a significant drain of experienced engineers and town planners within local government. That needs to be stopped. The new people coming need to have road safety embedded into their view and into their work, and they need to be supported by the decision-makers.

**The CHAIR:** I do not know if this is a question for yourselves or perhaps some of the other witnesses coming in later. I am just curious—you have the cost of injuries, rehabilitation and ongoing care to victims of road incidents. Do we know what the cost of all that is? And if it could have been diverted into road management and road infrastructure, do we know how much we could reduce fatalities by? Hypothetically speaking, if we could take that money away—let us say it is a billion dollars annually to care for these people. If we could divert it into roads, could we reduce them and by how much? Is that sort of study being done anywhere? Does anyone have an answer? If not, I will continue on with witnesses later.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** Look, there certainly is a wealth of information out there costing road trauma. I have not got the details for local roads in New South Wales, but in our submission we have a bit of a breakdown there. Nationally it is estimated that road trauma in Australia costs approximately \$30 billion per year to the economy.

**The CHAIR:** That is \$30 billion per year?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** That is \$30 billion per year. The cost of health, the lost skills and experience from people who have been killed, the carers required to keep people with traumatic brain injury a part of society—\$30 billion a year. If we look at a breakdown of that, we estimated in our proposal, just based on rough proportions, that the trauma cost from local roads is in the order of \$2 billion to \$3 billion per year.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, Mr McTiernan. You do not have the New South Wales stats, do you? You say it is \$30 billion nationally. Do we know what the cost is to this State?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** Sure. Just based on apportioning using figures of the number of deaths in New South Wales and figures I have seen published by Transport for NSW, we are talking around \$8 billion per year in New South Wales. I am sure if that is right they can confirm that. If we again just drill down and apportion that on local road fatalities and serious injuries, we are looking at \$2 billion to \$3 billion per year of road trauma costs just on local roads. Again, I am not aware fully of what investment the State Government is making on local government roads to support them through black spots and the Safer Roads Program. I know it is in the order of \$600 million over a period of five-plus years.

That is just a drop in the ocean of the potential \$2 billion to \$3 billion cost just on local roads each and every year. So, you can see even a small percentage of that road trauma cost—if that was taken and invested into local roads it could make a significant difference to road safety performance on our road network. While I was an engineer and I will keep talking about infrastructure, we need to be aware that road safety is far broader than just infrastructure. There is a behavioural component. There is a vehicle component. And so, some of that money clearly needs to be invested in making sure that we are educating and transforming community attitudes towards road safety as well.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Very good point, Mr McTiernan. Very good point.

**Mr HAY:** If I could just add, one of the big problems we have for local government is—no full risk assessment has been undertaken. So, local governments do not have a clear view of their network and understanding where the problems are, unless it is a black spot where lives have been sacrificed or ruined because accidents have occurred numerous times at the same spot. And then, we spend X amount of dollars trying to fix

that one particular spot. And because we are not necessarily applying a fit for purpose solution—the go-to at the moment is barriers. We have got wire barriers and W-beam barriers. But there are solutions that, if you properly understood the network, could be applied and be just as effective so that more of the network could actually be made safe.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for that.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** If I could just add to that?

**The CHAIR:** Certainly.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** The way I couch the network risk assessment is like any business. Each financial year you need to have a stocktake. You need to understand what stock you have on your shelves and what you might need for the next financial year. As Mr Hay said, there has not been a stocktake of road safety infrastructure risk on local roads. There certainly has at the national level. The National Highway has been done. The State network has been done in all jurisdictions in Australia, in New South Wales in particular. But when you get to regional and local roads that have not been done, the Queensland Government supported local governments to do a stocktake of risk on their local roads of significance, which are equivalent to our regional roads.

There is a pilot project that is just looking at it in New South Wales at the moment with three councils and the Australian Road Research Board was involved in that pilot project with Transport for NSW, but it is, as Mr Hay said, difficult to understand the scale of the solutions. We know the problem. We know how many people get killed and seriously injured on local roads but the scale of the solution cannot be determined until we undertake that stocktake.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Chair, can I just add to that?

**The CHAIR:** Certainly, Ms Preston.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Just picking up on that, the situation with not getting enough data because they are not reportable to police now, councils have really struggled in trying to justify improvements to intersections because the data is not being collected. Do we need to lower that benchmark and get more data to support upgrades to different intersections and road areas?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** I do not believe we need to lower the benchmark. I think it is looking at it in a different way. Mr Hay touched on it earlier. In other industries—airline and rail—you have comprehensive investigation of a crash. Now, the sheer number of crashes on the public road network would probably prevent something as comprehensive as that, but the police do a really good job of investigating the crash for their purposes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** But that is only if it is reported to the police. Smaller crashes are not. That data is not collected and so council does not have that ammunition to put forward to say that we need improvements on an intersection. It is not mandatory and police are not providing that information either.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** True. I guess the decision to have police no longer mandatorily attending crashes and to change that benchmark has had an effect on the low order crashes. They could be lead indicators. It would be great if we could get that dataset back again because that will have a significant resourcing impact on policing.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** So one of the things that—again, touching on what Mr Hay talked about—is the blameless investigation. There needs to be an approach towards road crashes to inquire—why did this crash happen?—and look at it from a systemic perspective. I am sure that the Committee members have heard of the Safe System approach. You do not just look at the infrastructure, you look at the vehicle and the human behaviour behind it. I think there really needs to be a change in approach to how crashes are investigated and certainly including lower order crashes would be important because they could be leading indicators of a much more severe problem. We cannot just wait for the most serious but resourcing may require to be collective in what we do there.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I know that several years ago—

**Mr HAY:** Chair?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Mr Hay.

**Mr HAY:** Sorry. If I just may add: Again I allude to one of my opening statements. Are we being proactive, or are we being reactive? Being reactive is almost the equivalent of sending men, women and children across a minefield to make it safer for the majority. It is that devastating. We should not necessarily have to wait

for accidents to occur in order to identify areas that are unsafe. We can do that through a holistic analysis of the network.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Hay.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I have a question about the police no longer having the accidents reported to them. Is that a national policy or only in New South Wales? If so, why was that introduced?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** It is a culture that was introduced in New South Wales but it does align with the approach in other jurisdictions. Not all jurisdictions report property damage only crashes, for example, which as I said could be lead indicators of a more serious problem. It is a decision that was made and did frustrate and disappoint a lot of people in research and local government and other practitioners who use that data to really highlight emerging problems. But I would not overemphasise the need to go back to that. As Mr Hay alluded to, we have the evidence already. We know what elements of road infrastructure cause problems, what elevates the risk. The data for local government of low order crashes would certainly help them to identify where crashes are developing but, as I said, we have the evidence already. We can do a risk assessment and predict where crashes will occur already.

**The CHAIR:** Actually, I can probably answer part of your question, Reverend Nile. When they took it away, the reason was that a lot of them were very minor accidents and the cost in resources of sending out the police—and usually two police officers had to attend the incident—meant that those resources were better used in other areas of policing. That is why they took it away. I think it was \$1,500. For any damage that is less than \$1,500, you do not have to call the police. That is why they did it—so that they could put those police resources to better use.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I am thinking, though: Why do we have to have it reported to the police? Could it not be reported to the local council so that they can collect the data?

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** I think the answer is this: If anyone has an accident and damages their car, they put a claim in for the insurance.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is right—to the insurance companies. They could provide it.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** The obvious thing is: Let us examine whether or not we can make the insurance companies provide that information.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** And insurance companies could help with that data.

**The CHAIR:** By providing that information, yes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I agree. I think that is a good point.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, good point Mr Bromhead. Good point. Are there any further questions?

**Mr HAY:** Chair, if I could add: Our ambulance services have a very important role to play in the actual collection of data and statistics with regards to the severity of the accidents that do occur, but of course when they arrive on scene one of the key concerns is their own safety as well as saving the lives of the people who have been injured. Still the reporting of that tends to take a back seat, if you like, understandably so. If there is a way that we can actually improve the data that we get of the types of accidents and the injuries being sustained by them, that once again helps us to evaluate the entire local government network.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** Chair, if I could add to that?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Just on that point, is it possible to have better collection from the hospitals of the trauma costs they have had to incur in treating those patients who have come in because of a road accident? Does anybody do that?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** I will just add to that. New South Wales is leading the way with hospital matching of crash data and hospital records. Other jurisdictions are working on it. It is being look at nationally but New South Wales has been leading the way on that and it has provided a really good, rich source of information about the severity of crashes. They have had some mismatch so they are picking up incidents when people have been admitted to hospital but there is no police record of the crash, and vice versa. But there are lots of opportunity to improve how we collate data, how we collect it, how we integrate the health, police and road management authorities to have a better picture. I would not necessarily support crashes being reported to local government. That is another burden on them that they are just not equipped to do. They need to be recipient of a good set of data so they can do their job rather than being the collators of that data.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr HAY:** If I can add to that? It is something that there needs to be a central holistic point, easy to access by local government and presented by Dashboard or other means that actually speaks in the language of local government.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes. I like that. That is good.

**Mr McTIERNAN:** It needs to be clearly identified.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Good point, Mr Hay. Good point. If there are no further questions, I think that brings us to the end of this session. Thank you both for appearing before the Committee today. We may send you some additional questions in writing. Your replies will form part of the evidence and will be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Mr McTIERNAN:** Absolutely. We would welcome that.

**Mr HAY:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Beautiful. Thank you very much. We appreciate your attending today's hearing.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**FIONA FROST**, Road Safety Officer, Blacktown City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Ms Frost, do you have any questions about the hearing process? No. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

**Ms FROST:** To give you a bit of background, Blacktown has a current population of 395,000. That is expected to grow to around 522,000 by 2036. It is very much a growing and dynamic area. We currently have 48 suburbs, so it is pretty large. The growth corridor is part and parcel of the Blacktown area. Again, a large amount of growth and development is in that area. I am not sure if any of the members are part of that area or are familiar with western Sydney, but in a lot of ways the things we talk about today will not just be about Blacktown. They will also be about the western growth corridors—south-western and north-western corridors—because they apply to all of us generally.

Blacktown is home to the second largest urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the State. That brings its own set of challenges and unique opportunities. We also have the Mount Druitt area, which has suburbs that have a very low Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas index. Some of them are at two, some of them are at three, which means that they are really low socio-economic and there are big challenges in those areas. There is a very large migrant population as well as the low socio-economic, so it is a really interesting mixture in our area. I could go on and give you a whole lot of information, but it is probably better that we start with your questions and I can fill you in as we go along. This process is new to me, so tell me what you want me to do.

**The CHAIR:** How long has the council participated in the Local Government Road Safety Program? What has been the experience of the program for the council?

**Ms FROST:** We have been part of that process for over 20 years. I am the incumbent and I have been there for four years. It has been part and parcel of what the council has done for a long time. Our experience of it is good and bad. The good parts are the opportunities to work with the community to provide things that are targeted specifically for our community. The difficulties are often around the limitations that are placed on us by Transport for NSW. I presume that you are familiar with the way that the program works. My road safety officer [RSO] position is half funded by Roads and Maritime Services—Transport for NSW now—and half funded by council. They also contribute to the programs that we run. A lot of those programs that we do really have a lot of support from RMS. The difficulty comes with some of the other issues around the limitations that they place on the program.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any ways in which the program can be improved apart from funding?

**Ms FROST:** The program can be improved. From my point of view, I would love another RSO to work alongside me. One of me with 142 schools is quite a challenge. One of me with the large multicultural population is a challenge. But other than that I enjoy it. I do the job I do because I love it. In terms of the program, there are challenges with regard to the limitations that RMS put on what we are allowed to do. We are not allowed to advertise extensively and that can be a problem. There are quite strict limits on what we can do. For example, we are limited as to how we can use artwork. I understand that some of that is copyright. I have had that explained to me in the past. However, there are often times when you want to take a piece of artwork and adapt it to something that suits the local community and that is not allowed.

With images, it is difficult if you are doing a presentation. They will provide the presentation that you are supposed to do and some of it is not that great, especially when you are putting it into a local context. That part of things can be really difficult. One of the issues is around communication. They have got better at that recently—thank goodness—but that can be difficult. One of the big problems that we have not just in my area but for other RSOs is that the position in some cases is funded by council—or contracted by council—based on the funding period for RMS, or from Transport for NSW. It is usually a three-year cycle. If the incumbent RSO leaves within that time period, because it is a contract position many councils will then try and employ someone for the remainder of the period. That makes it very difficult to take somebody on.

Some of us are permanent, and for that we are very grateful to our councils, but that constant cycling round of the program is really difficult. A longer term commitment to the Local Government Road Safety Program on behalf of the State Government would be really welcomed not just by myself but by everybody else. Obviously, the funding of it runs in government cycles. But, all the same, it could be extended. That would be a really good thing. I would love some more support for my car seat program. That is something that is huge in my area. We made it into *The Daily Telegraph* last week with an extended program that we are doing. I am happy to talk more about that if you really want to hear about it, or to talk to you offline about it if that is a better way to go about it. It is a program that has involved the police; it has involved the Australasian Nurse Family Partnership Program;

it has involved hospital midwives—so a really wide selection of the community trying to get into the groups of people that will not otherwise put their children into car seats. It has been a really worthwhile program. If you want any more information about that I can talk about it for hours, but that is probably not what you require.

**The CHAIR:** For the benefit of the Committee, I have been informed that unfortunately Mr Campbell will not be joining us. Ms Frost, how does a council road safety officer work with the Department of Education to assist with road safety issues impacting roads near schools?

**Ms FROST:** That is a huge challenge. As I said before, I have got 142 schools—five more are currently under construction and we are negotiating with the various organisations at the present time. I have more schools than, I think, any other local government area [LGA] in the State. Schools are a really difficult issue, partly because, in a lot of cases in the past, the Department of Education has plonked a school onto a site and then said, "That's it, we're done," and they have walked away and left it for the council and the principal to try and manage what was there. While I understand that to an extent, it has left us with some really bad positions in terms of school layouts, positioning of gates—those sorts of things where we could do things a lot better.

I am really fortunate that within the council, the planners and the traffic engineers have allowed me to be involved with discussions with our new schools. Alex Avenue public school will be starting term one 2021. I have been quite deeply involved with that and it has allowed us to do some tweaking of the layouts, tweaking of the gate locations, making sure that they have bus facilities that are really accessible to the school, kiss and drop facilities—those sorts of things. That is just starting to come online.

One of the real difficulties around schools is that the Department of Education has an attitude that we are in the business of education and not in the business of providing car parking, and so it means schools do not want to provide onsite parking for their staff. That is all very good and well but we could take that same attitude back in the reverse and say that council is not in the business of providing parking for businesses either. Although education is not necessarily a business, they need to consider better containing their business to their site. That is a really big issue at our schools, where teachers are having to park on the street. Over a period of time we then have to put timed parking in, which means that they park further away. It just becomes really messy, so dealing with that issue would be a really good start in terms of schools.

Dealing with things like time of departure of students—the Department of Education, or principals specifically, have traditionally had a bell time, everybody goes and that is fine, but we have some really large sites in our LGA. One site has both a primary and a secondary school on that site with over 3,500 students, who are all dismissed within about a 10-minute period. The chaos on those streets around the area is just horrendous and I had to have a call in from the deputy principal of the primary school. She was wanting us to do something about the congestion around the school. I often say to people, "We don't kill children at zero kilometres an hour," and so a lot of those congestions are our friend around schools. It is not necessarily a good thing in terms of frustration and other people that may need to use that road.

I have similar concerns where we have issues where schools have not been planned well, whereas, existing schools are being enlarged without any particular thought for how that might be done particularly well. There is some discussion with the Department of Education and our council at the moment and I am hoping that that is extended to other councils as a way of helping to reduce those issues. Schools are always going to be difficult—for that 15 minutes after school and the half an hour before school—but if we can do things like spreading the bell times then that will make life a lot easier than what we have at the present time. It would be really good to have some discussions around those things happening.

There is a working party that has been established—with Blacktown part and parcel of that—to hopefully start to address some of those issues, but there are other issues as well. We need to consider where we actually site schools and ensure that they have wide enough road widths, that we can put a bus bay, that we can put a kiss and drop zone nearby to the school, because we cannot put those across the front of residential properties—it just does not work. We need to be thinking about those sorts of issues.

**The CHAIR:** All of that would be more in the new developments, obviously.

**Ms FROST:** Absolutely, but like I say, I have got five new schools coming on board in the next two years, so let us make sure that we learn from our mistakes and do not make the same dumb mistakes that have been made in some of the schools that we are dealing with now.

