

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

REDUCING TRAUMA ON LOCAL ROADS IN NSW

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Friday 14 August 2020

The Committee met at 9:20.

PRESENT

The Hon. Lou Amato (Chair)

Legislative Council

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

Legislative Assembly

Mr Roy Butler

Ms Robyn Preston (Deputy Chair)

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Legislative Council

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey

Legislative Assembly

Mr Stephen Bromhead

Mr Christopher Gulaptis

Mr Nick Lulich

Ms Wendy Lindsay

The CHAIR: I declare open the second public hearing for the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into reducing trauma on local roads in New South Wales. We meet today at Parliament House. We will hear from all witnesses today by videoconference. The hearing is being broadcast to the public via the Parliament's website. Today is the second of two public hearings for this inquiry. We held our first hearing last week on 7 August. I thank everyone who is appearing before the Committee. We appreciate the flexibility of everyone involved.

ANTHONY CARROLL, Road Safety Officer, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and Snowy Valleys Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

MATT STUBBS, Manager Technical Services, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

HEINZ KAUSCHE, Executive Director Infrastructure, Snowy Valleys Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Mr Carroll, would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin with some questions?

Mr CARROLL: My opening statement is Snowy Valleys Council and Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council both take road safety seriously and adopt a wide range of strategies to help make our roads safe for all road users. The councils adopt the Safe System approach, for instance our Safer Roads Program. We are targeting our black spots through Safer Roads funding. We are preparing our Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan funding. We work with our local traffic committee to make our Safer Roads, and we would welcome [inaudible]—

The CHAIR: Mr Stubbs, we have got a little bit of technical difficulty. Mr Carroll is talking but we cannot hear him. While we resolve that technical issue, I would like to welcome you to the inquiry today. Would you like to start off by making just a short statement to the Committee?

Mr STUBBS: My role as Manager Technical Services is to oversee the operations for Cootamundra-Gundagai, particularly in the Gundagai area. Anthony Carroll, for those that do not know, acts as the Road Safety Officer for both Snowy Valleys Council and also Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council. Essentially that is why we tried to merge the two together—so that Anthony can speak for the road safety initiatives that he is primarily responsible for, for both councils. My role is to oversee that those processes are being implemented at council, so along with Anthony, we do work on those. As a council, we do take road safety particularly seriously. We have got an understanding of our crash history and we work with those government programs to deliver safety outcomes for the community, like the Safer Roads, the Black Spot Program, and also undertake road safety audits as required. That is a quick summary of my role and our approach to road safety.

The CHAIR: It looks like the technical problem could be maybe down Mr Carroll's side, so do you mind if we start with a couple of questions? I will make them easy for you.

Mr STUBBS: That would be great.

The CHAIR: How long have the councils participated in the Local Government Road Safety Program? What has been the experience of the program for the councils? Could the program be improved?

Mr STUBBS: From my perspective, I have been at Cootamundra-Gundagai for approximately 18 months. In that time, I think it has been quite positive. Anthony Carroll is actually a new staff member to the role as well, so both he and I probably picked up from the start point, so we probably cannot comment on what existed prior to that period. But I have seen quite a good focus on road safety, and particularly with those programs that are out there. I guess the biggest challenge for us is just the resources. Being a small council, Anthony is our primary contact for road safety. He is the Road Safety Officer, but he is also a shared resource with Snowy Valleys Council and also Transport.

We have got technical staff that can deliver and run some of these projects that need designs and applications, but physically preparing those things is the biggest challenge for us. When we look at Anthony's time, a typical week for him involves one day here with me in Gundagai, one day in Cootamundra, and then he has got two days of the week that he spends with Snowy Valleys. It means we have not got a strict, full-time, dedicated staff member available to us all the time. That is probably the biggest challenge with us—just preparing and maybe doing what we would like to achieve with these programs and the rollout. We would love to be able to do more, but we are limited with those resources.

The CHAIR: How large are the combined council areas?

Mr STUBBS: Cootamundra-Gundagai, in population terms, I think is around the 15,000. I think Snowy Valley would be similar.

The CHAIR: I was thinking about area. If you had to travel from one side—it is just to give us an idea.

Mr STUBBS: I would have to look that up for you. But in terms of travel distance we are a couple of hours.

The CHAIR: From one end to the other end—two hours.

Mr STUBBS: From one end to the other—I know Snowy Valleys, from Khancoban up to Tumut in the north, you would be looking at three to four hours. And then us at Cootamundra-Gundagai, we would be sort of three hours as well. So it is an enormous distance for him to traverse.

The CHAIR: Yes, it is a big distance.

Mr STUBBS: I have just looked it up. The area of Cootamundra-Gundagai is about 4,000 square kilometres.

The CHAIR: That is a big area.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have got a quick question for Mr Stubbs. It is in the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council submission from Mayor McAlister. It just makes a statement, "We are aware that our region is five times the rate for fatalities." What is the reason for that?

Mr STUBBS: I am not sure what that rate is referring to, sorry. Is that based on the size or density, or—

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: To deaths—fatalities.

Mr CARROLL: Can I answer for you?

Mr STUBBS: Yes, please.

The CHAIR: Yes. It does not matter who answers, by the way. If someone does not have an answer, you are always more than welcome to take it on notice.

Mr CARROLL: There are a few reasons that Cootamundra-Gundagai has five times the rate of fatalities compared to the State average. The main reason is our vehicle speeds, our average road speeds, are so much higher than anywhere else. Our crashes are 60 per cent in the 100-kilometre zones. Also distances are so far that when crashes occur, it is actually a long time for help to arrive at many locations.

The CHAIR: Yes, that explains a lot. That explains it.

Mr CARROLL: For the locals who have crashes, one of the reasons is the age of our residents' fleets is older than the average as well. We have a lot of older drivers and their vehicles are older as well.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Is there anything you can do about that problem? You said the medical people arrived a lot later. I guess the person could die beside the road in the accident.

Mr CARROLL: That is right. There are a lot of strategies that we are adopting to develop that. One of the things we are looking at is the phone connections. On the Snowy Mountains Highway, Snowy Mountains region and the Alpine Way, the phone reception is really patchy in places. We have been talking to people at Telstra and co. about enhancing the phone reception. We have not developed any strategies within Cootamundra-Gundagai because it is just in the too-hard basket at the moment. But as for getting speeds to slow down, we are targeting specific groups like the older drivers, who have programs approached directly at them. For the highway users, we are targeting the rest areas for programs, mainly through passive advertising in the toilets and things like that, like the passive advertising behind the toilet doors about adopting safe driving practices.

The CHAIR: Mr Carroll, before we had technical difficulties you started reading out a statement. Would you just like to email that statement across to us? That will save you going through it all again. If you could hear us, just nod.

Mr CARROLL: [Inaudible].

The CHAIR: Mr Carroll, if you can hear us, can you ring in via teleconference? Do any of the members have a question for Mr Stubbs?

Mr ROY BUTLER: You pre-empted one of my questions, which is around mobile phone connectivity. In my electorate—I just drove from Broken Hill yesterday—there are huge areas with no mobile phone connection, which obviously makes it impossible to call for services unless there is an emergency service available to get through. The other thing I wanted to ask about was intensive care paramedics. Do you have any idea of the number of intensive care paramedics you have available through your ambulance stations and how often they are dispatched to local road trauma?