**The CHAIR:** Council also has a look at those plans, as well, when they are being proposed, so they would also be aware of how the streets are going to be, where the bus stops will be and so forth. In case something is missed, council would pick those issues up, you would presume.



**Ms FROST:** And that is what we are trying to do. Unfortunately, by the time we get to them, the school is relatively well planned. The architects have come in and done their thing—they have decided how they are going to lay the school out—and we have a road there that is already the width that it is going to be, the layout that it is going to be. Unless people consider of the appropriateness of the site, before it actually comes to us.

**The CHAIR:** Who does the road traffic study? Is it council or is it the department that does it?

**Ms FROST:** I would expect that to be the department.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** The department just has a template and they just pop it down there with no regard for parking going forward, and then council have to deal with that fallout.

**The CHAIR:** If you are going to open up some other form of business, you would have to pay for a road study and present it to council.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I think we should congratulate the Blacktown City Council on having a road safety officer, but from your opening remarks you are part-time. Is that roughly 50 per cent?

**Ms FROST:** No, I am actually full-time. I am half funded by Roads and Maritime Services and half funded by council, but I work five days a week. I could work seven if they let me, but five days is enough.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Would you agree that it is very important for other councils to have a road safety officer such as you? Do you know whether other councils have appointed them?

**Ms FROST:** Many other councils across New South Wales have RSOs. Some of them in rural and remote areas, they share an RSO across multiple councils or municipalities, which makes a lot of sense. Some of our suburban or metropolitan councils do not have an RSO, for whatever reason, and some have dropped out of the program. There are obviously a few vacancies from time to time, but there are a lot of people like me doing this sort of job.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** So you liaise with the other road safety officers and share information?

**Ms FROST:** Yes I do often [inaudible]. Yes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I will need to further add to that, Ms Frost. Would you present your thoughts at local traffic committee [LTC] meetings as well?

**Ms FROST:** Sadly not.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Why not?

**Ms FROST:** In this particular council, no, I do not get to go to local traffic committees. I do get involved with many issues before the report is done.

**The CHAIR:** I do not understand why you don't.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I would have thought that would be a given.

**Ms FROST:** I would love to. That is a decision of this particular council. The previous council I worked at for six years, I did. I attended pretty much every LTC, but it does not happen with Blacktown. That is a management decision, not mine.

**The CHAIR:** So council made the decision to not have you as part of the—

**Ms FROST:** I am not sure whether it is council or whether it is within my management team—my personal hierarchy. I am not sure where that decision is made.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Chair, it might be worth looking into that.

**The CHAIR:** I might let you carry on though, because it does not make sense why you would not have an RSO—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** To be able to bring the knowledge that comes with the role and the problems you deal with day to day to the floor of a local traffic committee, that meets, perhaps, fortnightly or monthly on a range of issues around their local government area—I would have thought that would be something that you could offer a major contribution to. Perhaps, Chair, that may be a recommendation going forward for local government councils.

**The CHAIR:** That is a good point, Ms Preston.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**Ms FROST:** If I could just jump in, most of the traffic engineers and managers at that level are fairly au fait with road safety things as well, so they do tend to push that aspect of that—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Do you meet with them? You would be meeting with them.

**Ms FROST:** Oh yes. I sit with the traffic team, the traffic section of council. I work with them closely. I write traffic reports myself. Yes, I am part of it. It is not always a bad thing, but it would possibly be useful as well.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Ms Frost, I just wanted you to talk a little bit more about the flexibility in the use of the road safety program funding and also reconsideration of the safety around schools program and what that might mean for councils like yours.

**Ms FROST:** Sorry, can you give me the first part of the question again?

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Yes. More flexibility on the use of the road safety program funding. As I understand it there are some pretty strict parameters about how that can be used and that limits how effective you can be and how you spend that money; also, a previous program—the safety around schools program—and what that would enable you to do if that was available for you in the way it was previously.

**Ms FROST:** I am going to do those in reverse order. The safety around schools program was very good for providing access facilities around schools—upgrading footpaths, pedestrian crossings, those sorts of things. That was particularly useful. In this post-COVID time or current COVID time where pedestrian access is a really big issue getting facilities for cycling, getting people out of cars has been a real bonus, I think, with COVID. That safety around schools program was really good for that. Continuing to build on that would be really useful. I am all for those facilities in our schools, especially given that a lot of our schools do not have good footpath access. I have done a lot of work in getting pedestrian crossings and wombat crossings into school facilities because in the past sometimes those have not been installed. They are expensive, though. There is more to putting in a pedestrian crossing than a few signs and some lines on the road.

Street lighting is the big cost. You can take the cost of a pedestrian crossing from around \$20,000 for some wider roadworks and street works and then you can add another \$70,000 or \$80,000 for the street lighting. Suddenly installing pedestrian crossing and wombat crossings becomes a very expensive proposition. Any support we can get on that would be really welcome.

Going back to the Local Government Road Safety Program, there really are limitations with what we can do with our money and how we can put the programs together. Unfortunately with what I do with my car seat program that I basically put all of my funds—bearing in mind the size of my council, the funding from the Local Government Road Safety Program is around \$12,000 for me for programs plus I get another about \$1,500 for running the supervising learner drivers workshops or whatever you want to call that program—GLS, Graduated Licensing Scheme; the workshop for parents. That is funded on a separate basis. But the rest of my programs come out at \$12,000 in funding, which I put entirely into my car seat program because there is a huge need in my area to promote the appropriate car seat use by parents, grandparents and family members to protect our young children.

In a way that simplifies the process for me, but for many other road safety officers who are trying to run programs they come up against the challenges of RMS having a partly done project and not being prepared to in any way do anything. For example, you might want to run perhaps a motorcycle program but Transport for NSW have got one that they have sort of been working on and it is going to be another nine months before they do it, but because they have got it on the backburner then, no, you cannot get funding for that. Those sorts of issues are really difficult.

Having to get artwork approved and then sometimes—there is a case at the moment where a group has done a really good project. They have put it together, they have taken it to Transport for approval and been told, "Ooh, we like this! This is looking good. Yes, we'll take this over". Now they cannot get approval because it is going to become a statewide program. In a way that is a really good compliment to the people who have done the work, that it is being taken on board. However, one, they cannot deliver what they had planned on delivering because now the artwork on it, too, which has been put on hold; two, they will get no credit for that, so as an RSO that is really, really annoying; and, thirdly, how do they deliver what they are supposed to be delivering this year? There are lots of issues and lots of difficulties. Also, at times it leads to RSOs or councils deciding to go under the radar and actually not notify RMS or Transport about what they are doing.

Fortunately, that is something I do not have to do at the moment but I have done it in the past, where I have said, "I am not even going to try and get this approved. I am going to do it my way and we will ask

forgiveness rather than asking permission". Getting a lot of public support of that program does tend to mean that you get that, "Okay, you have done it now, but you should not have done it that way", which is not really good. We find that we work more collaboratively. It is also really difficult when we find out about things at the same time as the media does. There are often launches of things, changes to the road rules and things that come through. I have even had a staff member come to me and say, "Hey Fiona, what's the new rule about" something and I go, "Pardon?" I google it and I find out a media release came out this morning about this particular thing, and as an RSO I knew nothing about that.

**The CHAIR:** You were not informed about it.

**Ms FROST:** That sort of lack of communication can be frustrating. We are supposed to be working together. We are supposed to be a partnership. We are supposed to be the community link to State Government back to our communities. Traditionally that has been a really difficult link.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Frost.

**Ms FROST:** As an RSO we have two masters.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Frost, I just want to go back to something you said earlier. You mentioned the types of challenges with people of a low socio-economic background, and I think you also mentioned the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Can you elucidate that a bit more for the Committee, please? I think it is very important to address that.

**Ms FROST:** Yes. We have a large migrant population which, in our case, has come from countries that do not have particularly strong road safety backgrounds. What I mean by that is, the new baby is born in the hospital. If you love your baby he will carry it, he will cuddle it, he will protect it by holding it in his arms. We know in this country that is no way to transport a child; however, that is the way it is done for many cultures. That is something I spend a lot of time trying to break down, which is that if we love our children we have got to put them in a position where they protected in a crash—

**The CHAIR:** Can I ask you a question—

**Ms FROST:** [Inaudible] a few different car seats and things and that—go on?

**The CHAIR:** I just wondered, because obviously they have to get a car licence and the driver would be aware of the rules and regulations in order to get a car licence in New South Wales.

**Ms FROST:** Should I just jump to that one? Because that is a really, really good point. In fact, when you come to this country you do not need to get a New South Wales driver licence. Under the rules you can drive on your overseas licence until you have permanent residency. Many of our population do not have residency here and they do not have a New South Wales driver licence. That means that when they are driving they actually have not connected at all with what the expectations or the rules are in this country—not just in this State but in this country generally. That is a real problem. Seatbelt rules, car seat rules, intersection rules: a lot of the stuff just goes straight over their head [inaudible]—

**The CHAIR:** I am glad you brought that up, because I was not aware of it myself.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Ms Frost, just a clarifying question: Anecdotally, and I am not asking you to give me any hard data that I can hold you to or anything like that, but do these people driving on foreign licences feature more highly in incidents, accidents, injuries or deaths than the general population?

**Ms FROST:** I will give you the official line. The official line is I cannot give you any data because my crash data does not give ethnicity. Anecdotally, we have had some horrendous crashes. In one of them just last year an elderly couple in their 70s or 80s, a local couple minding their own business driving home at night were T-boned at a cross intersection where they had right of way by a vehicle travelling at excessive speed that failed to stop and, according to the media, was an international licence holder or foreign licence holder who had been in the country for a number of years.

You can imagine the outcome for that community. That young person lived in the community, as well as the elderly couple, so this was not a good combination at all. We have had multiples of those sorts of things where people have come from another country. Another one just before I started was a four- or five-person fatality where the driver had been drinking a large quantity of alcohol and had decided to drive home and he had taken with him a number of people—also family members but of relatively recent arrivals—and four or five people died from that crash. So, yes, it is a problem. It is a real problem.

I think we need to differentiate between our tourist travellers and our long-term residents or long-term arrivals. One of the recommendations that has come to the police is that you are only allowed to drive in this

country or State for a maximum of, for example, for three months before you have to get a New South Wales licence. You can get what is called a "Q" licence, which means you do not have residency but it gives you a New South Wales address. It means you have demerit points on your licence and all those other things. Demerit points mean nothing for somebody who does not have a New South Wales licence. That old system does not work.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Frost. Unfortunately, our time is up and we have the next witness waiting. Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. We may send you some additional questions in writing and any replies will form part of your evidence and be made public. Are you happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Ms FROST:** Absolutely. I have some paperwork that I put together and I am happy to send that through to you. I also have some information from a colleague about total effects, which I am happy to send.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Frost, in the discussions we just had regarding licences and people coming to the country, could you put that in writing to us as well, please?

**Ms FROST:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** Because that is very important and something that we should be addressing.

**Ms FROST:** I have it in my notes already, so it is already covered.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you and thank you again for your time.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**SAL PETROCCITTO**, Chief Executive Officer, National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Before we proceed, do you have any questions about the hearing process?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** No, Chair, I am comfortable with the committee process and I acknowledge the efforts and work of the Committee to try to reduce the fatalities and injuries on our Australian roads.

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to make an opening statement before we begin questions?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes, I would. Thank you for the opportunity to join you today. My name is Sal Petroccitto and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The regulator is Australia's dedicated regulator for all heavy vehicles, including trucks and buses. Our national headquarters is based in Brisbane and we officially opened for business in 2013. Our functions are established by the Heavy Vehicle National Law. We are the regulator and have staff in four of the six participating jurisdictions: South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and, most recently, Victoria. We are currently working with New South Wales and Queensland to transition the services around heavy vehicles to the regulator. Our fundamental first rule is the safety of our industry and the broader community.

We are committed to continuously moving towards the concept of being a modern regulator and to improve safety. This means encouraging development of safety capabilities of the industry and supply chains, embracing new and effective approaches to target those great safety risks and recognising modern approaches and technology to improve safety outcomes, including fatigue detection technologies and the use of modern, safer vehicles. As the Committee would appreciate, there are many players in this space and it is our drive to ensure that they do the right thing. We also believe that many of the operators that play in the heavy vehicle space do endeavour to do so. We will continue to have the appropriate methods in play to continue positive behaviour towards safety.

The Committee might be aware that a couple of days ago with the Federal Government we announced projects that were successful in round five of the Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative programs. There are now 26 programs that have been announced, which will see close to \$6 million worth of funding. The projects aimed at delivering grassroots outcomes focused on saving lives on roads and reducing road trauma. Some of the projects include mental health and support for drivers, education and training campaigns and developing and testing new safety technologies. So far under the Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative programs that are Commonwealth funded, 62 grants and close to \$17 million has been invested in improving local safety outcomes. Our submission to the Committee focused particularly on the benefits of performance-based standard [PBS] vehicles and the focus of these modern, safer vehicles to improve safety.

The premise of PBS is to match the right vehicle to the task. Its focus on performance of the vehicle, rather than prescriptive dimension, mass and lengths, means we can aim to get the right type of vehicle on the right type of activity. As a regulator we keep striving to adopt more efficient risk-based approaches to how we do business, and PBS is one such scheme that underpins that approach. We know through research that performance-based vehicles are safer—the National Transport Commission has demonstrated that through their recent research where 46 per cent fewer major crashes per kilometre occur when these newer, safer vehicles are utilised. We also now know that they are between 15 per cent and 30 per cent more productive, which means that there are fewer trucks on the road needing to do the same thing, which means therefore potentially fewer crashes.

The vehicles are also younger, with a median age of less than four years, compared to the traditional 12 years for the general heavy vehicle fleet. A younger fleet, which has considerably better safety technology, is one way that we believe can contribute to better, safer outcomes. I am also pleased to advise the Committee that we now have over 10,000 performance-based vehicles that have been approved and operating on the network. This is made up of more than 25,000 individual units. By now we can see a lot more of these vehicles and, if we ensure that we have the right truck access policy setting in place, we can start to get a greater uptake. We are still limited by certain access restrictions preventing operators from accessing them, but we continue to work closely with road managers, both at a State and local government level, to advise them of the benefits of these types of vehicles.

I also advise the Committee on some of our recent work to help industry to invest in newer and safer technologies. Many new vehicle technologies help drivers to safely operate their vehicles and reduce the number of movements required to complete a particular freight task, and also minimise carbon emissions. While available technologies have progressively increased over recent years, the adoption of these new technologies into the heavy vehicle fleet remains slow. At the end of June we released a national Vehicle Safety and Environmental Technology Uptake Plan, which focuses on removing barriers that prevent truck manufacturers from supplying

trucks with these technologies from their origin markets. Some of those technologies include delayed departure warning, autonomous emergency braking systems and pedestrian and cyclist detection systems.

The plan also includes significant work to educate the industry on how this technology can help them and our drivers deliver freight tasks more safely. The plan has five work packages that contribute to safer vehicle pillars and to the National Road Safety Strategy. We will commence implementation of those packages over the coming months.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Petrocitto, could I just interject for a moment. You mentioned something about the speed limiters on trucks. Are they fitted by the manufacturers?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes. In terms of that question, yes, it is a requirement, or it is a requirement under the law, as you know.

**The CHAIR:** Because I thought it was under the Australian Design Rules [ADR]. So it is a requirement for speed limiters?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes, under the Australian Design Rules?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is right—under ADR, correct.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes, and there is also then the engine management systems that also operate in the vehicles as well, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** That is right. So who regulates them now? I know they were inspected in the past. Are they still being inspected and regulated?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Can I take that question on notice and come back to you?

**The CHAIR:** You certainly can. If they are all fitted these days and if they are still being regulated and inspected, I am wondering how trucks can exceed the speed limit.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes, we will take that question on notice and I will come back to you with some accurate information in relation to the way those engine management systems and those speed devices operate.