Mr STUBBS: It is a good question that I would probably have to take on notice, or potentially follow up with Mr Carroll. He might know those figures offhand.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Yes, no worries. Just for everyone's benefit, the intensive care paramedics have advanced medication, intubation and a number of skills which make the survivability rate of a serious accident far higher. In my electorate, which takes up 44 per cent of the State, I know there was five across the whole electorate.

The closest one to, for example, Lightning Ridge, which has got a lot of dirt roads and mining activity, was in Gilgandra, which is several hours away.

The CHAIR: Mr Stubbs, how did your councillors come to the decision to share a road safety officer? How does the road safety officer split their time between councils? Would you encourage other councils to consider a similar regional arrangement?

Mr STUBBS: I am hoping for Mr Carroll to get back with us.

The CHAIR: We have got Mr Carroll back.

Mr STUBBS: He certainly would be able to answer this one. It was an externally funded position that has developed and it has probably grown since its inception. Currently, Mr Carroll, if you are with us, you can probably answer what your typical week looks like and how much time you spend at each location.

Mr CARROLL: The way that the arrangement is, I am half employed by Transport for NSW, a quarter by Snowy Valleys and a quarter by Cootamundra-Gundagai. That has been a longstanding arrangement for at least 20 years. Before amalgamation of councils, the arrangement was between Tumbarumba Council, Tumut Shire Council and Gundagai, so it has been a fairly long time. My typical week is fairly busy. I do keep track of how much time we are using per council and for Transport for NSW, and I will have to admit that I typically work 50 hours or more each week to get all the work in, including all the travelling.

The CHAIR: How much is your travel time, Mr Carroll? On a typical week, how much of your time is just spent travelling?

Mr CARROLL: I budget on doing from 850 kilometres a week to 1,000 kilometres a fortnight, so that is between 10 and 12 hours a week travelling.

The CHAIR: Just travelling, okay.

Mr CARROLL: That is just travelling. Cootamundra is an hour away from Tumut, so that is two hours, an hour there and an hour back. Tumbarumba is the same. Khancoban is 2½ hours from Tumut. Gundagai is just down the road; it is 30 minutes.

Mr NICK LALICH: When they are sharing their road safety officers, how do they find their resources? How do they find the funding? Is it better that way, or are they still short? Every time I hear from these guys from other councils, it seems to be the funding which is not real good. Is it better when you share between the regions, or does your funding cover it, or are you still short?

Mr CARROLL: I should really introduce my manager, Heinz Kausche, who could probably answer this question from his point of view.

Mr KAUSCHE: Just as a quick introduction, I am the director of infrastructure for Snowy Valleys Council and I enjoy the support of Anthony Carroll, our shared road safety officer. In regards to funding, we very much appreciate the arrangement between Transport for NSW, Snowy Valleys Council and Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council. It works in respect of that. The issue for us is that initiatives that come out of the road safety officer arrangements, being the local traffic committee, we find funding those quite difficult. The salaries associated with the road safety officer role is fine. It is the initiatives that come out of Mr Carroll's work and implementing those that we struggle to find funding for. We find that quite often it will take us several years to actually implement some of those initiatives.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I note in the submission that the amount of sealed roads and unsealed roads was pretty well the same. I was wondering whether the unsealed roads are one of the reasons for the high accident rate in that region? Are the accidents occurring on the sealed roads or the unsealed roads?

Mr CARROLL: Mr Nile, unfortunately the accidents are happening more on the sealed roads than the unsealed roads. While there are probably more crashes on unsealed roads, or a higher proportion of crashes, they are not as likely to cause serious injury or fatalities.

The CHAIR: Because they are a lower speed.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, they are slower speeds. Because our unsealed roads are usually very narrow and quite twisty, and people are driving to the conditions, then the speeds of crashes are lower, if they occur.

Mr STUBBS: It is generally more local traffic as well on those unsealed roads, so people are familiar with the conditions, as opposed to sealed roads. You know, higher in the hierarchy, there is more through traffic and people who are not familiar with the conditions.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I am trying to see if I can get a reason why you should have more money to seal the unsealed roads, but they are not a problem in road safety.

Mr STUBBS: From a road safety perspective, probably not. But I guess the long-term maintenance means that we could be spending that money elsewhere if we had longer life out of those assets.

The CHAIR: How do your local traffic committees work to improve local road safety, how is the community involved in this process and what assistance does Transport for NSW provide?

Mr CARROLL: Wow. There are three parts to the question.

The CHAIR: You can start with the first one.

Mr CARROLL: The local traffic committee is every quarter for both councils. Each council has its own traffic committee. I have the luxury of having eight traffic committees a year. The Cootamundra-Gundagai approach—they have been doing the regular traffic committee meetings for longer, so they have a more teamed approach. Snowy Valleys were not as regular. Now that they are becoming more regular and more predictable, more issues are being raised. The way that issues are brought to the traffic committee is usually members of the public raise issues, they go into the council reporting system and then a report is made to a traffic committee. The usual process is, the first time it is raised it is just a notification that it is an issue, and then the second time we have a report made up on how we are going to treat it. Is that what you would say, Mr Stubbs?

Mr STUBBS: Yes, I would say generally that we would go straight to step two if we have time to prepare a report. But, as you say, the meetings are generally quite frequent, so it might come up in general business that the report will be prepared. That is assuming that it is not a significant safety risk that we need to action immediately. These are generally the concerns that would require some assessment and planning.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, okay. Then the role of Transport for NSW in this is that they attend all of the meetings. We had a traffic committee meeting yesterday at Cootamundra-Gundagai and the Transport for NSW representative offered a number of solutions to about four of the pressing problems that we have with the Hume Highway and other roads. We get an expected amount of assistance from Transport for NSW.

The CHAIR: To bring up your current road safety issues in your regions, how far behind are you?

Mr CARROLL: Can you repeat that, please?

The CHAIR: With your road traffic issues in your regions, how far behind are you? How long would it take to bring it up to current levels of road safety? In hindsight, how long do you think, would you be a year behind or two years behind?

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: It depends on the money.

Mr CARROLL: To be honest, I would say a decade behind.

Mr STUBBS: It is a good question, because if you look at what the backlog is we need to know what the problems are. I would say one of the biggest challenges is having those road safety audits on the shelf with a priority action list in order to answer the question with a detailed time frame. We have a road safety audit prepared for Muttama Road, which is our most significant road within the shire, but a lot of our other roads are an unknown. I guess, even going back a step further, funding to have those road safety audits to determine what our problems are and then following on from there what the backlog is as a result—

The CHAIR: Okay. Council does not have someone who goes and checks the roads to see the conditions?

Mr STUBBS: We do not.

Mr CARROLL: No.

Mr STUBBS: We have routine inspection regimes, but I guess more of that strategic-type document is what we are lacking.

The CHAIR: Do you rely on the public a lot?

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Mr STUBBS: We are preparing submissions for Safer Roads NSW at the moment for Muttama Road, which looks at the whole network and potential safety strategies, and that is subject to a cost-benefit ratio. I get that it would be great to apply that same logic to other roads within our network.

Mr CARROLL: That is the whole issue. Muttama Road for Cootamundra-Gundagai is the most significant road for crashes, but Cootamundra-Gundagai has at least three other roads—Olympic Highway, Burley Griffin Way, Nangus Road and then the Grahamstown Road—that all have high rates of crashes. As Mr Stubbs was saying, we do not have the staff to get around and do those road safety audits.

The CHAIR: How can all three levels of government work better together towards reducing trauma on local roads?

Mr NICK LALICH: More funding.

Mr CARROLL: Actually, before we go back to more funding, one of the steps that is happening in middle-to-late September is the councils are undergoing strategic road safety planning. That is the first step. When we say more funding, the first thing is actually to get the planning and the skills to actually start cooperating together and to know what is going on. I have been doing this role for 18 months and I am still learning how the local traffic committee works, who the Transport for NSW contacts are, who the councils are, and that is why I have got involved with this committee, just finding out who is available to do what. Before we can say "how can they all work together?", we need training in how to get on with each other and how to resource each other.

The CHAIR: Okay. That is part of your challenge.

Mr STUBBS: Particularly for me, it is not just the funding, it is the resources and the skills that are somewhat lacking. We see road safety audits and there are full-time resources employed by Transport for NSW that could potentially be utilised by councils on our local roads to save us having to pay salaries and train staff. Just attracting and retaining technical staff is an industry-wide problem at the moment. So the more that we can share those resources that currently exist probably elsewhere in other government departments would be a benefit—

The CHAIR: Sorry to interject. On an average, how long does somebody hold a position or role? What is the average span? It takes time to train them up. Does that mean by the time that you have trained them up, they move on?

Mr STUBBS: I think that is a fair summary, particularly for the engineering department at Cootamundra-Gundagai. The day I started I was told that the engineering workforce doubled. I said, "Who else started?" The answer was no. It was just me. At that point in time we had two engineering staff. Currently we have added a couple of roles but the turnover is quite a short period of time. Anthony and I did the road safety audit training but I think there are only three of us that have it at a basic level.

The CHAIR: How come it has a fast turnaround? Is it the pay or the conditions, or better opportunities perhaps in the private sector? What is the reason why the council is losing good engineers?

Mr STUBBS: I would say is a combination of the three. It is hard to attract people to country areas when they maybe have more attractive places that they can live. We try to sell the benefits of working in regional areas as well but when you are competing against places that can afford to pay more and may be in a more attractive place to live, yes, it is hard.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Mr KAUSCHE: Just supporting what Matt just said, it is difficult to recruit people into regional and, for us, remote areas. When we do get people in they tend to build their skill set and then move on to more attractive and higher-paid positions. For us, we try to keep the skill set in local government so we can share it a little bit, but exactly as Matt just said, it is difficult to recruit; it is difficult to retain. If we get a young engineer in and we can hang on to him for two or three years, we have done really well.

The CHAIR: That is good. You have got to try to keep Mr Stubbs in.

Mr STUBBS: I actually was formerly employed by Snowy Valleys and 18 months ago moved to Cootamundra-Gundagai so that is a perfect example.

Mr KAUSCHE: And we are really pleased that Matt stayed in local government and has not moved off into private enterprise. We kept Matt—that is a really good thing.

Ms WENDY LINDSAY: Is there something we can do in the local high school/ TAFE/training space to attract people before they leave high school to this as a possible career as well to keep them in the regions?

Mr STUBBS: I think it is a really good point, Ms Lindsay. I know myself when I was in high school, I did go to some engineering summer schools. Some people find those exciting still. That was a good exposure to what the engineering industry was and it involved a residential week up in Sydney visiting different universities and having speakers explain what engineering was because personally I did not know what it was when I was in

year 12. I knew I liked certain things and did not know what engineering really involved. In saying that, I would say the biggest challenge for me—I would love to be employing cadets similar to what I was when I left school but it is having that stable mentor who can really train those cadets and develop them because I think we have to make sure we have that stable work environment before we can bring anyone on. At the moment I have a guy in here that it has been in here for two weeks now. Ideally, once he has been here for six to 12 months, I would look at maybe employing a cadet and helping develop our own.

Ms WENDY LINDSAY: Yes, I was just thinking that if you can catch them when they are in high school—let us face it, when you are in high school you do not know what you want to do. You do not even know what that is, right? Even if it is just someone doing the rounds at some of the high schools perhaps from a local government perspective of the roles within local government—that if you want this job you have to do this course or this job actually even exists. As a parent—my daughter is in year 11—there are just so many jobs out there I personally do not even know what on earth they are and what is involved to get her to those roles. If there is something we can do in that space to try to let people know these roles exist and what they need to do to further get the training in that area so we have some people taking on these roles later?

Mr STUBBS: It is a really good point. Something we have been discussing as an industry for quite a while is how to address the skills shortage. I know as Cootamundra-Gundagai we started to foster a relationship with City of Sydney. We have had a couple of meetings with the guys up there. COVID unfortunately put a stop to the progress we have made but the intention there was to look at some mutually beneficial arrangements. That might have involved sharing technical staff from the City of Sydney, who might come down to Cootamundra-Gundagai and be exposed to a broader range of engineering, which may benefit a junior engineer from up there whilst also trying to sell working in a regional environment to them. There are opportunities with universities and other organisations to potentially share resources.

Ms WENDY LINDSAY: Maybe even just local high schools in your area and engaging some of the high schools before they take off to do whatever it is they do next. I am thinking like a careers night in year 10 before they choose their subjects for year 11 and year 12. Catch them early and keep them in the regions rather than them going to Sydney and then you lose them. Do you know what I mean?

Mr STUBBS: Yes.

Ms WENDY LINDSAY: I think if they think that there are jobs available and there are careers available in the regions they might be more inclined to stay in the regions to begin with rather than go to Sydney or Melbourne thinking that is where the jobs are. Maybe that is something we need to do from an education level or year 10: try to capture some of them before they decide what they are doing in the HSC—i.e. for university or TAFE—a bit of direction.

Mr STUBBS: Yes.

Mr CARROLL: The issue with that is—

Mr STUBBS: The only challenge is probably—the past history with Cootamundra-Gundagai is that they have done that with a lot of positions and by the time they have developed someone up to a usable level they have gone on to bigger and better opportunities, which for an industry as a whole is a positive if they are to remain in the industry, but I guess it leaves a sour taste in the mouth of the smaller organisations when that does happen.

Mr CARROLL: That is the issue. My daughter is interested in doing engineering and she attended some student work experience sessions at Cootamundra-Gundagai but she is hoping to go away to do engineering at university and she has made it clear that she is not going to come back to the region. So while we make these links with the high schools because of the motivated kids that apply for these sort of situations, they are very attracted to outside establishments.

Mr KAUSCHE: Yes, like I said earlier, we keep them and get them up to where they are productive and effective and then there are so many other opportunities out there for these kids that they will tend to—like I said before, if we get two to three years out of them, that is good. If we get five years, that is a bonus, but that would be at best.

Ms WENDY LINDSAY: I guess with any industry though probably after two or three years people tend to move on. The days of staying with someone for 10 years are pretty few and far between now.

Mr KAUSCHE: Yes, and that is okay if it cycles through and you have got the skill sets cycling through but for us we sort of start again. We go back to square one, train someone up and get caught in that cycle. And it is expensive for a small council to train someone up.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I notice in your submission it was stated:

... speeding is a factor in the crashes within the councils at either two or three times the state average.

What action can you take to reduce speeding? Are you using speed cameras? Are they too expensive?