**The CHAIR:** I place on record that I have an automotive background.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Okay. Thanks, Chair. Are you okay for me to proceed?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I have a general question. There has been some controversy in the media that some companies are putting pressure on drivers to drive unnecessarily for long periods of time. How do you control that now to make sure the drivers are not being exploited to keep their jobs? I do not want to mention company names at this stage.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** No, that is okay. Within the provisions of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, in 2018 there were new safety duties introduced which really build on the chain of responsibility obligations that apply to the whole supply chain. And, as you know, it is an offence to, in effect, force a driver to do things that are, in effect, contravening the law. What the regulator has been doing, we introduced a confidential reporting line. We have had over 1,300 calls to that line where the industry themselves advised us of certain behaviours or practices where there are concerns. I have a dedicated team of investigators that now work with State police agencies and transport agencies to go out and investigate wherever those situations are we become aware of.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Good.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** And we are in the process of undertaking prosecutions under those particular chains of responsibility. It is a really pertinent question that you have raised, Committee member. With the concerns now around some of these lockdowns during COVID, we released a media release yesterday with the Australian Trucking Association, reminding operators of their obligations under the law do not put undue pressure on drivers to breach their driving hours or their obligations.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Good. Thank you.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Mr Petrocitto, I have a quick question with regard to rest areas and logbooks. In my part of the world I have large distances to cover and very limited options where people with a B-double can pull off the road and take a bit of a break. I am thinking of the example of Little Topar, about 86 kilometres east of Broken Hill. They can currently fit 16 B-doubles, but often more people than that want to pull over and need to pull over for logbook purposes. For the drivers that you are aware of, how much of an issue is the availability of rest areas in order to comply with logbook requirements?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** It is something that is constantly raised with us as an organisation through numerous trucking associations. I think it is fair to say that the availability of rest areas continues to become, and is, a concern. We have actually done a concerted campaign with the caravan industry because one of the concerns that the industry was advising us was that a lot of the grey nomads were also using these facilities. So, we have actually done an education and awareness program to encourage grey nomads to be cognisant of the fact that these facilities are provided for fatigue management requirements and we really want them to keep these locations free so these heavy vehicle drivers can access.

I think it is fair to say, Committee, that probably across the jurisdictions further work in identifying suitable rest area locations would be encouraged. We are starting to see a large number of these large service centre locations where drivers can come in and have a shower and have a meal. But the provision of probably a tiered approach to rest areas is something that we are going to continue to probably push State agencies to consider as part of their broader transport planning requirements. As the freight [inaudible] continues to get [inaudible] we are going to see more movements so the ability to have these facilities will be important.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I have a secondary question on that, Chair. Mr Petroccitto, could you describe what facilities are essential at those trucking rest areas?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** The information that we have, and I will just be clear that the regulator is not the accountable authority in terms of the design or development, but the sort of things that we are being advised by our drivers is to have a safe facility where they can park their trucks safely. So, security is an issue for the industry. An ability to have an area within those facilities which, to some degree, is largely dedicated to the driver—a lot of these large facilities have driver lounges—so, an ability to access a shower, an ability to sit down and have a home-cooked meal, if possible, at one of those areas, an ability to just have some time out away from the general public are the sort of things we are hearing.

One of the challenges that I think is currently moving into this space, and some of the feedback we do get from the drivers, is the availability of what they would consider to be good-quality food. It is an issue in this industry. The important thing is, to this Committee, to understand that the majority of our drivers probably fall into that over-size category, health issues, things that need to be managed, not only in terms of food but also mental health, wellbeing. So, in essence, a safe facility, one that gives them a feeling of security that their vehicle is safe, their own health and wellbeing is safe, the ability to come in and have a shower, rest for a while and have a home-cooked meal, would be some of the requirements that we would like to see continue to be developed as they progress these service centre locations.

If it is a generic sort of rest area, a facility that allows them to park their truck, removes the conflict maybe from light vehicles, a toilet—you would be surprised, probably, how many rest areas do not have toilets. We are seeing an increase of female drivers in this industry as well. It is something that has been made aware—just basic services, such as a clean, open toilet, would be something that would be also—

**The CHAIR:** I am glad you raised that. I have had a lot of constituents contact me about that—there are no facilities or very limited facilities where they can have a break.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Typically who funds those rest areas? Is it piggybacking on garages or service stations, or not?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** I am happy to come back with more detail but what I might do, in terms of my understanding, if it is a large service centre, which normally has a relationship with a facility, whether it is food or fuel, that is normally the service centre that will create that facility.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** So they piggyback off that, yes.

**The CHAIR:** And they talk about the other ones on the side of the road with no facilities. You might see a coffee van or something but there does not seem to be enough of those. If you leave Sydney, heading southbound, the first stop for anybody—not just heavy vehicle operators—is just before Pheasants Nest. I cannot remember what it is called, but that is the first one. There was an accident a couple of weeks ago where a truck went through. That is the first break for anybody. And then if you have traffic—

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes, so, committee member, they are a mix of commercial ventures and then a mix of, I suppose, parking bays or rest areas provided by State authorities through their road planning budgets, and in some cases you might have a local council that might provide some facility because they are heavy vehicle-friendly councils and they may allow heavy vehicles to stop. So it is a mix of commercial and State- and Commonwealth-funded facilities.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Is there a shortfall in relation to that?

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** Yes.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** If we take the advice of the industry, the industry would say to us that they believe that there is a requirement for better quality rest areas. As a regulator, because it is not within our remit, it is not something that we have particularly done a lot of work on but I am happy, in terms of an opinion, I would say if there was an ability to have better quality rest areas, I do not think that would be unwelcome by the industry.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Has the industry thought about this? I will give you an example. There is a company whose drivers pick up their trailer in Sydney. They then drive the trailer to Taree, take that trailer off, put on another trailer and drive it back to Sydney, so every night the driver spends his night in bed with his wife and getting a good night's sleep. It is done in therefore about nine hours so he does not have to worry about hours of driving.

The trailer he take to Taree is picked up by another driver and the driver then drives—and I am talking about a Sydney to Brisbane route—the truck from Taree with that trailer from Sydney to Grafton. He drops the trailer off there. He then picks up another trailer and drives it down to Taree. Another driver is the driver who takes it to Sydney. Similarly, at Grafton a new driver picks up the trailer and takes it to Brisbane and it is turned around there. In other words, instead of being a two-day trip, each of those drivers spends the night in their own bed. Log books are not an issue. There is no time pressure.

Have we looked at the various freight routes across New South Wales and on the East Coast and looked at whether or not this should be a mode of practice that is encouraged for all the trucking companies to look at a three-hop to Brisbane and a three-hop to Melbourne rather than pushing drivers to do two days?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** It is a really good question and I probably know the operator that you are referring to. We have some very, very good operators that operate in this industry but we are also an industry that 76 per cent of it is—or 70 to 80 per cent of it—is made up of one to five truck operators—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, they are small operators.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** A lot of those are owner-operators which probably do not have some of the luxury of some of those sophistications that you have mentioned, Committee members, in that particular operator, who runs an extremely good business. It is a difficult one due to the nature of the industry and the way this industry operates because if you are a sole operator you probably do not have the luxury of being able to drop off from that home and spend the night in your bed.

There is a fair amount of work that probably will start to be done through the review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law around what are some of those fatigue provisions and some of those fatigue requirements. We have probably come back to that earlier discussion that the Committee was having about the adequacy of suitable rest areas and providing those facilities. It is a complex question from the point of view that it is about a commercial operation and the way those commercial operations are done. I think from a regulatory sense, it is about how we remove some of those burdens that impede on the industry in terms of how they operate efficiently and providing the appropriate frameworks to do more of what you have mentioned with that particular operator to ensure that his drivers are really well working within the rigour of the hours.

Committee, what we have probably heard is that the majority of this industry really feels that the span of hours is adequate. It is just some of the provisions and the requirements that could use some better flexibility in terms of when do I rest and when do I drive. That is work that is currently progressing through the national Heavy Vehicle National Law review. We are also doing some work around the utilisation of routine detection technology, which may give operators some better flexibility. But in relation to your specific question, Committee member, a lot of it really comes back to the nature of the operation and whether they have the flexibility to do those good operational practices that you have mentioned.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** That great operator that we are both talking about, one of the things he has implemented is the fatigue technology infrastructure within the trucks—the face monitoring and the blinking of eyes.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Is that something that your organisation would advocate for to make it mandatory in all those long-haul trucks?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** I am glad you raised that. We are actually in the middle of a—we have commenced a trial now so we are in doing some work with the industry. We interviewed over 80 transport and bus companies and they have unanimously told us that this type of technology would be significantly beneficial in their view in preventing accidents before they occur. On the back of that now we have started a program of



work over three years to look at how we can utilise this technology and how we can amend the regulatory frameworks to make this particular technology, I suppose, more commonplace.

As a regulator in terms of a focus on anything we can do to improve outcomes, I would love to see some of that technology mandated. It is something that we need to work through and we are hoping, through the review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, that some of these particular type of technologies become more commonplace. I think, Committee, if we could start to look at the type of regulatory barriers or burdens that are placed on industry, we make it easier for them to adopt. My view is that a lot more of them will adopt. I am actually quite surprised at the number of companies now that are starting to use this detection technology because of the benefits that it provides not only them as an operator but the benefit it gives their drivers. I have spent numerous hours at truck stops talking to drivers who have said, "I won't work for a particular company now that doesn't have this type of investment in my safety."

I think there is a change coming through the industry where they are saying technology now is beneficial and I think that it is definitely timely through committees like yourselves or other work that is being done across the country to really start to look at how this particular technology should become commonplace in certain types of heavy vehicles doing tasks.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Another safety technology device is the interlock system they use for prescribed concentration of alcohol [PCA] and drink-driving.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Do you think that that also should be part of the truck?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** It is a good question. Some of the information that we have been receiving is that alcohol is not so much of an issue anymore in the heavy vehicle industry. There seems to have been a very good amount of work done to really remove the use of alcohol. What we are hearing from some of our police colleagues is probably more the use of illicit drugs.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** I think that is probably more of an issue that probably needs to be worked through over the coming years around what is the appropriate type of blood testing regimes and practices. But from what I hear from police we do not see a lot of alcohol type of usage in this industry anymore. It seems to have stamped itself out. A lot of that comes around those safety obligations, those duties on operators, to ensure that their drivers are fit for purpose and do the right thing. I know that that particular operator that you and I are talking about would have some very strong practices in play about how he allows a driver to get behind the wheel.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Yes. It is just that overnight there was a driver driving a road train who was pulled up with a high-range PCA. I think it was in Moree last night. So there was one.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Wow, okay.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Just a general question: I note in your submission you keep using the terminology "heavy trucks and dogs". Lay people would normally just say heavy truck and trailer, as the questioner has been doing. Why are you using that terminology "truck and dog"?

**The CHAIR:** That is industry terminology.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** The industry commonly refers to them as truck and dog combination. A dog is actually a term that is actually given to the trailer that is behind that dump truck so you either have a pig trailer or a dog trailer. It has got to do with the hitching of the way that trailer works. In the construction industry basically everything that you would see travelling around the Sydney network at the moment with your expansive road program are largely truck and dogs.

Truck and dogs are probably one of the largest adopters of performance-based standards so we are seeing that they are adopting some of those newer provisions but we are also seeing a large number of older combinations. It is a terminology, Committee member, that is well regarded through the industry. It is the way that a trailer is defined by the way it hitches to the truck.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. It is the jargon of the industry.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Well, it is a bit confusing.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes. You can have a pig trailer or a dog trailer.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any questions?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I won't ask why we are calling them pigs or dogs.

**The CHAIR:** How can governments assist with encouraging the development of safety capabilities of the heavy vehicle industry, particularly regarding the use of local roads?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Committee, it is a really, really good question. We think that some of the work that we have started to do, definitely around probably the understanding of how these performance-based standard vehicles can assist in both safety technology and, probably more so importantly, around the removal of the number of truck movements and a lot of the work we are doing is around, I suppose, education and awareness. As a national regulator, I not only have to deal with the State agencies but I also deal with over 400 local governments. It is about going out to those local governments, those engineers, and making them aware of the benefits that come with safer newer vehicles. That is one: So education and awareness.

I think also that there is probably an opportunity to do more in the educational space of both the light user—and by that I mean the light vehicle user. It is interesting. I am a country boy. I was born in Stanthorpe. My parents had an apple orchard so I grew up with trucks. You know, people from the country, sort of, nothing can really knock us around. I think that awareness campaign around how to use local roads and how you operate in those local roads would be something that we would be keen to encourage.

While we do not have a remit at the moment around licensing I think there is probably something around the way licensing is undertaken and, I suppose, a refresher on your licensing and understanding the road conditions. The heavy vehicle industry itself has done a lot to probably improve its commitment to safety. In the majority of cases it is doing a very, very good job. There will always be sectors of any industry where you will have a cohort that just do not want to play by the rules but in most cases there is a lot of investment in safety and training. I think it is how we do that with the light vehicle users as well because in the majority of cases—in 80 per cent of cases where there is a fatality with a heavy vehicle, it is not the heavy vehicle driver's fault. It is normally the light vehicle.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry to interrupt you, but for the benefit of the Committee, some may not be aware of what a light vehicle is. Could you explain that to some of the Committee members by tonnage, et cetera?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes. I think the best way to explain it is what constitutes a heavy vehicle. Anything above four and a half tonnes is constituted as a heavy vehicle. If you are below four and a half tonnes you fall into a light vehicle or a light commercial vehicle. So your cars and your utes are a light vehicle, your little trucks that deliver your Coles online order, they would fall into the light vehicle category. Above four and a half tonnes you are a heavy vehicle. Below four and half tonnes you are considered a light commercial vehicle or a bike.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** A car. But I think it is both. I think it is an educational thing. It is working with road authorities and local governments to comprehend the benefits that come from safer newer vehicles and manage to get them onto the network. There is probably no one silver bullet. I think there is a broad program of work that would need to be done, Committee.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. What percentage of heavy vehicles is inspected annually by the RMS?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Chair, I will have to take that on notice because I do not have control at the moment of those transport inspections in my clutches. I can get that figure for you but I do not know off the top of my head.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Are there any other questions?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you, Chair. I just want to get up to speed on this but a little while ago on main roads—Transport for NSW roads—we introduced staged traffic lights so that heavy vehicles could continue through or take off faster because it takes a while to move through the gear changes to accelerate and keep up with the flow of traffic. I just want to get your feedback on what drivers of those heavy vehicles thought of that whole idea of allowing them to go forward before the rest of the traffic takes off at the lights. Does everyone know what I am talking about with that trial?

**The CHAIR:** Like the buses in some areas?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Mr Petroccitto, you might wish to elaborate on that.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes, thank you, Committee member. Yes, I was aware—I think it was in the period when Minister Pavey was the transport Minister.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Transport for NSW instigated what is largely almost like a traffic light pre-emptive technology which identifies, as a heavy vehicle approaches a set of traffic lights, depending on the cycle, it might top the green cycle longer, which means that the heavy vehicle can continue to traverse through the network to the crossing without having to stop and the resultant congestion delays [inaudible.] It was actually some local technology that was developed by the Queensland Government when they were using it for emergency vehicles. They used it in Queensland to provide fire engines and ambulances priority at intersections. My understanding from that trial, although I have not seen the final figures, is that it was well received from the point of view it allowed the heavy vehicle to continue to move.

I think the beneficial impact to the network was that there is probably less congestion because, as she would appreciate, if you are a 68 tonne B-double and you have got to go through the gears and you are four or five cars back, by the time you probably get to the lights they are red again. It is smart technology. Unfortunately, Committee, I am not sure where the next phase of that program will work as it progresses, but from discussions that I have had with some industry operators they did see the benefit of that type of technology. It is probably something that should be considered in the future around both congestion management and the ease of heavy vehicles within an urban environment.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Chair, perhaps through you, we might be able to explore where that is at to see if that needs to be brought in permanently.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Thank you.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** If the feedback has been good from the users that would benefit from that and the traffic, I would like to have a little bit more background knowledge of what they found from that trial.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Preston. We will do that.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Committee, I believe that it is Transport for NSW. I am not aware whether it was the Centre for Road Safety that was leading this or another part of the department.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I know you touched on some of this earlier, but are there any other ways in which we can improve road safety planning for local roads to assist in ensuring lower potential road trauma incidents involving heavy vehicles?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Chair, it is a really, really good question. My actual professional background is as a land use planner. I spent 14 and a half years working with the Brisbane City Council. So we were not small and were probably a large local government. I would like to think about that maybe in a couple of ways. I think it comes back to the whole land use planning approach as well with the way land use planning and development is done within these particular locations, where industrial precincts are developed, the way the road hierarchy is done and designed. From a planning perspective, I think if there is closer interaction between the traffic planners and the land use planners, that should hopefully start to see some benefits in the way the network operates.

As a planner, it was always interesting to watch—you know, you would invest a lot of money to design a town by-pass to keep the trucks out of town but then you allow a residential development to be built next to a town by-pass, which then would put more pressure on it. So we have been trying as an organisation to work with the agencies around: How does land use planning better integrate to transport planning? That is one way to do that. I think also probably the way the road hierarchy is designed and developed—and by that I mean the type of access arrangements that can be provided as you design and build roads to make it easier for trucks to get in and out. That reduces some of those potential conflicts.

In the local environments I am pretty sure the Committee would have probably heard that local governments are finding it difficult to maintain networks. The cost of maintaining and sustaining networks I think continues to be an issue that will probably continue. We see that from an access perspective as we start to work with the industry to provide better access. Chair, I do not think it is a simple question but I think it does come back to that whole planning.

**The CHAIR:** Planning.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** When you start to plan, how you integrate land use planning with transport planning?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, good point. Out of interest, would you know what percentage of trucks are on daylight and how many or what percentage are on night-time?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Interesting.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** No. Unfortunately I do not have that figure off the top of my head. I can ask my data people if we have a rough idea, Committee, and if I do, I can come back to the secretariat for you.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. I was just thinking about traffic congestion and just to see what the percentage is—daytime versus night-time—and whether, maybe to ease some of the congestion, if was possible at all for some—

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Chair, you raised—sorry, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** No, I will let you proceed.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** I was just going to say: You raise a really interesting point. We have been heavily involved in the COVID response and what we have been trying to do as a national regulator is try to get consistency across the country. One of the things that the industry found extremely beneficial during this whole program was the easing of some of the curfews that are placed on the industry by local governments. That has meant this industry is now able to plan across a whole cycle. They are not having to rush to get to a particular shopping centre at a particular time because they are going to get locked out. I know that this is a very contentious issue at the moment.

**The CHAIR:** I understand that it is, but I wanted to raise it. I know that if you can move things around a little bit more you could actually make the traffic flow a lot better, particularly in city and metropolitan areas. If there is a bit more flexibility from some of the companies in allowing the trucks to go at their different hours, it would certainly make life easier for everybody.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** I am 100 per cent behind your comment. You would not get an industry operator who would object to your comments. I think that it would remove a whole lot of [inaudible] in the industry. It would potentially remove some of those congestion tight spots. You can get these trucks operating in a time frame that removes a lot of that interface. As a planner, it is not simple to manage that because you are always going to have that conflict between resident and service. My view is that if you move into an apartment in a residential development which has a supermarket on the ground floor, you should expect to get some noise. So it is about how you communicate that.

**The CHAIR:** I totally understand. It is like if you buy a house under a flight path.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** That is correct.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I wanted to further elaborate on that. Good planning by councils going forward—if there is a shopping centre, often it springs up in a housing estate because of the convenience of that locality. It would be good to look at ways of having underground freight drop and delivery points in open car parks so that the vehicles could go underneath the shopping centres and unload where there is no noise.

**The CHAIR:** It is very hard because of the turning circle of a truck.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That is what you would need to allow for—a drive-through. The heights going under would have to be considered too.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it is hard unless you do something like that.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It is all about good urban planning, isn't it?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** That is why my comment to you earlier about that whole land use planning and transport planning interface is so critical. While we do not have a jurisdictional role there, we are in a position to advocate for better integration between land use planning and transport planning. In any sense, a planning scheme will always identify where a commercial precinct will be built and where a residential precinct will be built. However, when you buy a house not many people look at town planning and say, "There is going to be a commercial venture built there in the future so I am going to get some noise." It is a complex one.

If I could leave one thing with the Committee, the one thing that we have heard constantly over the last four months that the industry has found beneficial is the relaxing of the curfews on our freight movement in urban environments. I know that is going to be a difficult issue in some Sydney councils. I appreciate that. But if you consider removing the interface and conflict between a heavy truck and an individual or a car, we might need to look differently at what a world-class international city looks like. Sydney is one of those. What does 24/7 operations look like if we are really holistically looking at that framework?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** As a resident of the northern beaches, I have noticed that a big apartment block has opened in which Woolworths is renting the ground floor. All of these big trucks are coming into that apartment block. Is there any restriction on that?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That is a typical northern beaches question. It is a good point.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** I would not know what conditions would be imposed on that particular development. As a land use planner, I would suggest that in that development approval there would be some condition of operation and hours of operations. That probably goes back to the earlier discussion around what additional pressures that puts on the road network. Without understanding that particular application I am unable to comment accurately for you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. We may send you some additional questions in writing. Your replies will form part of your evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Yes. If those questions fall within the remit of our organisation and we can respond, we will.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for your time. It has been very informative.

**Mr PETROCCITTO:** Thank you for the opportunity. Have a great day and stay safe.

**The CHAIR:** You too.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**PHILIP DEVON**, Manager, Transport Network, Northern Beaches Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**ROBYNANN DIXON**, Road Safety Officer, Northern Beaches Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**CRAIG SAWYER**, Executive Manager, Transport and Civil Infrastructure, Northern Beaches Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Before we proceed, do you have any questions about the hearing process?

**Mr DEVON:** No.

**Ms DIXON:** No.

**Mr SAWYER:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Would any of you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

**Mr DEVON:** Northern Beaches Council is an amalgamation of Manly, Warringah and Pittwater councils. Formed in 2016, the census put the population at just over 266,000 residents. That is a 6.4 per cent increase on the previous census. It is served by public transport including buses, ferries and ridesharing services. We have no heavy rail or light rail. Previously, the transport system on the northern beaches has been linear from the city towards Palm Beach, without a lot of cross-Sydney connections. That has left a lot of our residents relying on single-use private cars. We have got higher than average private vehicle ownership across the area. Sixty per cent travel by car to work with only 11 per cent taking public transport. The congestion on and eroding of the road network is considerable.

Generally, there is a focus on vehicles rather than people when it comes to the road network on the northern beaches. That is something that we are looking at changing through various initiatives that we are running. We have small pockets of non-English-speaking migrants. We have got a large Tibetan community in the Dee Why area. Our area has over 80 schools, including high schools and a couple of special schools. Thirty per cent of the population is attending these schools, plus the local TAFE colleges. You have all received a copy of our transport strategy, which is our guiding document when it comes to how we are looking to proceed with transport in the road network on the northern beaches.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Are you waiting for us to confirm that we have got a copy of it?

**Mr DEVON:** Yes.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** We certainly do.

**Mr DEVON:** That was adopted by council two years ago and we are currently in the process of delivering the seven operational plans that sit within the document. I provided a copy to the Committee of the ones that have been adopted by council, including a road safety plan. Robynann Dixon, who is here with us, is one of our two road safety officers—whose positions are partly funded by Transport for NSW as well. But they are permanent staff, not contract staff. If the funding was not there they would still be on staff to provide the road safety function within our transport team.

**The CHAIR:** In your submission you state, "There needs to be a recognition that education and behavioural change campaigns are needed in conjunction with infrastructure improvements." What kind of campaigns are needed and how should they be implemented?

**Ms DIXON:** Certainly behavioural campaigns. One of the things that we struggle with is not really understanding much about behavioural change. We do not have the skills. I would like to see that that is something that Transport for NSW could provide us with. Things like profiles on who our residents are, how to communicate from a behavioural perspective. Some of the specific things that I can talk about, for example, we get inquiries that people should slow down. There is this expectation that council should do some infrastructure change, things like, as I mentioned, putting in speed bumps, putting slow down signs, rather than putting campaigns or slowing down and speeding [inaudible]. We get requests for no parking signs to go next to just about everybody's driveway, because everyone has trouble now with getting out of driveways with the line of sight. Obviously, with this problem that everyone has, we have more congestion, more population, more road users and then everyone expects the council to come along.

What I am doing, for example, with that specific one about getting out of driveways is you are trying to cross two directions of traffic if you are trying to turn right—invariably that is often the problem. I am trying to

do a campaign of turn left and I try and say, "Well, you'll probably save time because you are sitting there waiting, waiting, waiting and you will certainly have less stress," but people have this concept that it is faster to turn right—so that is another one. Around schools we are trying to promote park and walk, because obviously we all talk about the problem around schools where every single parent and family carer are wanting to drop kids right off at the school gate, and that just causes so much risky behaviour with vehicles double parking, parking across driveways. If we can have a campaign to encourage people that it is actually better from different behavioural perspectives, whatever that might be, to park a short distance away—something like that to reduce the risk. It is an interesting change now.

We have been a bit disappointed with the COVID response from the Government saying that people should be driving and not using public transport, so that has actually increased our frustrations around schools. You mentioned the Department of Education—we find that local schools, especially public schools, will not or cannot take responsibility beyond their fence, which is exactly where the problems are. If there was some way that there could be an extended responsibility or resources—they always say that they do not have resources to deal with things outside the fence.

**The CHAIR:** How can a school take responsibility outside of their gates?

**Ms DIXON:** I do not know.

**The CHAIR:** And why would you expect them to?

**Ms DIXON:** I do not know. You are asking me what the problems are—the problems are outside the fence. I do not know how that can be addressed and where that responsibility is.

**Mr DEVON:** The available kerb space in that situation is sort of—it is a balancing act of parents dropping the kids off, the safety requirement and also the local residents around. We get a lot of complaints from residents who live close to schools—queueing up around the school between pickup and drop-off time—and you sort of explain to them that it is only 15 minutes morning and afternoon that impacts. But the risk potential during that 15 minutes for something to go horribly wrong—especially with the current situation where there is not as many kids catching the buses, obviously. That is the other issue. If you live outside the given distance, that is fine, you get a bus pass, but where the kids are walking to the local school that is a big issue at the moment because parents do not want them walking, because of the congestion on the roads, because everyone is driving and not catching public transport as well that is adding to the problem.

**The CHAIR:** What did you say the percentage was of people that drive there due to lack of transport?

**Ms DIXON:** About 60 per cent driving to work.

**Mr DEVON:** We are also running a safer schools project at the moment where, holistically, we are doing road safety audits around the local school network. We had about 25 percent of the local schools present at a meeting that we had late last year to workshop a whole heap of their problems and programs that they were running. Some of the schools actually manage quite well. North Balgowlah, for instance, did a walking bus to school—it is a different demographic. Where you have got a lot of congestion around a school people are less likely to walk. Whether they cross a State road, for instance, parents are less likely to let their kids walk to school.

From a safety perspective, they want to drop them to the school. A couple of the private schools create issues with this pickup and drop-off time as well, where it is now not safe within the road network because of the congestion and then they actually make the congestion worse because they will queue up on the public road. That is part of the traffic management for the school as well.

**The CHAIR:** That is a problem, isn't it?

**Ms DIXON:** It is a problem. Just a couple of other things, we have got bicycles—we would like to improve our sustainability transport options. I spoke with quite a number of different RMS representatives about whether they were doing anything to encourage safer bike riding on the roads, but everyone seemed to say, "No, that's too big an issue." So we have been looking into that and that is definitely a behavioural change for all the road users to be willing to share the road. We get some very negative responses when we put up information about bike riding in the community.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Does council have a pedestrian and cycleway strategy and how long is that for?

**Mr DEVON:** Our bike plan was adopted at the July council meeting, which is the four-year delivery plan for putting in a shared path, and also all of the on-road safe cycling network. We have also got a walking plan that was adopted 18 months ago, so we are in the second year of delivery for a footpath program where we are aiming to deliver between five and 10 kilometres of footpath each year.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Given the nature of the age of a lot of the homes in that area there were not a lot of footpaths that cropped up with the estates that were being built at the time, because it was grassed to the kerb.

**Mr DEVON:** Correct.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** So you are retrofitting areas as well, and that is quite costly for council?

**Mr DEVON:** Yes, it is, and you have got a lot of the residents quite happy with the way their street is at the moment. They do not want concrete footpaths. They want to be able to walk conveniently but it is not a must-have in some of the streets. We have gone to pains to say to them a lot of the streets probably are not designed to have a footpath constructed—little cul-de-sacs in residential areas—and it is better to make the road environment safe for pedestrians to use the road environment rather than build a concrete footpath to 10 houses.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** But would you not have a criteria that you rate streets on—given that if they are close to a school you are going to attract a lot of pedestrian traffic, or to shopping centres—so there would be a regime that perhaps ratepayers would understand of where you can retrofit? I am from The Hills Shire Council—some 12 years there—and we spent \$60 million over five years in retrofitting particularly the older parts of the council areas, because you have an ageing population that needs to walk safely. You do not want to encourage them on the roads, even if they are quieter roads. You want to get them off the roads and you want to have a safe path for them to travel, and also young families with prams and trikes and things like that. Is that a strategy going forward that you are wanting to implement?

**Mr DEVON:** Yes. Basically we have got an assessment tool attached to both the footpath plan and the bike plan on how we prioritise the delivery of that infrastructure. A prime example is we recently did a shared path along Allambie Road at Allambie. Originally a lot of the older residents were like, "We don't want a shared path because that just makes it unsafe for us". They were thinking it was going to be used as a—one of them said it was going to be like a velodrome. I went out and met with some of the residents at one of the aged care facilities there recently and they are ecstatic at the delivery—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes, they would love it. It is really well received in aged areas.

**Mr DEVON:** Yes, because they can use their mobility scooters. It is 2½ metres wide and they actually feel safer using it, whereas before they were on and off the road and around power poles and they were not very comfortable with getting to the local shops.

**Mr SAWYER:** But again that connects from a series of aged care facilities and other education facilities for disabled people in that area through to the local school, shops and park at Allambie Heights and then connects into the wider cycle network [inaudible].

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I presume council would be looking—if there is a proposal for an aged care facility you would look at the developer contributions to look at adequate footpath areas leading up to shopping centres and places of convenience as well?

**Mr DEVON:** Correct. Historically a lot of the older areas have one-metre wide footpaths, 1.2-metre wide footpaths. Our new minimum standard is 1½ metres because of the mobility scooters, the interactions between pedestrians going in both directions, that sort of thing.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Which keeps them off the road.

**Mr SAWYER:** [Inaudible] Yes. Then around high pedestrian activity areas the footpath grows wider again until we get into town centres where it is probably 3½ metres wide.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I congratulate you on experimenting with different speed limits, particularly in residential streets with a 30 kilometre per hour speed limit. What has been the response to that trial?

**Mr DEVON:** It has only been in place for just on a month. Initially we received a reasonable amount of pushback from the local residents because the perception was it was slowing them down even further. When you actually drive those streets you probably do not reach the 30 kilometres per hour mark anyway at most times of the day, just due to the nature of where that trial is being run. When you speak to them one on one they get that it is a much safer speed to be travelling at where you have got that volume of pedestrians and cyclists sharing the road.

**Mr SAWYER:** But the area where that has been implemented is the Manly beachfront and town centre area. I drive through there quite regularly. On a normal day with the number of vehicles that are parking and manoeuvring and the number of pedestrian crossings that we have and other issues that happen in that locality it is very difficult to exceed 30 kilometres an hour. I did drive through there about an hour ago and with this weather,



yes, I could do 45 kilometres an hour, but that is because no-one is at the beach and no-one was outside. But it is a much safer speed to travel at, and with cyclists mixing on the road in a lot of cases it is much safer for them as well, which then makes the footpath areas much safer for pedestrians.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I live in that area, so I have been experiencing the 30 kilometres per hour speed limit and I thought it was very helpful. I encourage you to keep that as a trial. I also have been impressed with the traffic signals that you have installed with the countdown timers. That gives you a lot more confidence as to when to cross the road and so on. Did you have good positive feedback from the locals on that?

**Mr DEVON:** Yes, the process with the countdown timers is you get to a point where you need to use different signal phasing to allow that to be implemented. When you implement something like that it takes a while for people to actually get used to the whole change in the signal phasing. Generally people who are using the timed signal crossings do actually benefit from it and the drivers get used to the extra delay at that point as well.

**Mr SAWYER:** I think Manly is also an area that gets a lot of overseas travellers, and they are very familiar with that style of traffic pedestrian signal from overseas experiences. It is becoming more widely used across Sydney and other places around the State, so I think it is a positive thing as well.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** In your submission you said that the pedestrian countdown timer should be mandatory in high pedestrian activity areas. As I said earlier, I have experienced it and I felt it was very helpful to know when to cross the road and so on—you watch that timer.

**Mr DEVON:** It also has the benefit that it stops that last-minute running out just as the traffic starts flowing, because people are looking for cars coming and that sort of thing and they are not conceptually aware that, hang on, there is a pedestrian who is about to dart out because they are running late for a bus or, in Manly, running late for the ferry or whatever. It gives the pedestrians that clarity that, "Okay, I have only got X number of seconds left to cross. Do I commence that leg in the journey or do I actually just wait for the next signal to go?".

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Good. Again, I found them very positive. I encourage you to maintain them and increase the number of them. Finally, I note in your submission you have classified certain motorists as "negative motorists". What is a negative motorist?

**Ms DIXON:** I will respond to that. That is not something that we have classified. It was subject to research that we did. I mentioned that we were talking about looking into ways that we can promote sustainable transport, specifically to encourage more people riding their bicycles on the road. We engaged a research organisation to look at what we could do. They researched with a thousand local people to find out what was their approach to having bicycles on the road. That is where they gave the title "negative motorists". They found that of those one thousand people interviewed that 40 per cent had a negative approach to life, negative approach to anything that we wanted to do and that they would be negative to change and negative to being spoken to as to how they should behave. That is the background of the negative motorists' perspective.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Is there any proposal to change that "negative motorist" attitude?