Mr CARROLL: We do cooperate with New South Wales police fairly effectively but the issue cooperating with New South Wales police is that they have a high turnover of staff. Our highway patrol sergeant who covers the Tumut area—we are onto the fourth one in my 18 months of being here. While we do the speed camera stuff with New South Wales police, getting a regime of checking is lost. What council does do to assist the New South Wales police, and they really appreciate and we appreciate as well, is the use of traffic meters—traffic counters. We share that information with the New South Wales police, so when we find spots and speeds like super roadworks, we were able to tell that someone was speeding at the same time.

The police actually call that person at the same time as we put the information out, so there is that sort of cooperation with New South Wales police. We collect data and then share it with them and they do the same back to us. But the [inaudible] being such an issue for our council is because we are crossed by the highways—100-kilometres-an-hour highways—and we have so much traffic. Cootamundra to Gundagai has the Hume Highway, which is the busiest route—one of the busiest routes, actually, in the world, not just in Australia. Then the Snowy Valleys highway through Snowy Valleys Council—that is 100 kilometres the whole way and a lot of it is in isolated areas.

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

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Mr STUBBS: Yes.

Mr KAUSCHE: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much again for appearing today.

Mr CARROLL: Thank you so much for your time.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

DAVID HUGHES, Director Built and Natural Assets, Lake Macquarie City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

BRENDAN CALLANDER, Acting Manager Asset Management, Lake Macquarie City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

THOMAS BOYLE, Senior Transport Strategist, Lake Macquarie City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

DAN HUGHES, Government Relations and Policy Advisor, Lake Macquarie City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Before we begin the questions, would anybody like to make a short opening statement?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: Yes, I would. On behalf of council we thank the panel for the opportunity to participate in today's inquiry. Lake Macquarie City is part of the Greater Newcastle metropolitan area, which is an hour and a half north of Sydney. We have 205,000 residents and we are one of the largest regional councils in New South Wales. Last year our residents collectively made 775,000 driving, walking, cycling and public transport trips on an average weekday. Proportionally, more of us drive than residents of the metropolitan areas of Sydney and Newcastle. We have to drive further to get to services and employment, and this is due to our city surrounding Lake Macquarie itself and that we have inadequate, albeit slowly improving, public transport. The city's transport network includes approximately 1,250 kilometres of urban roads, 200 kilometres of rural roads, 470 kilometres of footpaths, 183 kilometres of shared paths, and an inter-city train line on the western side of our city. Of the city's road network, 10 per cent are State roads in terms of length.

Our population is projected to grow by anywhere between 40,000 and 130,000 people by the year 2050. Our local road network is currently growing at around 10.8 kilometres, or close to 11 kilometres, each year. As the Greater Newcastle metropolitan area grows, the New South Wales Government estimates daily trip demand between Lake Macquarie and Newcastle is expected to grow by 23 per cent by 2056—216,900 trips, or close to 217,000 trips. Meanwhile, because of the way Lake Macquarie has developed over time, most of our local roads do not meet current safety recommendations, nor are they meeting the community expectations. For example, at the rate of current construction it would take 135 years to double the length of our footpaths in established parts of the city. Even this falls well short of the New South Wales Government's latest guidance, which was published in July this year, in the NSW Walking Space Guideline. This is the backdrop that frames our submission to this inquiry: reducing road trauma in a growing and geographically dispersed city, getting the design of our new streets right, fixing a historical legacy of unsafe roads and improving safe transport choices on the whole.

We recognise and advocate our role in reducing road trauma across all four pillars of the Safe System framework, which at this stage of the inquiry the panel may be familiar with. In particular, council has a key role in creating safer roads and roadside environments. This financial year, Lake Macquarie City Council will be investing \$70.6 million towards maintaining, upgrading and constructing new roads, pedestrian walkways and cycling and bus stop infrastructure. Council continues to navigate how best to apply the latest road safety design guidance when planning new projects. The job of reducing road trauma is a big one. Dollars are important, but it is about more than dollars. Smarter, more collaborative planning is a key feature. It is also about addressing the cultural barriers within local and State government and the community. We know, for example, that an impact at 30 kilometres an hour is the speed at which most pedestrians can survive. An impact at 40 kilometres an hour will see 25 per cent of pedestrians die. We know that reducing speed limits has little impact on journey times on local roads, but it can be the difference between life and death. Yet this is an area in which local government is hamstrung, needing the leadership and support of the New South Wales Government and some streamlined processes to be more effective.

Ultimately, our key message is this: We are open and willing to work together to do what it takes to reduce road trauma. In doing so, we strongly recommend the strategic approach that addresses the full scope of reducing road trauma—one that looks at the transport system holistically and one that recognises the reality for local government, in that we are juggling many competing priorities and driven by a need to prioritise investment to make the best use of limited resources. Thank you. That is the end of my opening statement

The CHAIR: Does anyone else wish to add anything? If not, I will start with the first question. Why does Lake Macquarie not currently participate in the Local Government Road Safety Program? What changes to the program would be needed for your council to consider involvement?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: I will direct that question to Mr Callander.

Mr CALLANDER: Lake Macquarie City Council currently do not participate in having a road safety officer. We believe that would be better served at a regional level as part of the joint regional organisation, to do

that holistically across the greater Newcastle area and not just focusing solely on Lake Macquarie. We do participate and we have been successful in obtaining grant funding from that program and implementing some of the projects from it. We are obviously a large council and having one road safety officer responsible for that whole area in our council we do not see as efficient. We have actually got a few people that have responsibilities that fall into that, but not one person solely responsible for it.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In your submission you say you would welcome further State funded investments in public transport networks as well as safe walking and cycling infrastructure. How would the State assist the public transport networks?

Mr BOYLE: There are a variety of ways that could happen. For example, Lake Macquarie is responsible for looking after bus stop infrastructure. We have 2,000 bus stops in the city. We currently are not fully across whether those meet the latest disability standards, although we are doing an audit to count for that. The funding we have applied for from the State Government to support us in that area, we have been waiting for about 18 months without answer. The program is probably not as clear as it could be. That is an example of where improvements to that partnership would be of benefit. In other ways, for our walking and cycling infrastructure as well, better connectivity to our train stations, for example, and we have had an issue where there has been quite a bit of back and forth just to get a bus stop shelter upgrade at one of the city's main stations. Again, it comes back to better collaboration.

The CHAIR: Going back to my previous question, how does your council work with neighbouring councils which participate in the road safety program?

Mr BOYLE: I do not have the full history of that, but that is probably something we could take on notice. What I can say is that we do have a close working relationship with the City of Newcastle at officer level. For example, I work closely with the transport strategist at that council and we are both refreshing our walking and cycling strategies at the moment and looking for synergies, and obviously road safety is one example of the topics that we look at.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: With no road safety officer how do you work with your community to identify and deliver road safety initiatives?

Mr CALLANDER: We have a traffic facilities committee, which has representatives from the various stakeholders from our community and from the transport movement front. We also have people like the representatives from the bus providers and public transport providers. We utilise that committee to provide recommendations to council to allow us to make changes to our network where they are required.

Mr BOYLE: We receive about 100 customer requests a month specifically related to transport and traffic, and those requests are investigated as part of the traffic facilities committee process. In addition to that we also regularly touch base with our community. I should mention as well that the traffic committee has representatives from the NSW Police Force, local MPs and the State Government. That operates in addition to other regular touchpoints with our community. We have won quite a few awards in terms of community engagement programs. For example, when we developed the community vision values as part of our community strategic plan we received 1,800 submissions, we did a statistical representative phone survey and we had a lot of other engagement activities as well.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In your submission you make a comment that greater collaboration is needed between the State Government and councils to improve the freight movement of heavy vehicles and how to separate heavy vehicles from other road users, how to achieve that.