**Ms DIXON:** Certainly, yes, that is something that we are looking at now and it is somewhere where I would love to have some additional help from Transport for NSW in relation to training and doing behavioural change. At the moment we are specifically promoting information about why and how bicyclists use the road and what the road rules are. We are hoping that knowledge will help to change behaviours, so that is the approach we are currently taking.

**The CHAIR:** I go back to Fred Nile's question, when you said that 43 per cent of road users—and I presume that they are locals, people who live in your council area were the ones—

**Ms DIXON:** Predominantly.

**The CHAIR:** So 43 per cent of them were negative—in life itself they were not happy. So, almost half your population is not happy?

**Ms DIXON:** As a witness—

**The CHAIR:** Because I know that Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is very happy.

**Ms DIXON:** That is just when they are on the road.

**The CHAIR:** You can always move down our way—everyone is happy there. In regards to bicycles, consider the problems you have up there. Areas were built a long time ago and they never had the foresight to see that one down we would become the Jetsons age, for those that remember *The Jetsons*. There are a lot of issues and a lot of the roads in those areas are very narrow so, when it comes to bicycles—and a lot of bicycle riders

obey the laws, are very responsible and very courteous towards drivers, but there are also a lot of them who are not. What happens is that they take up most of the road and you also have to give them 1½ metres, which means you are forced to go right over to the other side of the road. If they are going to work or things like that, it becomes frustrating for people—it is the type of life we are living these days. You know, life is becoming faster and faster and everyone is becoming time poor. How do you with a happy equilibrium for everyone? That is certainly a challenge.

**Mr DEVON:** Yes, that is the balancing act that we try to achieve every day—balancing the use of the road by cyclists within what is basically a movement corridor where everyone is rushing to get to their next five-minute appointment. And you are right, many of the roads were never designed for that use of traffic.

**The CHAIR:** They were just not designed for it. The shared pathways are a lot better.

**Mr SAWYER:** Yes, and we are trying to build more shared pathways that connect through to transport nodes such as the B-line bus stops and, obviously, Manly Wharf and other significant attractions that are typically in the Manly area—around the beachfront and the shopping districts and that sort of thing. And then making facilities there for them to keep their bike until they come back and that sort of thing. We are continuing to work in those areas.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** And bike lanes.

**Mr SAWYER:** Yes.

**Ms DIXON:** Can I also just comment that it is interesting the idea of cars being held up by bikes, which is correct; however, a recent study in Sydney showed that in a one-hour journey for a car travelling in Sydney, because there are so many hold-ups, if you kept giving way to people all the time—such as bicycles—you would lose three minutes in a one-hour journey. I think the idea that—and this is where I think a behavioural change campaign could be useful, although I do not know the extent of how it could be—there are so many other things that we are used to, such as traffic lights that we stop at. We might get frustrated, but we know that that is part of the journey. A car accident will also hold us up. So there are so many things on the road that already hold us up but there is the idea that we do not want bicycles on the road to hold us up. I just throw that in as another perspective.

**The CHAIR:** This is just my opinion, but there are some roads that I believe pose a high risk to bicycle riders. I come from a country area and there are some roads there—80 kilometre, 100 kilometre roads—which are narrow and have potholes and everything else. When you have someone on a pushbike in an 80-kilometre or 100-kilometre zone and you come around a corner they are there and they have to go more or less in the middle of the road because there is no—

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Two abreast.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, and that poses a high risk to the bicycle riders and to anyone who is driving a car, or a truck, or a bus or a motorcycle.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** You will have an accident then.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it is an accident. So, the problems you have in suburbia and metropolitan areas are very different to the issues in country areas.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** I have a quick question that is also easy. Prior to amalgamation—you amalgamated three councils into one and currently have two RSOs [road safety officers]—what was the strength of RSOs?

**Mr DEVON:** Two or three.

**Ms DIXON:** Three. We had one per area. So, we have lost one in amalgamation.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** But still servicing the same number of schools, the same number of streets, the same number of everything?

**Ms DIXON:** Yes, and so we also lost the funding that went with that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for joining us today, we all sincerely appreciate it. We may send you some additional questions in writing and your replies will form part of your evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Mr DEVON:** Yes, we are happy to do that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**JASON ANTONY**, Vice-Chairman, Motorcycle Council of NSW, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**BRIAN WOOD**, Secretary, Motorcycle Council of NSW, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Before we proceed, do you have any questions about the formalities of the hearing process?

**Mr ANTONY:** No.

**Mr WOOD:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Would either of you like to make a short opening statement before the Committee begins its questions?

**Mr WOOD:** I would like to make a short statement. Just to clarify a bit more about our submission regarding local governments adopting and being familiar with the Safe System approach. My feeling is—I have had a case where I have tried to contact my local council, which is one of the few councils that has adopted the Safe System approach, but in that exchange of emails about an issue that I had regarding speed cushions I do not think he really understood the approach that Safe System is a proactive approach. The discussion was around crashing. Clearly no-one had had a crash history regarding these speed cushions but the idea of the Safe System approach is that it says to be proactive and identify when there is a hazard and remove the hazard before there is a crash.

Also, a lot of councils say, "Oh, we can't adopt it because we do not have funding to do it," but I have never seen anything in the documentation regarding the Safe System approach that it is subject to funding requirements. Also, I guess the concern is that when they do do treatments it is not at the benefit of one road user group over another. They do do treatments to improve the safety of car drivers and occupants. Sometimes those treatments are at the expense of motorcycle safety.

I would also just like to raise the social model. I am currently involved with the Federal Office of Road Safety regarding the preparation of the next National Road Safety Strategy and in that they are adopting what they are calling the "social model" where it puts the individual at the centre of the process and then you develop around that into a community and in organisations. So, I see if that approach is adopted at the national level then I would be expecting New South Wales would also adopt it. That would be an opportunity for motorcyclists to have more direct contact with their local councils and their local road safety officers regarding road safety issues that they might have. I can see if that approach is adopted it can benefit motorcyclists. That is all I would like to say at this stage.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Wood. You state that very few local government resources are allocated to address motorcycle road trauma. How can that be improved and how can the safety of motorcycle riders be improved on local roads?

**Mr WOOD:** As I say, I do not think many road safety officers have had much experience with motorcycle issues. Those that have, I think, have been quite successful in approaching motorcyclists. Sometimes they are quite surprised that motorcyclists are interested in their safety. I think you would usually find that motorcyclists are passionate about what they do. Given the opportunity to express an opinion and to be involved, they usually take up that opportunity quite readily. I think, really, perhaps with the road safety officers, they need to have more training or more involvement about motorcycle safety issues. As I say, those who do get involved usually find the experience to be beneficial and perhaps not as frightening as they might initially feel.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. What are they called? I know in the motorcycle world we call them "cheese cutters". For the benefit of the members—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** What is a cheese cutter?

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** A wire barrier.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Wood?

**Mr WOOD:** A cheese cutter is a wire rope barrier.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you. I get the picture now.

**Mr WOOD:** That type of barrier is being rolled out more in New South Wales. Also quite a lot of it has now been installed in Victoria. I guess it is referred to as "cheese cutters" because riders have concerns that the rope will act as a cheese cutter. But, really, the research indicates what you need to worry about is the post.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** The post is the thing that brings you to a sudden stop and can cause you quite significant injuries. What happens with the ropes is that the rope basically directs you to the first post. That is where you have the problem. But it has also been shown that, wire rope barriers, motorcyclists do not collide with them that often because they are usually—

**The CHAIR:** Low.

**Mr WOOD:** —installed on straight stretches of road. Where motorcyclists usually come into contact with a roadside barrier is in corners and that is usually—well, it is normally referred to as an "Armco barrier" but more correctly it is a "guardrail". At a number of places they have installed a rub rail underneath the guardrail to protect riders who have fallen off from coming into contact with the bottom of the post. We are pressing to include a rub rail on the top to cover the tops of the posts because 50 per cent of the time a rider is still on the bike when they do come off and come into contact with a barrier. So by putting a rub rail at the bottom you are only addressing part of the problem. You do need to have something on the top to protect the tops of the posts. So, really, I think riders should not just be concerned about wire rope; they should be concerned about all types of barriers.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Wood. Mr Butler has a question.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** I have three questions so cut me off, Chair, when you are ready. I have been a motorcyclist since the age of five. I have never got off a bike—on the road and the dirt—so I am still used to it but I know a lot of people get off a bike due to family or career and then, when they have the money and the time, they decide to get back into it. So I am wondering whether in your experience, and for you, are we doing enough for people returning to motorcycling after a hiatus of maybe 20 years, given that bikes are a bit different now to what they were 20 years ago and the skills and reflexes might not be what they were when they were half the age?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes. Our approach is that rider training should be a whole-of-riding-career experience, not just at the novice stage. So even riders who have been riding continuously, they should be seeking training. And certainly those who are returning to riding—they are the ones we call "returnees"—should certainly get some training. As you say, bikes have probably changed significantly since they last rode and, as you say, their reflexes and perhaps their riding skills are not what they used to be. Part of the difficulty is to identify who is a returnee. You would say if someone has been off the bike for 20 years then they are certainly a returnee. But somebody like riders for the ambulance service, if their riders have been off the bike for six weeks they consider them to be a returnee and they get them to do a refresher course before they get back on a bike for the ambulance service.

So identifying who is a returnee is somewhat difficult. It also comes about that once you have got that endorsement for a motorcycle on your licence, it remains there. There is no process by which you have to renew it so that if you have a car licence, then the two licences are on the same licence so if you can continue to drive and keep your licence up to date, that endorsement for a motorcycle licence remains there.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you. Back to the front end of a motorcycling career, the current rider testing and learner approved motorcycles [LAM] system. Do you have any commentary? Do you think we are adequate? Have we got the balance right?

**Mr WOOD:** I think we certainly have got the balance right. I think that the New South Wales rider training scheme whereby you do two half-days before you are able to get a learner's permit and then do an additional day's training and a riding test prior to getting your provisional license is an excellent scheme. It is definitely something that New South Wales should be proud of. I forget the second part of your question.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** LAMs—the list of approved motorcycles, power to weight and all that sort of thing.

**Mr WOOD:** Certainly, again, an excellent scheme. It certainly has changed the landscape regarding what learners and provisional riders are riding. Back in the day you were restricted to a 250 and riders would get, I guess, the quickest 250 they could get their hands on with the intention that they were only going to hold onto it up until, you know, as soon as they could get rid of it. You know, the intention was that it was not a bike that they were going to keep so they tended to perhaps thrash it and pass it on as quickly as possible. The LAM scheme has changed that totally in that now learner and provisional riders are buying a bike which they intend to keep for some time so they tend to look after it better and I guess ride it perhaps in a more appropriate manner.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Excellent.

**Mr WOOD:** And of the sales of bikes, LAMs has actually the largest segment of road bikes, so they are over 50 per cent of road bikes sold are actually LAMs-approved bikes.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Fantastic.

**Mr ANTONY:** I would like to add that having the larger engine provides a rider with more torque, which helps them get out of problems they have in a hazardous situation.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Absolutely.

**Mr ANTONY:** So having a larger engine can be beneficial in that.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Yes. I totally agree. I have another question that maybe is not in your field of expertise but I am just interested in any commentary you have. The current 60-day logbook trial that is available for vehicles that are 30 days old has been really well received in the community but it also means we have a lot of older bikes on the road for up to 60 days a year that might not get used as often. Have you got any comments or thoughts about how that scheme is working from a safety perspective?

**Mr WOOD:** The Motorcycle Council were actually a member of the Australian Confederation of Motor Clubs, which is one of the two organisations who have run the Classic Vehicle Scheme, so we do have some involvement there because of our membership of that. Certainly that logbook scheme I think works very well.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** It does allow people at a much cheaper price to use a historical or classic vehicle that might otherwise just sit in the shed and no-one sees it. From an issue point of view I guess it is good that these vehicles are out there being used. Owners of those sorts of vehicles perhaps drive far more carefully than perhaps your average rider because it is their pride and joy. In many cases it is probably something that you could not easily replace if they do crash it, so that's a safer scheme. Sixty days certainly satisfies what most riders want to ride their bikes for. We are actually pressing for a recreational registration scheme whereby dirt bikes could be registered. Unfortunately, a lot of dirt bikes are not registered because the riders do not use it sufficiently often to perhaps entice them to take out full registration.

**The CHAIR:** You are talking about road trails, not trail bikes—road trails—because there is a difference between a trail bike and a road trail. You can register a road trail but you cannot register a straight-out trail bike.

**Mr WOOD:** Oh. Yes, correct. Well at least these ones would be bikes that you could register for full registration.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** So bikes with a compliance plate.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. A straight-out trail bike does not need Australian Design Rules.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes. Many trail bikes do, but, yes, there are certainly a lot of the motor cross type bikes that do not comply with the ADRs. But we would set a standard to cover bikes that did not comply with the ADRs. For financial reasons the owners do not register them but perhaps then are riding them illegally. We would see that a 60-day type logbook would satisfy most of those riders, but again would make them legal, bring into the scheme where their licence and the bike is registered.

The recreational scheme has changed the culture in Victoria whereby if someone on an unregistered bike had turned up to go for a ride, the rest of the group would sort of accept it because they could understand that perhaps he did not spend \$500 getting full registration. But it has changed the culture in Victoria in that if someone turns up on an unregistered bike, they are basically told, "You're not riding with us. If you can't be bothered to take out recreational registration", which is currently \$81.50 a year, "you're not going to travel with us." We see that a logbook-type scheme for recreational bikes could be the way in which you can bring those riders back into I guess being licensed, registered and riding more responsibly.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Mr Wood and Mr Antony. We appreciate that. I am a big fan of the historical 60-day historical vehicle scheme as well.

**The CHAIR:** That is interesting.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I find one technique of getting motorists to treat you with respect when you are motorcyclist was when I purchased a former police motorbike with the windshield and side bags. With my helmet and black jacket, every car within miles would slow down. Maybe that should be the outfit for motorcyclists.

**Mr WOOD:** I will hand this over to Mr Antony because he currently rides an ex-police bike.

**Mr ANTONY:** That is right. I bought this one back in 2017 and I have also ridden with a helmet camera since 2011. It is interesting to see how more people tend to notice the bike and myself. But while most people tend to behave in a more responsible manner there are some who will actually try to hit me. They might have thought that I might have been a police officer and they have actually tried to run me off the road on a few occasions, so [inaudible.]

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I have just a quick question. In your submission you have stated local councils play virtually no role in addressing motorcycle road trauma. Is that statement confirmed? Do you stick by it?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes. I certainly stick by that. I think I say in there that we currently only now—I think there are 128 councils—have contact with about half a dozen of those who are doing anything in the motorcycle safety sort of space. So, yes—

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** What would you like to see the councils do then? What do you want them to do in regards to motorcycle trauma?

**Mr WOOD:** Up in the Hunter a group there of road safety officers, they have got riders to go out and actually ride roads and then identify hazards that they are concerned about; you know, it has corners where the road is not perhaps up to scratch or there is gravel on the road or potholes. They have used local riders to go out and actually identify hazards and then they have gone out and addressed those hazards. That is where they are proactively working with those road safety officers.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Good.

**Mr WOOD:** We have worked with road safety officers for Sutherland, Kogarah and Bayside because they run an event called Breakfast Torque, which has been running now for 13 or 14 years. That is a meeting on a Sunday morning with a number of stalls and presentations. On a good day they will get a thousand riders turn up to that event so that is an opportunity whereby we can get a safety message directly to all those riders who attend that event.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Good.

**Mr WOOD:** Particularly again the ones in the Hunter produced a booklet, which has the underlying message of motorcycle safety but included in there is a number of maps of suggested rides. That is where riders will take the booklet, because it has got maps and suggested rides, but while they are looking that the maps and the rest of the brochure they are getting a safety message about how to ride appropriately and also about protective clothing and that sort of information as well.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Very good.

**Mr ANTONY:** May I also add that social media is becoming an increasingly influential medium by which we can promote road safety. For example, I was riding with Mr Wood a couple of years ago and we came across a couple of cyclists. He and I decided to put the minimum passing distance laws into effect. I put that up on my Facebook page and it was quite well received by the bicyclists as quite a nice instructional video. But at the same time it revealed the number of people who hate cyclists with a passion who are all too happy to run them over. In fact, one of them told me that I should be part of the solution and not be part of the problem, even though I was literally providing them with a solution.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Can I ask what work you do in schools to educate teenagers who are thinking of wanting to get a bike licence?