Mr DAN HUGHES: Thank you for your question. When we talk about the collaboration it really comes down to the sharing of information. A lot of the work around the freight network, major roads, the rail network, is obviously done at a State level. For local government it is understanding where are these corridors actually going, what are the priorities of government around the time lines, because they seem to shift. State strategies, they say that they are 20 years away, some say that they are five. There is inconsistency there and when you approach agencies to say: How can we work together on understanding where things go, we do not get access to the information or we do not get told, or we get a very high level stakeholder presentation as if we are the general public, where of course we need to know for our own network planning.

There are opportunities for us to identify how we can contribute, even if it is something as simple as writing budget submissions to try to amplify this as an area that we need to work on. One of the key things for us around the freight network is the delivery of the lower Hunter freight rail bypass, which will actually remove freight from a suburban rail network, where there are level crossings in the City of Newcastle. There are a lot of amenity issues and it could actually help trigger a genuine passenger rail network with that higher frequency

between at least Fassifern in the southern end of Lake Macquarie and the City of Newcastle, but of course increased frequency across the actual region right through to Gosford in the Central Coast.

Mr DAVID HUGHES: I will add to that. The visibility—we do know at times, for example, Transport for NSW are working on strategic studies. We do not know the detail that is in them, but they are just so critical for our own planning that we get access to that information as it is being developed because we have data that can be fed into it, just as much as State departments have data that can feed into our planning processes. The more data we have got we can turn that into useful information and collectively we will make better decisions.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have a follow up question. You say in your submission that council has sought funding to resolve two key freight issues for your city, the Pennant Street bridge and the lower Hunter freight rail bypass. Is there any sign of you getting any financial support or cooperation from the State Government on those two projects?

Mr DAN HUGHES: Not so much with the lower Hunter freight rail bypass, we understand that has now being moved for other efforts around faster rail. When it comes to the Pennant Street bridge, it has got a long term legacy in Lake Macquarie city around different [inaudible] of what we are trying to do. I believe it was 2018 we participated in a strategic business case assessment for Pennant Street bridge with Infrastructure NSW gateway review—my terminology might be incorrect, sorry, there are different terms for different agencies for different assessments. Through that we were told that the probability of the Pennant Street bridge going ahead was not high; however, there were other priorities within that area that needed to be focused on which could support that network. That is another example of information that has not been shared afterwards, to say upgraded intersections, what is the work that we actually could do to support that.

The CHAIR: How does the local community work with your council to identify and deliver road safety initiatives? How could the State Government support this better?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: I will direct that question to Mr Boyle.

Mr BOYLE: We have a variety of ways to do that. For example, we mentioned the traffic facilities committee before and I mentioned the [inaudible] specifically that has dealt with that committee. In addition, at the moment we are refreshing our Active Transport Strategy and we have an active community engagement campaign around that. We regularly look at the crash data that is made available to us from the NSW Centre for Road Safety. We look at that to inform grant applications for the Black Spot Program, for example. Sorry, can you remind me of the second part of the question?

The CHAIR: No, that is fine. The second part of the question was: How can the State Government support this better?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: Do you want to take it on notice?

Mr BOYLE: I think, in terms of supporting this activity better, it comes down to consistent guidance. We are in a place where we are trying to, as Mr David Hughes mentioned in his opening statement, navigate how to apply the latest Safe System guidance, for example. The New South Wales Government is slowly releasing new guidance on how to apply that. It still seems there is a little way to go. The other thing I would note is that it is expensive to get projects to an ideal state to meet the ideal Safe System recommendations. We have to make trade-offs around the scope of the project versus everything else that we have to do in the city. That prioritisation is key, but there is not a lot of guidance from the State Government around prioritisation.

The CHAIR: Does your council have a traffic committee?

Mr DAN HUGHES: That is correct.

The CHAIR: Obviously the councils would be on it, obviously the staff members, you would have Transport for NSW, the area commanders, all of those different stakeholders are in the committee?

Mr DAN HUGHES: Yes, that is correct.

The CHAIR: That is working fine?

Mr DAN HUGHES: We are actually helping find some ways to improve it. There is quite a lot of content in that group. We are just trying to find ways through existing mechanisms around the use of delegations. You know, do you need to meet physically? Obviously in COVID times, it has really helped to think about different ways to adapt, which allows some of those lower hanging fruit items to be passed through that group a lot quicker, for us to then be able to dive into more detail for more complex issues. That is certainly one area that is a work in progress. If you ask a lot of people, you get mixed views. Most of it comes down to the timeliness of making decisions, but we are tackling that. I should acknowledge too that there are recent efforts within

Transport for NSW around updating quite a lot of their aged guidance information for both public and government agencies. Some of it is as old as 2011 or 2013. That is well past its due date for these more contemporary times. They are working through it and we are doing what we can to assist them.

The CHAIR: Some witnesses from another council mentioned that they had a high turnover of staff, particularly with expertise. Does your council share that same experience of high turnover? Just as somebody starts to get the idea of what to do in their job, they move on. From what I can see, that could hinder the process of making things better in the council.

Mr CALLANDER: Yes. Within the area of traffic, we have previously seen quite a high turnover of staff, but the staff that we have at the moment, I guess we have had some continuity in that space for a period of time.

The CHAIR: What is that period of time?

Mr CALLANDER: I would say two years is probably the period of time that we have had continuity for the moment. The problem that we see in that space is the access to qualified staff. We are having to develop our own more so than being able to get them in the market. The market is not flush with people who are qualified in regards to the area of traffic, in our experience.

The CHAIR: There are not many qualified people in the market. Do people leave for the Sydney region or capital city regions rather than go into more regional areas? Is that a hindrance? Is that part of the problem, or is it just a lack of people with qualifications in the market?

Mr DAN HUGHES: Anecdotally, as we are a regional area, the main baseline of having office and public sector workforce is not as strong as other metropolitan areas, particularly around Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra et cetera. Naturally there is already a competitive challenge to attract people to the regions, although it is not necessarily isolated to this type of work or employment type. It is just something we all face, working in a regional area, finding talent. Fortunately we have really good quality people. As Mr Callander has pointed out, we just need to help develop them, rather than maybe poach them from an existing market.

Mr CALLANDER: I will add to that. We are in the resources sector. A lot of the qualified people who come from an engineering base work in the resources sector in this area, so we do have trouble attracting from that base. People specialising in traffic is probably not a huge focus for graduates in this region.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I note in your submission you say the council does not participate in the Local Government Road Safety Program. Does that mean you have your own program, or what is the reason you do not participate in it?

Mr CALLANDER: We have chosen not to participate in having a road safety officer. That is on the basis that we believe it would be better served for a road safety officer to sit across the joint organisation of councils, and actually do that on a regional basis, to provide a strategic focus for us as a holistic network. We utilise our existing staff to undertake parts of the process of a road safety officer. At our council, being quite a large council, we do not believe one person can undertake that role holistically for us. We do put applications in for the grant programs and we actively participate in that part of the road safety officer process, but we do not choose to have the 50-50 funded position that is part of the process.