**Mr WOOD:** None, currently. Some years ago a number of schools had I guess a driver education-type day, particularly down around Picton there. I used to attend those and give a presentation about motorcycle safety. They were very well received.

**The CHAIR:** Down in Picton?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Which one? Picton High School?

**Mr WOOD:** It would have been—it was on an oval in Picton. As I say, this is some time ago, but that was an opportunity where I would go along. I also did the same thing down on the coast down at Wollongong. But it was a day—I guess it would be a number of presenters from a number of different road-user groups. Some of those days I used to give presentations with a truck driver. I guess it was the two extremes of the road-user

group: we were the smallest, they were the largest. But it demonstrated that different road-use groups have different needs when it comes to road safety. Even at that Breakfast Torque, we would get one of the trucking companies to provide a truck because it is actually quite frightening when you get up in the cab of a truck and actually see just how big their blind spots are. It is very easy for a motorcycle to disappear into those blind spots, so that is where we are able to give that sort of message. Certainly we would look at possibilities of being able to get a message to schoolchildren before they actually go and get their licence, but it would I think it would have to be through the school organising some of these—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Because you cannot get to every school, can you Brian?

**Mr WOOD:** No.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Perhaps that is something we could look at: driver education, bike-riding education.

**The CHAIR:** I have just got one last question—

**Mr WOOD:** Because Transport for NSW have quite a large event—well they used to; I am not sure if they are still running them. It used to be down in the Entertainment Centre, where they would have perhaps thousands of schoolchildren. That would be beneficial, in that you could get the message to quite a few schoolchildren at an event like that.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Wood. Just one last question, Mr Antony, talking about bicycles.

**Mr ANTONY:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** I can see the frustration of some motorists and motorcycle riders. You have been through, say, Macquarie Pass?

**Mr ANTONY:** I have, yes.

**The CHAIR:** For anyone who has got a motorbike that is probably one of the nicest roads to ride. Now imagine pushbikes, bicycle riders on that road: can you see the dangers involved in it? That is the problem. There are some roads where the two just do not go together. How do we deal with this?

**Mr ANTONY:** I think it comes down to educating licence holders that they need to be prepared for any kind of obstacle as they approach a blind bend. How to be—

**The CHAIR:** Well, they do.

**Mr ANTONY:** How to be mentally prepared. They should be able to do—they should look to hang back in a calm manner until it is safe to overtake.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, but if you are on the bike and you are going around a corner and, all of a sudden, they are there—

**Mr ANTONY:** Yes, I know. I think when I approach a corner I am assuming—

**The CHAIR:** That is what happens, and they are really narrow roads.

**Mr ANTONY:** That is correct. That is right. I just check my speed and I make sure that I am able to slow down and not cause a collision. But this is just that old sort of thing: Many people despise the fact that there could be bicyclists who are incredibly small in comparison and they will not be able to overtake them and they interrupt the fun. I think it comes down to driver education and the attitude adjustment. At the end of the day we all have to learn to get along together and coexist peacefully.

**Mr WOOD:** This issue has also arisen on what we call the Old Pacific Highway going up to Gosford, which is a very popular motorcycle road but is also popular for bicycles riding there.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, going down the old way.

**Mr WOOD:** I have spoken to bicycle riders there. In some ways they saw motorcyclists as less of an issue than car drivers because, being similar single-track vehicles, motorcyclists understand some of the issues—

**The CHAIR:** On some of the roads it is not a problem—on some of the straights, some of the bends. Some roads are just very narrow and they become a hazard to everyone who is using it. Anyhow, I do have to call it to an end; unfortunately our time has expired. I thank both of you for attending today's hearing.

**Mr ANTONY:** Thank you for having us.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry?

**Mr ANTONY:** Thank you for having us.

**The CHAIR:** No, the pleasure was all ours. We may send you some additional questions in writing, and your replies will form part of your evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Mr ANTONY:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We sincerely appreciate it. Thank you again for taking the time to be with us today.

**Mr ANTONY:** It is our pleasure.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**



**DAN KNEIPP**, Chief Executive Officer, Amy Gillett Foundation, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

**MARILYN JOHNSON**, Research and Policy Manager, Amy Gillett Foundation; Senior Researcher, Monash University, Institute of Transport Studies, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**BASTIEN WALLACE**, General Manager of Public Affairs, Bicycle NSW, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next set of witnesses. Would anyone like to make an opening statement?

**Ms WALLACE:** Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee on behalf of Bicycle NSW on the matter of reducing trauma on local roads. For over 44 years Bicycle NSW has worked to make this State better for all bicycle riders. We support this important work to reduce trauma on local roads, which will benefit everyone. Bicycle NSW has advocated strongly for the Government's Future Transport 2056 plan for everyone to complete short journeys by foot and bicycle. We are keen supporters of increased active travel to school, one of the Premier's previous priorities, and of the Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan. Both offer excellent health, decongestion and environmental benefits to New South Wales.

We have committed to detailed work on major projects to improve local road safety during and post-construction, to uphold the Safe System approach adopted by the New South Wales Government. Bicycle NSW appreciates the pop-up cycleways and lower speed zones that are being implemented to provide COVID-safe travel. We offer the following recommendations to help the Government reduce trauma on local roads: Investment in safe, separated infrastructure that enables most people to ride from where they live to education, work and community facilities by 2030. Engineered solutions are vital to encourage mode shift and to reduce the chances that a mistake by a road user will lead to trauma or a fatal outcome. Accelerating delivery time lines supports the mode-shift priorities of the Government, safer roads and is vital to COVID-safe travel.

We advise that hazards to bike riders be eliminated on major projects, during and after construction, in line with the Government's guidelines for safe engineering for bike riders, the Safe System approach and the national Austroads guidelines. We recommend that Transport for NSW incentivises alternatives to motor vehicle use, from Opal points for active transport use to active travel to school programs, support for bike-based businesses and share bikes. Each could contribute to safer local roads and the Government's active transport priorities. We call on the Government to expand efforts to reduce distracted driving through the mobile phone camera enforcement scheme by enhancing road safety education at the point of licence renewal and through enforcement in areas where close passing has been an historic issue for bike riders.

Increased active travel safety is urgently needed to encourage mode shift and to reduce COVID-19 transmission. We recommend developing an award to recognise the excellent safety standards implemented by some councils, contractors, project managers and developers to protect bike riders and vulnerable road users. Evaluating and recognising excellent safety behaviour could then assist local and State procurement of service provision so that we can improve safety on local roads. Finally, Bicycle NSW urgently recommends the State Government adopt the early recommendations of the National Heavy Vehicle Law review for all heavy vehicles used on Government contracts, and that it phase in the same requirements, as soon as possible, for all heavy vehicles in New South Wales. Many of the recommendations conform with the construction, logistics and community safety standards, and that would better align us with global practice. I defer now to my colleagues at the Amy Gillett Foundation [AGF].

**Mr KNEIPP:** Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Dan Kneipp. I am the CEO of the Amy Gillett Foundation and I am presenting with my colleague Dr Marilyn Johnson, who is one of Australia's leading cycling safety researchers. She is the AGF research and policy manager and a senior researcher at Monash University. The Amy Gillett Foundation's mission is for safe cycling in Australia. Our vision is for zero deaths and a reduction in the serious injury of people riding bikes. AGF was born out of the tragic death of Amy Gillett in 2005. She was training overseas as a member of the Australian women's cycling team. A young driver was out of control and crashed their car into Amy and her five teammates. Amy was killed and her team suffered horrific injuries that still have an impact 15 years later.

This was an example of preventable road trauma that happens regularly to people who ride bikes. In Australia just riding a bicycle leads to too much trauma on our roads: Every day approximately 20 Australian cyclists are hospitalised with a serious injury and every 10 days a cyclist is killed. In New South Wales 10 cyclists have so far been killed in 2020, which is an 11 per cent increase compared to last year. These crashes do not just impact the cyclists, they also impact drivers: Most serious injuries and fatalities involve a motor vehicle. That means for most cyclist trauma crashes a driver is involved, who then lives with the emotional and mental health impacts, which can last for decades.

AGF is Australia's leading cycling safety charity. We champion an evidence-based approach to safe cycling. We support research, create education programs and advocate for safe cycling. We are currently experiencing unique transport challenges and opportunities due to COVID-19. Many countries around the world are prioritising cycling safety with temporary separated bike lanes. New South Wales has shown valuable leadership with pop-up bikeways but this is just the start and only scratching the surface. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how we live in our communities, particularly how we make our local streets safer.

In May this year the Amy Gillett Foundation commissioned YouGov to conduct a nationwide survey to understand Australia's current attitudes towards transport in a COVID-19 environment. Key findings of this polling were that nine out of 10 Australians support investment in temporary separated bike lanes and 75 per cent of Australian drivers said they would be more comfortable if cyclists had their own separated bike lane. The support from drivers was highest in rural and regional New South Wales. My colleague Dr Marilyn Johnson can answer any question the Committee has but I will now pass back to the Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Dr Johnson, would you like to add anything?

**Dr JOHNSON:** Thank you, no. I am actually okay at this time. I would much prefer it if we spent a bit more time with the Committee's questions, if that is okay?

**The CHAIR:** Okay, thank you. I will start with the first question. The Bicycle NSW submission proposes a recognition/award program be developed to recognise excellent safety standards for bicycle riders in road projects. How would that look in practice and are there similar award programs for other aspects of road safety design?

**Ms WALLACE:** In practice, and I would have to take it on notice to really develop a scheme, but we would love to see opportunities for people to present—the same as they do for the New South Wales road safety scheme to receive funding and grants to improve road safety, I would like to see people be able to make submission, either on their own behalf or on behalf of others, to recognise good practice. And I would call out a particular company today who are investing in better road safety for bike riders. SUEZ are literally partnering with us to lead road safety and a campaign will be launched in the coming week. So there are companies and organisations and councils doing excellent work and it is a showcase for other people.

**The CHAIR:** Do members have any questions at this stage?

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** I have a quick question. Dr Johnson, you mentioned that in regional New South Wales you had some different feedback about separated cycleways. Could you expand on that?

**Dr JOHNSON:** Mr Kneipp has those numbers in front of him. Mr Kneipp, do you want to talk to that?

**Mr KNEIPP:** Yes. That was the highest response we got around the country. It was a YouGov survey that was done throughout Australia and the figures that we got were three out of four drivers supported it but once we broke it down to Sydney and non-Sydney, rural and regional and non-Sydney responses had a higher level of support where the question was: If you were a driver would you like to see cyclists with their own lanes? And that was in line with what we are seeing; particularly if you look at a lot of those lanes, if there is a cyclist it does not work out very well for the cyclist and it is not great for the driver as well.

**The CHAIR:** I agree. It is quite dangerous. I live in a country area. The roads are very narrow with high speed limits of 80 and 100 kilometres per hour. A driver will go around a bend and all of a sudden there is a bicycle there. It does not happen very often, although it does on weekends sometimes. They are really terrible roads as well, which does not help. The driver is forced to brake suddenly or go around the cyclist, risking injury to both the driver and the cyclist. So I can see it in between regional areas and I can see it in between city areas. Obviously it is more practical achieving outcomes in city areas than in country areas.

**Ms WALLACE:** We would also note that there are moves to do a whole lot more for road safety in rural and regional areas and, at times, barriers are being fitted where it may mean that it is difficult for the driver then to give that metre-and-a-half on those high-speed roads so, actually, maybe a bit of reconfiguration to enable the road shoulder to be a protected area or to create more space might need some attention.

**The CHAIR:** In some areas you can but, for example, a road through a national park is a typical road that was not designed for it. Drivers will come round a corner and all of a sudden a cyclist is there. Especially when going uphill, it is an accident waiting to happen. I do not know how we will manage that type of issue. How can councils improve the implementation of road safety measures that decrease the potential for injury to cyclists on local roads? Anyone can answer or you can all provide input. We are happy to listen.

**Ms WALLACE:** Some of the measures that we have seen that have been very successful with councils—obviously, we have seen the wonderful pop-ups where we are getting physical separation.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is ideal.

**Ms WALLACE:** We have also got the moves, both in—Parramatta Council, City of Sydney Council and City of Newcastle are doing great structures and some of that is fully separated; some of it is shared paths. But doing the great work around physical separation and signage and making those cycleways safe for everyone. And, obviously, we are going to see with Wagga the development of an actual network in a community that had nothing before. So we have also reached out to government staff to ask them to please take some baselines and then do the measurement because that creates a wonderful dataset for rural and regional New South Wales so it is not just all about Sydney and metropolitan environments and that we can actually learn from that so that we can implement the Government's policy across the State.

**The CHAIR:** We are still talking about a sizeable town or inland city, so to speak. It is excellent—it is great for kids and families.

**Dr JOHNSON:** If I can just add to what Ms Wallace was saying: We have done quite a bit of work in the research that we have done at Monash in relation to regional areas and what we find in addition to—obviously there is a need for infrastructure but beyond that, depending on where you are talking about, there is also a really strong need for there to be education and more socially focused cultural campaigns and discussions to be had in the areas because for some regional areas there is a real attitude that is still of the mindset that the driver owns the road and there is a lot more aggression with some drivers, particularly in regional areas where cyclists are not as frequent or where there is a lot of cyclists because there is something that attracts cyclists to ride in that area.

We see a struggle with the local council between providing the wonderful benefits that cycling brings from a cycling tourism perspective and then the needs and the attitudes of some local people. So, we have been doing some work in different regional areas in Victoria, particularly in Gippsland and currently in Alpine Shire and it really is about engaging the community from very early on and hearing the concerns, and the complaints sometimes, from the local community. And sometimes they are based in just personal beliefs and sometimes they are quite legitimate and there are issues with safety around other vehicles on the road, particularly heavy vehicles or logging trucks. So there are ways to bring the community along and address those issues in some areas where there might be a little bit more hostility around cyclists.

**The CHAIR:** Various people have contacted my office upset about cyclists in the Royal National Park. They said pushbike riders might be going up a hill doing five or 10 kilometres an hour. There is nowhere at all for somebody in a car to overtake. They cannot overtake because there are no overtaking lanes. They might be stuck there behind these people for five or 10 kilometres, or whatever it is. That is what is causing the frustration; they cannot overtake because they have to give them 1.5 metres for starters. Then when they do, they are actually on the other side of the road. I do not know how to deal with that type of situation but that is the frustration that was forwarded on to me.

**Ms WALLACE:** Technically they are allowed to cross over the line to overtake safely. I think there is a low awareness. Even though minimum passing has been in for such a long time, I think the awareness of what people are allowed to do—that they are allowed to cross unbroken lines if that is what is necessary for safe passing. So I think there needs to be more education around that and we certainly have asked the NSW Centre for Road Safety if we can have more of a campaign.

**The CHAIR:** But what they said is it was too dangerous. Because the roads are so winding, you are stuck behind there for a considerable amount of time because you cannot overtake with safety.

**Dr JOHNSON:** Yes. I absolutely hear you and I agree. I have heard that nationally. That is absolutely a concern for drivers—particularly, as you are talking about, those little, winding country roads after the blind corners. It is not safe for drivers to cross that centre line to give cyclists the space. Then it really is quite a local discussion that is needed to be had. It is things like breakout bays that can be added to corners. There are ways around it, to mitigate that risk in terms of offering space where it is safe. This is something that the Amy Gillett Foundation is very clear about; there is also a role for the cyclist to behave in ways that is recognising that there is frustration and that there is a need to share that space.

It is not all just what the driver needs to do. Cyclists need to take some accountability, as well, to make sure that they are sharing the roads safely in their own behaviour. So, it can be both sides. It can be infrastructure. I think what we are trying to get to here is that it is not just one simple solution. It is often location-specific, but there is definitely a precedent for it in different States and different areas that have worked through it. So, there are certainly some solutions out there—there just is not one solution.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** In your submission you state that in Australia we do not accurately calculate the full cost of driving. There are many consequences of too many people driving for too many trips too often. You have listed some of those negative results. There is a deduction, then, that you want to discourage people from taking those trips. I am not sure what the point is that you are making.

**Dr JOHNSON:** There is a really great document that was written a few years ago by the Federal Government—and I can send a copy through for the Committee staff to have a look at—that does show the full cost of driving and cycling. In both cases the full costs of doing either mode is not really calculated fully. It is not about getting everyone who drives to suddenly ride. That is not what the point is. It is more recognising that there are many more people who drive who could ride but who do not because there are a lot of barriers that they see in the way, and they are generally around safety. It is about recognising that if we did fully do the cost-benefit analysis that recognised the full cost of driving, as well as the full benefits of cycling, often some of those return on investment ratios would be very different than what we generally see published.