Mr DAVID HUGHES: It is probably just worth adding that a lot of the smaller grants that go up, there is a disproportionate amount of administration time required to process and submit a smaller grant. If you are looking at how that system can be more effective, we do believe and we do advocate that it has to be transparent in what people are applying for with grants and in the way the money is spent. Where some of the grants are relatively small, a disproportionate amount of administration to actually process a grant and acquit it makes them unattractive at some stages.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have a follow-up question. You say in your submission you would welcome changes to the program guidelines for the New South Wales Walking and Cycling Program to include funding for footpaths. Footpaths would be a basic council responsibility, would it not?

Mr BOYLE: Yes, that is correct. In the past that program has not funded footpaths, but as of this financial year that program will now include footpaths. Council did actually apply for grant funding under that program. Relatedly, it is one of many programs that we apply for. I believe we also mentioned in our submission that better integration across the grant programs would be a benefit as well.

Mr DAVID HUGHES: I will just add to the question. Yes, we do see that footpaths are part of the council program, but, as was mentioned in our opening statement, we have a legacy of a lot of areas of our city that were developed when footpaths were not seen as necessary. We are running programs where we are building

on average at the moment 3.5 kilometres a year of footpaths in existing areas of our city. At the rate we are doing that, it will take a long, long time for us to put footpaths across our city. We are always juggling the priorities of where we spend that money. If there are more specific grants to put more footpath down, we would be very, very happy.

The CHAIR: Back to the footpaths, it is interesting that you said it would take 135 years. That is how many kilometres of footpath?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: We currently have 470 kilometres of footpath. It will take us at the current rate we are building 135 years to double that amount and lay another 470 kilometres.

The CHAIR: So to do another 470 kilometres will take another 135 years. How long does it take to build one kilometre of footpath?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: Off the top of my head, I do not have that stat. We are building about 3½ new kilometres per year in our existing parts of the city.

The CHAIR: So are you are only doing 3½ kilometres. The restraint of why you are only doing 3½ kilometres, is that funding? Is funding the problem there?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: Yes. That is the proper—

The CHAIR: Is that the issue? Is funding the issue?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: Yes, in that case.

The CHAIR: So you are saying that because of the current funding it will take 135 years to double the footpaths.

Mr DAVID HUGHES: Correct.

The CHAIR: It is not because of expertise or infrastructure?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: No. If we had more funding we could be stimulating the economy by pushing more work out to contract at this stage.

The CHAIR: Are there ways for councils such as Lake Macquarie to share knowledge and learnings with other councils across the State regarding excellence in road safety projects and initiatives?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: We have very collaborative relationships with most councils across the State and are very willing and happy to share what we know and learn what we can from others. We do have a Hunter Joint Organisation of councils where information is shared. So at an officer level and at an executive level, across the councils we do share information.

Ms WENDY LINDSAY: Going back to the footpaths, with the 3½ kilometres that you are doing every year, how are you targeting where you are doing it? What is prompting that length and the reasons why you are targeting that particular area? Is it because there has been a traffic incident there? Is it because it is near the local shop or the local school? How are you choosing where you are doing footpaths?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: The 3½ kilometres is in existing areas of the city. We are actually doing more. We are adding footpaths in the newer areas that are growing and subdivisions and development opening, but just an older areas of the city where the road network was put down years ago we are adding 3½ kilometres per year in that part of the city. I will hand to Tom Boyle who will talk about how we prioritise where the footpaths begin.

Mr BOYLE: As I mentioned before, we are currently refreshing our approach to how we prioritise. In the past we have been relying on a footpath strategy from 2013, which has used a modelling approach to determine priorities across the city. The new approach is that we are working actively with the community to develop the prioritisation approach. Essentially it follows some best practice around focusing on where high demand is and high need is, for example, people [inaudible] to get around the city. We are also overlaying what I call the complex, messy reality of planning for local government, which is we have to respond to grant applications. Whenever a grant program is announced we have to align projects with that grant program and that might affect our priorities as well.

The CHAIR: Just going back to the footpaths, when you have new developments, do the developers not pay a contribution and put the footpaths in so that council does not have to do that and the developers do it?

Mr DAVID HUGHES: That is correct in new development and those meters are being added as the development grows. The amount that we were talking about previously is where we are going back into areas that

did not have footpath put in when it was developed. Some of those might have been streets that were put down 70, 80, 100 years ago and we have to lay those footpaths now.

The CHAIR: Yes, that is right. The regulations were different back in those days.

Mr DAVID HUGHES: Correct.

Mr DAN HUGHES: Sorry, I must apologise too. If you are hearing the noise of a concrete saw on the footpath outside. Just in case it is a bit broken up, it is outside.

The CHAIR: What a coincidence.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In your submission it says that you would "welcome additional opportunities to embed the Safe System approach into the work of local government" and that Transport for NSW "could facilitate training, for local government, in Safe System design and implementation." You made that suggestion in your submission. Have you approached Transport for NSW?

Mr BOYLE: Not to my knowledge at this point in time. However, we do have a good relationship with them and it is something that we could explore further. We have a review happening at the moment where we are trying to understand how to apply the Safe System project assessment in our capital works projects. It would be a useful proposal to engage Transport for NSW in how to apply that.

The CHAIR: I am just curious about this part of your submission. It said 'pedestrian and cyclist' was 180 casualties. Do you know how many of them were cyclists?

Mr BOYLE: I can probably answer that but can you please clarify the question.

The CHAIR: Your submission says:

Lake Macquarie city has a higher proportion of driver and motorcyclist casualties (1,715) relative to passenger (332), pedestrian and cyclist (180) casualties.

Mr BOYLE: So what I will quote is the latest data. When we prepared the submission since then the crash data has been updated. The data that I have available in front of me is that there were 64 crashes involving cyclists between 2014 and 2019 involving 66 injuries to cyclists, and for pedestrians it was 100 crashes with 17 killed and 100 left injured.

The CHAIR: With the cyclists, do you know what was the main cause? Was it because they were sharing the road? Was it on footpaths?

Mr BOYLE: According to the data, I think we can get back to you on the specifics, but it is a variety of issues. It is also relatively evenly spread across State and local roads as well in a variety of speed zones but mainly around 60 kilometres per hour.

The CHAIR: Do you have parts of Lake Macquarie where you have a shared or dedicated bicycle lane or are they actually on the road?

Mr BOYLE: We have 183 kilometres of shared paths. We do also have on-road cycling facilities but for the most part, most of our roads do not meet requirements for the majority of cyclists.

The CHAIR: Did most of those accidents occur on those roads? If you need to you are welcome to take it on notice.

Mr BOYLE: I think we would need to take that on notice.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Something that was alarming in your submission was that you said:

From 2014-2018, Lake Macquarie City experienced 50 fatalities, 606 serious injuries, 984 moderate injuries and 587 minor/other injuries. This places the City in the top 10 in the State for the 'most number of casualties for combined fatalities and injuries'.

That is pretty alarming. Is there any strategy to try to take you out of the top 10?

Mr BOYLE: Yes. I will clarify that since the data has been updated we are now fifteenth in that ranking but it is still high obviously out of the number of local government areas in New South Wales. It is also worth noting that per capita data is not available and that would be quite helpful for comparison between local government areas. However, in answering your question, everything we have spoken about here before speaks to how we are trying to tackle that. In addition, as I mentioned, we are refreshing our active transport strategies and road safety and addressing road trauma is a key thing of that. In addition, we have been trying to work out how best to apply the Safe System guidance when scoping capital works projects.