**The CHAIR:** The Netherlands has got a good system but the advantage of the Netherlands over Australia is that it is flat. It is very flat compared to us. Go to the northern beaches and you have got roads up and down, up and down. If you are really young and really fit you can do it, but there are others that—as you advance with age it is not so easy.

**Dr JOHNSON:** Look, 10 years ago I would have absolutely agreed with you and said, "Yeah, that is a really big distinction between the Netherlands and Australia." They also have higher density, so a lot of their trips can be shorter, and they have a 40-year history of riding. It is much more part of their accepted modes of travel than what we have.

**The CHAIR:** And a very small land mass.

**Dr JOHNSON:** All of those things are true. But I think what we can all agree with now is that, definitely in the last five years, the hills argument is almost completely gone for Australia. With the introduction of e-bikes—

**The CHAIR:** Electric bikes, yes.

**Dr JOHNSON:** —and the increase in their use and their sale, we are seeing more and more people riding. Basically, there are no hills on an e-bike. People are riding for a lot longer, too, in a much older age group. I am trying to be diplomatic.

**The CHAIR:** That is alright. I am little bit older and I was thinking about the health implications and even being healthier. But, electric does sound pretty good. That is how you got around it.

**Dr JOHNSON:** Based on the same safety [inaudible].

**Mr KNEIPP:** Can I also add to that question around the Netherlands? It is often perceived as being too far away from what Australia could achieve. [Inaudible] a driving app that 65 million participants around the world use and they did a survey on driver satisfaction. The Netherlands came number one for the drivers, which seems counterintuitive for such a cycling-friendly nation. The reason why is the cycling facilities are so good that a lot of people choose to cycle instead of driving for small trips. It means that if you are forced to drive or you want to drive there are less cars on the road. It also means that a lot more of the people driving have got a separated lane, so you do not have that nervousness when you are driving about having to share it with a cyclist.

The third thing that they found was, because there are so many people cycling, the road infrastructure was much better just from having less cars. So, that is some really interesting information from a driver perspective that we would love for Australia to get a chance to see.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I am keen to hear each of you respond to my question. I might start off with Ms Wallace, then Dr Johnson and Mr Kneipp. I have had people come to me. Their comments have been that cyclists should pay an annual registration fee and that fee could then be used to fund cycleways and separated paths.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Hear, hear.

**Ms WALLACE:** Look, we do not tend to support the registration fee because we are all supporting road infrastructure in our ordinary taxes. The current road registration toll is mostly for the cost of vehicle inspections and keeping cars safe. So, cyclists are already paying for roads, and we know that Transport for NSW has already assessed that the cost of administering such a scheme would be basically more to pay for the scheme than it would actually get anything out of it. Paying through the ordinary tax system is more efficient.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Could it be acquired through an automatic deduction annually and then that fund is pooled through? Anyway, there would be ways to work through that.

**The CHAIR:** I can see Ms Preston's view. If you are living in the city and that is your permanent place of residence it becomes more unlikely that you are going to own a vehicle, which means you are using the road for free. In order to try and pay—I believe that is where you are trying to go, Ms Preston.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Well, that is the comments that I receive. As bicycle enthusiasts I would love to hear your opinions on that—that counter-opinion, perhaps—and a way forward on how we can fast track funding if we do not use that as a mechanism for funds. Did you want to finish, Ms Wallace?

**Ms WALLACE:** Look, I would support the position of Transport for NSW that administering such a scheme would cost more than you would actually get out of it. Everybody in New South Wales contributes to the cost of roads. Whether they live in a hospital bed and do not move outside at all—pedestrians, cyclists—every citizen who earns an income and pays taxes and rates is contributing. That really is the efficient taxation system to get us all to contribute to things that are of social benefit.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you. Dr Johnson?

**Dr JOHNSON:** Could I just get some clarification? When you say "registration"—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** An annual fee if you are a bike rider.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Like car registration.

**Dr JOHNSON:** The clarification I am seeking is—is it about registering the vehicle or is it about some kind of recognition licensing of the rider?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It is more or less a contribution that a rider on public roads, which are funded through taxes—the mindset of those that are coming to me about this feel that they are paying their taxes to use the roads. They do not see cyclists—even though from your comments, Ms Wallace, we all pay if we are ratepayers or if we have GST or other taxes.

**The CHAIR:** If you drive a vehicle, you are paying taxes for the fuel.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** There are, I suppose, closed ideas on—they would like to see a tangible contribution from every user of the road, including cyclists.

**Dr JOHNSON:** I am sure you can imagine this is not the first time we have had this discussion.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It is a common thing, so I am really interested to hear your opinion on it.

**Dr JOHNSON:** Yes. From the outset I would say that, to me, that is one of the arguments that goes onto the list of people who do not support people cycling on the road and have a list of objections that they point to, to say, "This is why they shouldn't be there." This is one of those. Putting that to one side, when it comes to registration it is quite common for people—it is a barrier to participation. That is the first point. This is obviously from the cyclists' perspective. The second point is that if this is based on bicycles then it is not uncommon for households to own multiple bicycles and for children to own bicycles. The details of this is not as easy as just slapping a cost on. There are details that would need to be worked through for this to be implemented.

As Ms Wallace said, not only is it the position currently that it would not be viable financially, but it has also been tested internationally and that has proven to not be viable. At times we have talked about needing an infographic to show exactly how the roads are paid for, because it is a very convenient tagline to throw out there. It is extended far beyond cyclists. I would ask those same people what their views are about people who drive Teslas, who are not contributing to the cost of the roads through their fuel excise because they are not filling up their car with petrol. I think—

**The CHAIR:** You are right, Dr Johnson. That has not been brought up yet. If you drive a car, a truck or a motorbike you are paying extra taxes through the fuel. You are actually paying that for those taxes for the roads, for the infrastructure. You are right, the ones driving the Teslas—that has not come up as yet, but thank you for putting it out there.

**Dr JOHNSON:** It is not that I am anti-Tesla—not at all!

**The CHAIR:** No, no.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** No, but this is all good conversation.

**The CHAIR:** What we are trying to find is how to have a happy equilibrium so everybody is happy. We are trying to find solutions to problems.

**Dr JOHNSON:** Absolutely. It comes back to the point made earlier about having a full admission of the benefit of cycling—looking at those health benefits by someone not taking a car—as somewhat displacing the

cost of them using the road. The other point that I would make really strongly—probably the most important point—is that the damage to the road infrastructure for someone riding their bike across it is obviously not taken into account when you compare the cost of someone who is driving a larger car that might be weighing—I do not even know what the mass would be, in terms of the size comparison in mass and volume of a driver in a car compared to someone on the road and the damage that they cause. Those are some of the things that I would recommend as a response. I would also ask—sorry to cut your time off, Mr Kneipp—I would also ask whether this is something that is a big enough issue that some kind of information or resource for the community is needed so that there is a better understanding about this.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It is a barrier. It is a conscious barrier that is always brought up with me, especially if I am in a car and people are struggling to try and get around a cyclist. The comments are, "You shouldn't be on the road, you don't contribute, you don't pay registration, you don't pay a fuel tax". It goes to what you are saying. People find that as an excuse, but it is a logic and a mindset that a lot of people have. Shifting that mindset would take a fair bit of work, in the same way that we do not have an education system with young people in schools to educate them on how to correctly ride a bike.

**The CHAIR:** They used to. When I went to school they used to teach you how to ride a bike responsibly.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It is just like becoming a parent. You are expected to know everything about it. All of a sudden it is thrust upon you. Mum and dad give the child a bike with training wheels and then take them off and hopefully they do not fall over, and that is your lesson in life on how to ride a bike. I just think there are a lot of processes in—and also having a respect for cyclists. You do not get that unless you perhaps get on the road yourself and understand what they are experiencing. It is a whole shift of mindset and respect. Dr Johnson, if you are finished I might invite Mr Kneipp to contribute as well.

**Mr KNEIPP:** Yes, thank you. I make just a couple of small points. The Amy Gillett Foundation has got tens of thousands of very passionate cyclists in its database and we did a survey around this recently. Some 95 per cent of our supporters have at least one car. I am a good example: We went to buy a second car recently, and it was just buying an e-bike that stopped my buying a second car. If I choose to cycle to work that is just one less car on the road, because I can take the bike lane there. I am paying those registrations and I am paying those fees. The other question we asked was their number-one mode of transport. Overwhelmingly people drove a lot more than they cycled. We thought that was really important to see.

Before I was at the Amy Gillett Foundation I worked for a mental health organisation. There are really tangible cost benefits you can show if someone chooses to cycle rather than to take a car, in physical health and mental health. You would not consider charging car drivers more because they are not having those mental health and physical health benefits, but it goes back to the discussion earlier around the real costs of driving versus cycling. I understand that is a particularly complex answer around mental health and physical health to throw into that, but it is just something that becomes really important when you are looking at the overall picture.

**The CHAIR:** The demographics play a big part. If you live in the city, yes, it makes sense to ride a bike. But when you go out of the city it is a different game set altogether. It is very hard for you to travel—it might take you an hour or two hours to get to work with a car; imagine it with a pushbike. In the city it makes sense. What we are trying to look at is how we keep everybody happy everywhere. I am sure we will get there in time.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** In your submission you are also critical of the use of language dealing with road deaths and so on, such as "road toll"—as roads do not die; it should be "deaths on our roads". For "fatalities" the word should be "deaths"; "lives lost" should be "deaths"; and "road deaths" should be "deaths on New South Wales roads". Are you having any success in trying to get that terminology used? Is it really a case of the media—I think "road toll" is a newspaper headline. When the figures come out they just put "road toll" and the number. Do you have to re-educate the media, let alone the people who collect information?

**Dr JOHNSON:** Yes, you are absolutely right, we do. We have had some success with language in the way that people report on crashes on the road by just using the word "crash" and not using the word "accident", not talking about cars hitting bicycles but talking about drivers and cyclists. Really the point we are making here is that these are deaths and serious injuries to people. They are not cars that are injured and they are not bicycles that are injured. I think the more that we remove that language and make it less personal—words like "toll" are very much a removed word—it makes it easy for the community to be complacent about this as being just an accepted cost.

The Amy Gillett Foundation is very much about not accepting that death and serious injury on the road is acceptable, and it is about challenging that. But you are right, it is about doing that with media. However, I really do need to say how important government documentations are to that, and how through parliamentary inquiries like this one that language is so important, because it serves as a way to reinforce the language that is

appropriate in the way that these deaths are occurring. I would encourage the Committee to consider the language that is used in its report, because it does stand as a way of authorising language that is appropriate.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Preston? Mr Butler?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** No, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** No thank you, Chair.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Actually, there was one I was going to talk about: the Safe System in local government and the lack of success there. This was introduced eight years ago. In 12 years in council I have not been approached by one cycling group to look at how that can be addressed. Are you looking at appointing ambassadors for different local government areas that could go out and address councils and work with them on a safer riding experience in those local government areas? That is the grassroots area and it does not seem to be having the impact that you have wanted to make. What are the solutions to change that?

**Ms WALLACE:** We do work directly with councils. Some councils are a lot further forwards in the journey than others. Some are very open to the idea. We sit on a wide range of panels. We make submissions on all sorts of different proposals. We are consulted with open-space strategies, with cycling and pedestrian strategies and we put in a really deep amount of work into all of those activities; we put a selection of that on our website. We work with the government projects as well, the large-scale projects, whether that is light rail or heavy rail or some of the projects around major road construction—WestConnex, et cetera. We work with that framework that the Government says is really important to follow—the Safe System approach, Austroads guidelines, the law and regulation that has been set down for safe engineering for bike riding.

We encounter a lot of misunderstanding and we do our best to educate. We put out a pictorial guide, which has in fact been adopted by some local government areas. They actually use our pictorial guide for their frontline staff when they are evaluating people applying to do things in their road-related environment. That is an ongoing process where we are calling for all of those things. Frankly, if everyone was following the Safe System approach and the things that the Government has set down, we would not really have very many problems. We keep pushing for that and we do the deep work to take people on a journey. By and large, wherever they are ready to do it, they are appreciative of the work that we do.

**The CHAIR:** A separate lane would make everybody happy.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** You are also critical of all of the inquiries that are going on in New South Wales, Victoria and federally. Is there any attempt to rationalise or to combine their reports or recommendations into one?

**Dr JOHNSON:** I am so sorry that so many of the questions that you are directing at our submission starts with that we were critical. I am sorry that the tone comes across that way but, yes, there is a frustration. As a national organisation we see the committee inquiries that are happening nationally and, often, repeatedly. It is frustrating to us because I am not sure where the breakdown is. Each committee has really clear terms of reference, they have a really clear process and, obviously, each member who is on the committee has a local constituency that varies from the other jurisdictions where those inquiries have happened. It just feels like we appear at these different hearings and we are having very similar conversations. I am not sure if it is a question so much for us, as it might be for the parliamentary process as to how we can help to gain some efficiencies so that we can achieve the outcomes faster.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Another point that you have made is that there are a lot of inquiries and recommendations and very few recommendations get implemented. Has anyone done research on that? Governments just file the report.

**Dr JOHNSON:** Yes, and before being an academic I worked at the parliamentary Road Safety Committee at the Victorian Parliament, so I watched that happen from the other side of this process, as well.

**The CHAIR:** That explains it all.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** No, we are not blaming you.

**Dr JOHNSON:** I know too much.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** You are on notice, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** We will not hold it against you.

**Dr JOHNSON:** I think, to answer your question really bluntly with my academic hat on, no-one is paying for that funding. As we see budgets for universities get cut back further and further, there is not an appetite,

that I can see, for consultants to do this sort of work. While I agree that it is hugely important and reform is definitely needed, it would really be a matter for the universities having the support in order to do that.

**Mr KNEIPP:** Can I just make one point? There was a really good question in relation to the Safe System approach and our vision there. I note that the core of that is that it should not be that a single error—a driver or cyclist error—can lead to death or a really serious injury. Most of our road infrastructure is still set up that way. The Amy Gillett Foundation does a lot of work with truck drivers as part of a vulnerable road user training program. Trucks make up 4 per cent of vehicles on the road and 50 per cent of cyclist deaths are caused by trucks—a really disproportionate number of deaths. That is partly because even when a truck is going five kilometres an hour or turning left, if they hit a cyclist it can be fatal, where that will not be the case with other vehicles.

It is an example where, if you look at the Safe System approach, if we have separate lanes, it is much better for the truck driver and it is much better for the cyclist. So, there are certainly things we can look at as to how we can improve it. We are seeing the rollout of temporary bike lanes because of COVID as a way that would have all different road users.

**The CHAIR:** Ideally, as I said before, yes, separate lanes would solve issues. It is very difficult for trucks because it is very hard for them to see you.

**Mr KNEIPP:** Yes, and we have been doing some training when we get cyclists to get into truck cabs and they are shocked because they do not realise. As a cyclist you have to be more predictable around a truck. Again, that is something where a single error of being in a blind spot should not lead to a death.

**The CHAIR:** I also ride a pushbike and I ride a motorcycle. There is a little saying amongst motorcyclists: When you ride, ride as though they are all out there to kill you. What that means is that you have to watch for other people all the time. You have to be really attentive because trucks do not see you and other people do not see you. Whether you are a motorcyclist or a pushbike it is very similar. You have to ride defensively.

**Dr JOHNSON:** If I could pick up on Mr Kneipp's point about the course we do, it is vulnerable road user awareness training, so it is cyclists, pedestrians and motorbike riders. We also put the truck drivers on bikes and they ride around a short course. They have a very different understanding of what it means when they get back in their truck after they have been on a bike themselves. There are ways to help truck drivers to have a different understanding. They come away with a much better appreciation of what it is to be vulnerable on the road after that. That is something we are still—

**The CHAIR:** A lot of the truck drivers would understand about pushbikes; they were children once who rode pushbikes, so they would have an understanding about bicycles.

**Dr JOHNSON:** That was the last time for some of them.

**The CHAIR:** Perhaps so, but they still have an understanding.

**Ms WALLACE:** We are big supporters of truck drivers having the very best technologies and systems to support them being able to detect vulnerable road users. We are well aware that you can sit in the cab of a truck and you actually cannot even see a pedestrian at the crossing in front of you. That is why we have worked with the National Heavy Vehicle Law review and most of what they are asking for we support. We want side under-run protection so a small mistake of a truck turning left when the bike rider is supposed to be on the left does not cause what happened at Sydney university. We absolutely support the detection systems and their cameras and all of the things that alert drivers, because of the type of vehicle they are operating.

The sooner that those standards can be brought in in New South Wales, the better for everyone, particularly because we have so many construction projects. We never used to see trucks and trailers going through suburbs and cities and dense urban areas, so it is really important that that comes in as soon as possible. We were quite disturbed that the National Heavy Vehicle Law review findings and implementation were pushed out by another two years. We would have almost half the death toll from last year if we had had safer heavy vehicles. We would love to see that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you all for attending today. We may send you some additional questions in writing, and your replies will form part of your evidence and be made public. Are you happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Ms WALLACE:** Of course.

**Dr JOHNSON:** Sure.



**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**JENNY BENNETT**, Executive Officer, Central NSW Joint Organisation, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**BEN HOWARD**, Acting Chair, Transport Technical Committee, Central NSW Joint Organisation; Director, Works and Services, Parkes Shire Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Before we proceed, do you have any questions about the hearing process?

**Ms BENNETT:** No, thank you.

**Mr HOWARD:** No, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Would one of you like to start by making a short opening statement before the Committee begins questions?

**Ms BENNETT:** Thank you, yes. On behalf of Central New South Wales councils, we welcome the opportunity to talk to you about road safety and road trauma. We think that the value that we bring to this inquiry is some deep knowledge from an individual perspective from a council, which will be the advice provided by Mr Howard. And the evidence I would like to bring to the Committee is the opportunity to get better outcomes in the road safety and road trauma space by working through joint organisations and, so, better collaboration between ourselves, Transport for NSW and other agencies responsible in the area for road safety.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Howard?

**Mr HOWARD:** Just in support of Ms Bennett; as we said, bringing together what we witness at a local government level and also at the strategic level. We sit at the table with the joint organisation and also Transport for NSW. So I am happy to provide input and appreciate the support from [inaudible] this inquiry.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I will start the questions. How can council joint organisations assist individual councils with road safety projects and ensure road safety projects are completed smoothly when they cross LGA borders?

**Ms BENNETT:** In our joint organisation we have two groups that work together; one at the strategic level which talks with Transport for NSW, Inland Rail, so it talks to the Federal and State level, the department of planning and various other agencies, and talks about potential roads that are not necessarily owned by council. For example, they are State-owned roads but are administered by councils under the Road Maintenance Council Contracts. And then we have the technical group, so that is all the directors and managers responsible for road safety projects. We do talk about roads that do cross council borders and we put them into a priority matrix to be offered priority to put advice back to the State and Federal governments on roads that should be funded.

A recent example of that is the work they have done on the Roads of Strategic Importance, identifying roads that go across LGAs and into along the Newell alignment. They are a couple of examples of where we do that sort of work together. The collaboration between the councils enabled by the joint organisation means that all the varying directors and managers of roads do talk to each other regularly and the door is always open and we bring all the new directors and managers as they come on board into the fold, and so there is that constant communication and relationship to be able to talk about those roads in both a formal and informal way.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. In your submission you say:

... better collaboration is starting to occur with TfNSW where road safety is a critical priority.

How has that improved and how should it continue to improve?

**Ms BENNETT:** For the first time we have a regional transport plan where there has been some significant collaboration with Transport for NSW. We have actually been able to help write some of their problem statement documents collaboratively. This is completely new for us in Central New South Wales where the experience has been the planning is done to us, not with us. So we are very excited by this new approach by Transport for NSW and we certainly would like to see that continue. The transport planning that we are doing in the region at the moment identifies road safety as a significant priority and there is a real opportunity for us to work with them on what that looks like on the other side.

I should say that that strategic plan has not been completed yet and so I cannot necessarily point to what those actions might be. Our policy position in Central New South Wales is that we want to see a two-year implementation plan for that program, including road safety. We want to see governance arrangements bringing together the different stakeholders to ensure that implementation happens. And, again, that would be a completely

new approach for Transport for NSW but something, as a joint organisation, we have seen works very effectively in other areas; for example, in planning.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Bennett. Do members have questions at this stage?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Yes. In your submission you have made the following comment:

Councils have tried to engage the State in the development of Community Strategic Plans (CSPs) with little success.

So, what more should be done to get the State involved, with the Committee's recommendations?

**Ms BENNETT:** Community strategic planning is part of integrated planning and reporting and it is something that comes underneath the Local Government Act but is broadly ignored by all other State agencies. This is because it is still, all things considered, quite new, and at the end of the day the department of local government is probably one of the little brothers in the family, rather than being as big an entity as, for example, say, Health, Education or Transport for NSW. But there does need to be some kind of integrated, strategic approach to bring the advice in the community strategic plans to the agencies. Over time we hope, through the joint organisation, we can see some better work in that space.

An alternative could be the better engagement through the regional transport plan as it is being contemplated with that implementation governance arrangement, as suggested. Over time we hope that the community strategic plans will talk back to that plan and there will be that two-way conversation and we will get much better outcomes into the future.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Does way the State Government operates now with clusters, as it calls them, where it puts a number of ministries under one senior Minister, help solve some of the problems or does that create more problems?

**Ms BENNETT:** We are very excited to see the Department of Regional NSW—it has had a couple of iterations—but that focus on regional New South Wales is new and exciting for the councils in our area. The challenge is the constant change and churn in the various State agencies. The constant machinery of government changes is very disabling and is being experienced at the moment in Transport for NSW. They are going through a great big machinery of government change at the moment. And it can take years for those changes to happen. And through those change periods we lose traction because people have not got their jobs, they have not got job security, all the programs just sort of go on hold.

It is not whether or not we have a mega ministry with a lot of clusters. The problem is—what needs to happen is we just need some consistency. Please do not keep changing things because that is what creates enormous havoc. It is actually not too bad in Transport; I think they have only had two machinery of government changes in living memory. In Water I think it is 14 in 13 years, so they are just in complete disarray. But I would really encourage any recommendations going back to government. And I appreciate that the Cabinet has a different view on things but the constant change happening with bureaucrats is not helpful.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Thank you.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you and welcome to the discussion. I am looking at comments that have been raised with other groups in relation to the support and data that you need at crash sites. Page 4 of your submission states:

Greater support from all emergency services and relevant agencies in the reporting of tow away (no injury) motor vehicle crashes along with injury and fatality crashes would be helpful.

I know with your black spot funding, the criteria is reliant on the number of accidents that are reported and councils do not always have that data. Going forward how do you see that being resolved?

**Mr HOWARD:** Thank you. I think it is a really good point and one that we at Parkes Council at a local government level have really tried to improve. You do state that the crash data is supplied to council through Transport for NSW or the NSW Centre for Road Safety. That is true but sometimes that data is not always up-to-date. And also, as we have said, it does not reflect that actual incidents do occur on local roads. So, being in rural and regional areas, we obviously see a lot of incidents where local assistance is provided. Local assistance may be even in the form of the State emergency services or the Rural Fire Service.

There is no mechanism that is adopted across all emergency personnel for the recording of incidents. When we see this crash data it is only reported for police statistics. I think, moving forward we have signed memorandums of understanding at our council with the NSW Police Force to improve this situation so that we can get up-to-date accurate data. Something like that across all agencies would definitely be beneficial.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** How do you actually access that data at the moment?

**Mr HOWARD:** That data is provided to council through Transport for NSW. We do have an opportunity to review the data. The data is generally six months behind on all cases provided to council.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That makes it hard when you are putting in applications for blackspot funding, because your data is out of date?

**Mr HOWARD:** One hundred per cent. Impact data can only be used for five years. Anything outside of five months cannot be used.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** As a joint organisation with so many areas involved, how have you found your ability to collaborate across council boundaries in terms of road and road safety projects?

**Mr HOWARD:** From my personal perspective, my road safety officer looks after three councils, so the consistency across those three councils is clear and evident. Most road safety officers within our district look after a couple of councils. We do not really see an issue with that. Where the strains are is the consistency in the administration of the whole road safety program, all the Local Government Road Safety Program, how it is administered by Transport for NSW in each individual council area. In some areas there is funding provided for some aspects, and advertising is an example, and in other areas it is not. I think that mechanism obviously needs some refocusing as well.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** You are not the first person we have heard from on that.

**The CHAIR:** In your submission on page 3, can you elucidate about the summer lights project rolling out LED lights with smart controls on local roads across 41 local government areas? Can you tell us more about it? Can you tell us why they are being gifted to Essential Energy?

**Ms BENNETT:** This is one of the perversities of life in local government. The way it works for streetlights at the moment is once upon a time streetlights used to be owned by local government entities, then they were all taken up to the State at one point in time as part of all electricity infrastructure being handed to the State in the 1990s and included in that were streetlights. They have become somewhat like the orphan child in this process and have been, frankly, neglected. A number of councils formed the Southern Lights NSW group with a view to try to get a better outcome for streetlights, in particular LED lighting. We have been very successful but it has also exposed some opportunities down the track. We are at the moment trying to put in LED lights with smart controls. There is a real opportunity, should the State want to do some traffic control monitoring.

There is a lot of traffic control monitoring going on and there is traffic control counting at the airport, to the east of Bathurst, undertaken by the State and the next spot is west of Orange. We know nothing about traffic on that State road in between those two places. With smart controls on LED lights that State route could give an enormous amount of rich information on what is going on with traffic across that footprint. It is a conversation that is difficult to have with Transport for NSW at the moment. If we do not push it it will not happen but we do think there is potential down the track for serious collaboration on thoughts of traffic control monitoring and it will be beneficial for communities, particularly large communities—any urban communities really across our footprint—on those state-owned roads.

**The CHAIR:** Council pays for them and then they are gifted to Essential Energy?

**Ms BENNETT:** Correct.

**The CHAIR:** All the upkeep and future maintenance on those lights then becomes the problem of Essential Energy?

**Ms BENNETT:** If only.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** No.

**Ms BENNETT:** No, we pay a thing called "slough-off" charges. We pay a maintenance fee as well. It has been described as you are told what sort of toaster to buy, you have to buy that toaster and you do not get to decide how much energy it uses; it is a most unfortunate arrangement for councils. It is our work environment at the moment and we are trying to do the best that we can by getting optimal outcomes with LED streetlights with the smart controls program.

**The CHAIR:** I am trying to work out how the ratepayer pays for it, gifts it to Essential Energy and then they charge the ratepayer. That is what I am trying to work out. It does not make sense.

**Ms BENNETT:** You are quite right, yes. It is very challenging.

**The CHAIR:** It is like you gift me a car, and I drive it, and for the privilege of me driving it I charge you.

**Ms BENNETT:** It is quite different and unusual to ensure safe street lighting. The challenge for council is that we have the legislative role of ensuring those streets are safe, it is our job as the road owner for all of our streets. It is incumbent on councils to have road lighting as safe as possible and there is a real opportunity, should the State come on board and make some recommendations from your Committee around getting the smart controls partly funded by the State that would be a fantastic outcome.

**The CHAIR:** There are some issues taken about the strategic framework for roads, including road safety. You said it was complex and difficult to navigate. How do you think it can be simplified and improved, particularly for your councils?

**Ms BENNETT:** I will ask Mr Howard to answer this after me, because he will have a view from the council's perspective. From the region's perspective we do want to see one strategy for the region that pulls in all the requisite stakeholders, that is implemented and has the people responsible for that implementation remaining in the region. What we do not want to see is a plan that becomes shelfware and we do not hear about how any of it is implemented and then five years later we come back and do the whole strategic process again. That is a critical change that we want to see and through that we will get a better understanding of what has traditionally been a very opaque entity for us, which is Transport for NSW.

If they can leave people in region with us implementing that plan, hand in glove with local government, so that we get better outcomes in the region, of which road safety would be one of the top priorities I would imagine, then you will see much better outcomes. At the moment it is a strategy which is yet to be completed; no conversations yet about what implementation might look like, no commitment to ongoing governance relationships and the potential of it becoming shelfware.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Can I jump in with one thing quickly? Ms Bennett, you have referred a couple of times to business continuity and keeping people in roles within the area so that they can see things through to fruition. Just how much of a problem is that for you with Transport for NSW or other agencies, having people in roles with a corporate memory of the way things have evolved so that they can actually follow things through to fruition.

**Ms BENNETT:** I think the corporate memory in regional New South Wales is not too bad. I actually think that those folk are pretty consistent. Their roles change and are changing at the moment which is difficult for them. The bigger issue, and I will share an anecdote with you: I had to present to the top 100 leaders of Transport for NSW when they started their restructuring journey. It was fantastic to see this wonderful slide talking about the new Regional Transport portfolio under Minister Toole and everyone was very excited by that. I challenged the room to say, "How many people of this top 100 leaders actually live in regional New South Wales?" Guess how many hands went up. One.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Oh gosh.

**Ms BENNETT:** That is the challenge. The challenge is not that people who exist in regional New South Wales do not have corporate memory. The challenge is we do not have enough of them out here and particularly in leadership positions.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you.

**Ms BENNETT:** I will ask Mr Howard to answer in a bit more detail that earlier question. It is obviously up to you how you want to structure it. I know I did not answer it from a local council's perspective.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** You mentioned that local councils have a problem with street lighting and that there seemed to be a gap. Is that because the Government kept discussing leasing poles and wires and never mentioned street lighting? Is that where the gap occurred? That meant that street lighting was dropped into the lap of councils.

**Ms BENNETT:** No. It was actually earlier than that. The transfer of assets was in the 1990s and the leasing conversation has been a lot later than that. I just think that somehow street lights got caught up in it all and have been poorly structured as a result of it. Really, that optimal discussion around who should own them and how should they be administered was never really undertaken.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Howard, I have one question and this would be directed to you. How long has the council participated in the Local Government Road Safety Program? What has been the experience of the program for the council? Could the program be improved?

**Mr HOWARD:** Council has been in it for about 18 years to date and my road safety officer has been involved in that since its inception. He had Transport for NSW and formerly RMS and of course the western region of Parkes, so our direct day-to-day relationships are very good. In relation to the program's perspective,

there are a number of areas that we already have touched on around funding and also crash data. Inconsistency is around the framework so there is no formal training for road safety officers or formal qualification for road safety officers.

There is no framework for the council themselves as to the [inaudible] administer the safety officer or a road safety program in itself, but with those inconsistencies in itself, just labelling or recruiting a staff member into a road safety program, is about a 12-month process. By the time you get someone in and get a full understanding of the program, what the program looks like and what the program entails, that is a lengthy process in itself. Previously in other councils I have been involved with there was support from Transport for NSW. There was training and there were field trips for road safety officers but they have not been forthcoming for many, many years now.

Coming from the road safety perspective, the Safe Around Schools program was an additional funding allocation that ceased probably about four years ago and it was able to be implemented around particularly activities and infrastructure around school programs. It seems to follow in around about the implementation of the 40 kilometres an hour zones around schools. I think something like that for reinstatement would assist local government. I mentioned before the inconsistencies across the State, what is funded and what is not funded, needs to be seriously looked at, as well as advertising. Councils run their own road safety programs that are not funded by Transport for NSW. They are totally funded by the three councils in my area. In general I think at group level it is okay but I think from an overall State framework—

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** I think you have just tapered off at the end there.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes. We did not hear that last sentence, "From an overall State"—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Howard?

**Mr HOWARD:** From the overall State perspective, a State framework would be most beneficial for all councils and road safety officers.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any further questions from members?

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** No. I am okay, Chair, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** It looks as though we might finish a little bit earlier then.

**Mr HOWARD:** Excuse me, Chair?

**The CHAIR:** If you would like to add things, yes, please do.

**Mr HOWARD:** I just go back to the question referred to before about the new strategic plan to provide an answer from the region's benefit. From our community's strategic plan of council, we have a number of areas that we can only really advocate for. So for things such as health, education and road safety our advocacy is pitched at local government. Without a State plan that supports these areas as well, it is all, as I say, just as an advocate. We cannot implement. We cannot change those areas. I think just to support Ms Bennett's comments around a regional level, a State strategic plan that then follows council's community strategic plan will enable us to then filter in other strategic plans, such as the road safety plan, instead of all those individual plans.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you, Mr Howard. Is there anything further you would like to add? Ms Bennett?

**Mr HOWARD:** No. Thank you.

**Ms BENNETT:** No, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity.

**The CHAIR:** That concludes our public hearing for today. I like to place on the record my thanks to all the witnesses who appeared today. I also thank Committee members, Committee staff, Hansard and the staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services for their assistance. Thank you both again for joining us today.

**Ms BENNETT:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** We may also send you some additional questions in writing. Your replies will form part of your evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

**Ms BENNETT:** Yes.

**Mr HOWARD:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Have a nice weekend.

**Ms BENNETT:** Thank you—you too.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you for your time.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 16:02.**