The CHAIR: Your submission states:

We suggest that specific road safety projects may be better identified in lower level strategies, which adapt to changing priorities year on year, therefore accommodating new infrastructure, changes to government policy and changes to funding arrangements.

Would you like to elucidate a little on that for us, please?

Mr BOYLE: Yes, I will have a go and then leave it open to my colleagues. The terms of reference for this inquiry were also looking at the role of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework for local government. All local governments are required, as you are probably aware, to produce a Community Strategic Plan. That is a really high-level document that sets the tone and agenda. It sets out what the community wants a local government to achieve over a 10-year period. I mentioned earlier in this meeting that we did a lot of work with our community to establish the community vision and values. One of those values is around safe mobility and accessibility around the city. That is obviously a key theme that sets the agenda for lower-level strategies. Some of those lower-level strategies I mentioned were, for example, active transport strategies we are working on. But it also flows through to what we call locality planning. Locality planning is specific precinct planning. We have nine town centres, for example, and we prepare individual plans for those areas. So we would look at more detailed road safety matters at that level as well. So you would see that there is a linear progression from the high-level strategies through to our planning and then infrastructure planning.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Boyle, and thank you all for appearing before the Committee today. We may send you some additional questions in writing and 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 DAVID HUGHES: We would. Not a problem.

The CHAIR: Thank you again, gentlemen, for appearing at today's inquiry.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

WARREN CLARK, Chief Executive Officer, National Road Transport Association, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Before we proceed, do you have any questions about today's hearing process?

Mr CLARK: No, I am fine. Thank you.

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

Mr CLARK: Sure. Chair and Committee, thank you for inviting the National Road Transport Association, or NatRoad, to participate in the hearing. There have been many changes in Australia and around the world since we lodged our submission to the inquiry. The pandemic has changed everything, including reducing the volume of traffic on Australian roads, but freight task has continued to increase and will continue to increase. In our submission we highlighted four important issues: heavy vehicle safety, local road issues, infrastructure and local government role. We await the latest statistics on fatalities for heavy vehicles for June 2020, but the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics data for the March quarter shows that fatalities involving heavy trucks increased by 5.5 per cent when compared with the corresponding 12 months over the same period for the previous year. Yet it decreased by an average of 2.8 per cent for the three years to March 2020. However, I emphasise that no break-up for rural roads as opposed to city roads exists in these figures.

This reinforces what we are saying about heavy vehicle fatality rates in our submission: They are improving but not at a rate that we would like. This month is Rural Road Safety Month and we support the efforts by the Federal Government to make targeted investment through the Black Spot Program to address high-risk areas. Investment in programs to improve infrastructure is vital, as we emphasised in our submission. Our submission particularly speaks to the need for infrastructure proposals to ensure the construction of appropriate rest areas for heavy vehicle drivers so they can properly manage their fatigue. The release issued by Federal ministers for safety month notes that 109 people have already lost their lives on New South Wales roads this year. NatRoad fully supports measures to reduce this tragic toll. The submission we lodged with your Committee contains policy proposals that we believe would assist in reducing the burden on society and, in particular, rural communities. Chair, I am happy to take any questions on our submission now, if that suits.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Clark. Your submission states:

The construction of heavy vehicle rest areas must form part of the road infrastructure planning.

How frequent are heavy vehicle rest areas on local roads, and how responsive are councils to the rest needs of heavy vehicle drivers?

Mr CLARK: This is very mixed. In our submission there is a requirement to have one every so many kilometres. What we do know is there are just not enough heavy vehicle rest areas on local roads, State roads and federal roads. When these facilities have been built, they have also been overcrowded by recreational vehicles—campervans, caravans and things like that. To answer your question on the councils' willingness, that is pretty mixed. Some councils are opposed to trucks parking within their borders; other councils see the value and the money that it brings to the town.

The CHAIR: Why is that, Mr Clark? Sorry to interject.

Mr CLARK: I think it is more about they do not understand the value that it brings into the town, but also they do not want the trucks parked along the side of roads and things like that. I think it is probably pressure from their residents, honestly, that they do not want heavy vehicles sitting on the side of roads or in areas within their town. What some councils have realised throughout the State rural and regional areas is that if there is a heavy flow of vehicles coming into their town, it is actually bringing money into their towns. They provide minimal facilities. The drivers spend money, they stay, they move on. They use the facilities.

So it is a bit of a mixed bag. We would like to see more engagement with the rural towns in allowing the vehicles to stop, because it also provides—assuming that it is appropriate—a facility where these guys can pull up and safely take their break and actually be within the law. As we know, the Heavy Vehicle National Law is very prescriptive. If these guys are not taking their breaks when they are supposed to, it is a risk to the community and they also risk very heavy fines. It all helps with that.

The CHAIR: All these bypasses have come up over the years. In the old days trucks used to go through the towns. I remember when I was young, for example at Bulahdelah there were many service stations and rest stops with trucks parked. Could part of the problem be because trucks might not be going through the towns the way they did in the old days when drivers could have a rest, a bite to eat, a chat with a fellow truck driver, they just keep going because they are on the highway?

Mr CLARK: That is part of the problem. This is why we are saying when we build roads—local, State, Federal—we have got to take into consideration actually building in proper facilities for these guys to stop with these new roads. Like you have just indicated there, one of their traditional stops has been taken out of the mix, so it does add pressure to the whole system when we have got to get proper fatigue. As you know, fatigue and speed are probably one of the major causes of fatalities on the rural roads.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Mr Clark, I am from the electorate of Barwon, which covers a lot of regional New South Wales. I have an interest in rest areas, places like Packsaddle, Topar and Coombah. Traditional roadhouses that have the only facilities available where parking is not so much of an issue, they would like more parking so more people could comply more easily with their logbook requirements. In discussions with them they have talked about the facilities that heavy vehicle drivers are looking for and most often it is things like a shower, a meal that is not something that is plastic and is actually nutritional and enjoyable, and the opportunity to pull up somewhere quiet and have a rest. Can you talk about what a good rest area looks like in those places and if you have any commentary on how that should be delivered or who should be providing it, whether it is a private investment to provide that facility which contributes to road safety, or whether you think that there is a role for State or local government to step in?

Mr CLARK: That is a pretty comprehensive question, but there are probably different tiers of rest stops. Their log book requirements require them to stop at certain times and pull up at certain periods of time, depending on how long they have been driving. The thing that you have highlighted there is very, very important to the heavy vehicle sector, particularly when we are trying to get gender diversity to come into our industry and we are trying to get more female drivers involved. The big thing is when they have to take one of their major breaks, they have to be able to come in, they have to be able to get a nice shower, they have to be able to get decent food, and they have actually got to be able to take a rest break. A lot of the roadhouses or the commercial entities provide those facilities and they do a very good job of it. We work very heavily with BP and BP pride themselves on their road stop facilities.

There is always a constant battle with food. For our guys, they are now looking more towards having good quality food, good home cooked type food, as opposed to McDonald's and things like that, because they are starting to see the necessity of it. But when we get out in the rural and remote areas, you cannot have a truck stop everywhere. This is where we are asking for Federal and State Government to be looking to provide a certain quality of rest stops certain distances apart. Some of those things, they do not have to be Taj Mahals, but where they can get off the road, there might be a bit of shade and where they can actually go to a toilet, and where they can get fresh water and at the odd time be able to take a shower. It seems pretty basic but if you really look about it where you have people—I know this is maybe a bit too much information—who actually have to go to the toilet under trucks and things like that. I think we have to get past that, we have to move into a more professional facility.

To sum up—I do not want to take too much time—my thoughts are that there is a mix of these facilities that need to be provided by government, they need to be built into and planned in all future road building. We have got a period now where a lot of roads and a lot of facilities have been destroyed by flood and by bushfires, now is the time for local government to try and build it in with their planning. Any new road that the Federal Government or the State Government puts in, we should be at least building in proper rest facilities for the heavy vehicle sector.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Just a follow up to that, in some of those very remote locations where there are very limited opportunities and places to stop, like the places I mentioned earlier, it sounds like you are saying there could be a role for a public-private partnership in terms of how those facilities are delivered, given that that is probably where people would be stopping anyway based on distance and log book, and also the availability of a feed and a place to pull up.

Mr CLARK: I think there is opportunity and it would depend on each situation, but it is really important in those remote areas because it is a pretty lonely road, it is a pretty long road, we are trying to manage fatigue, we are trying to keep everyone safe. This is the big thing about it, we are trying to keep everyone safe, but a simple thing as an area that is suitable for a B-double driver to pull off to the side of the road, just to be able to pull up and have a rest if he is tired, a lot of the time that does not exist at the moment. It is also a problem in the urban areas too. The rural areas are not alone in that area.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Following up those questions, I have noticed with the heavy vehicles that often there is now another attached trailer, which is often as big as the semitrailer itself. Is that adding to road accidents and to the stress on the driver, having such a heavy vehicle plus another one attached?

Mr CLARK: The question is really about the size of the vehicle. We do a lot of work with a company called National Transport Insurance. They are the major insurer of heavy vehicles in this country. All the evidence shows that just because the vehicle is bigger does not mean it is less safe. In actual fact, I think you will find a lot

of the data that comes through, and I cannot actually talk about the exact data, but a B-double is a vehicle that pulls a trailer behind it. Then you have other performance vehicles. A performance vehicle is a vehicle that could carry extra mass that might be a bit longer, et cetera, et cetera. There is absolutely no evidence to show that these vehicles are more risk than the smaller vehicles. In actual fact what we are finding is that the risk that they pose is probably less than the ordinary semitrailer and the smaller vehicles. We have to realise that a heavy vehicle is classed from 4.5 tonnes up to triple road trains and things like that. There is a large array of vehicles and our evidence shows that the longer vehicles, the bigger vehicles are just as safe as what the ordinary vehicle is.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Has there been any assessment of the impact on the drivers? Is there greater stress for those drivers?

Mr CLARK: There is greater skill in operating the vehicle, full stop, these days with the level of technology that sits in the cabin. The technology in the vehicle has improved dramatically over the last 10 years, and when they come on to drive a larger vehicle, say a B-double or a triple road train, these guys have generally had quite a bit of experience, they have had quite a bit of training and they know how to operate these vehicles. Sure, these vehicles are different to drive, they are different to back, they have got different performance capabilities, all these sort of things. But stress, it is a stressful job. I do not believe the size of the vehicle—and I do not think there is any evidence out there showing that the size of the vehicle—adds stress to the driver. I think there are far greater stressors on a driver's life than the size of the vehicle. Generally the bigger vehicles or the newer vehicles, greater technology and greater performance and greater safety.

The CHAIR: Mr Clark, how engaged are councils with heavy vehicle organisations, such as the National Road Transport Association, when they plan and implement road safety projects on roads often used by heavy vehicles?

Mr CLARK: I think what you have touched on there is the key to all of it. It is about engaging industry, it is about engaging associations and it is about getting a better asset and better asset management. At this stage I would say we both make some effort in that area, but I would like to see that effort and communication improved dramatically over the years to come. When the Federal Government spouts that the freight task is going to double by the year 2025, there are going to be more and more vehicles on the road. The greater input that industry can have in the development stage of roads and where things should fit is not to make it more difficult for local groups or State groups, it is to actually give them a better asset and enable them to manage it more productively right through into the future.

The CHAIR: Does your association approach different councils? If you know there is a lot more transport going down certain routes, do you approach a certain council and go, "listen, our drivers need these facilities in this area here, that area there" and what is the reaction from council in implementing the needs of truck drivers?

Mr CLARK: I think, to answer that fairly, we approach councils on a random basis. It is generally when there is an issue. We are not really involved in their planning, although we are sometimes, and some councils contact us proactively to get our thoughts on some sort of asset introduction. I think really it has to be a process that we push harder on and that we push going forward. Everything can be improved and, like I say, it is just about getting a better asset, better management, with greater safety and greater efficiency.

Mr ROY BUTLER: It is not part of your submission, but one of the things that I am curious to get your opinion on is the rules around combinations, where a conventional truck or a cabover is used and, essentially, one trailer would be legal on a cabover but not legal on a conventional truck. Is there any relationship between those things and road safety, from your perspective?

Mr CLARK: There are different types of trucks. There is a bonneted truck, where the engine is in front of the driver, and obviously a cabover, where the driver sits on the engine, basically. Those two trucks can pull any size of payload depending on their rating and their ability. When we look at that, there is absolutely no difference in safety in that area. When we start to talk about the areas that probably are a safety issue, we have to realise that transport is an essential item. I think COVID has actually shown that, but there is more to just the guys that are travelling long haul and interstate. You have plumbers and builders, all of these guys could have nine or 10 trucks. What is happening in that area? Is that as heavily monitored as what the long-haul guys are doing? Probably not. I think there is a lot of improvement there. We would like to get those guys engaged a hell of a lot more in providing a better outcome for local communities. I am not quite sure if that answers your question, but that is how I interpreted it.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Yes, you have answered it. It is in terms of the overall length. If the overall length of a truck and trailer combination is 19 metres, a trailer that might fit on a cabover and be under the overall length will not go on a traditional bonneted truck.

Mr CLARK: Yes.

Mr ROY BUTLER: I am just wondering if there is any interaction between those two. Obviously the truck would be two or three metres longer if the trailer went on a bonneted truck as opposed to a cabover. I am just wondering if there are any safety implications from that? A lot of people who use trucks around harvest time, for example, the truck may only come out for a few months of the year around harvest time, they might not have a lot of choice in terms of the combinations that they can use to stay under overall length, but that is probably a very specific issue to agriculture in regional New South Wales.

Mr CLARK: Yes. Look, it is. I am happy to take that on notice. It brings out quite a few profound issues. I am happy to deal with you guys directly on that or in a formal written notice. But, just to summarise it really quickly, the Heavy Vehicle National Law, which is currently under review at the present time, is very clear about the length of vehicles and what you can and cannot do. If you go outside those requirements, the fines are quite heavy. The law is in place for a reason. If you stick within the law, then we are assuming there is a better safety outcome and you should not get into trouble. Around harvest time, look, harvest time and the use of trucks in agricultural times is a little outside the realm of normal transport, I suppose, but the biggest issue we would have with that is—sorry, this may be getting off track a little bit—when those vehicles come in and are used to compete against mainstream freight. I think that is when you could get safety issues. That is something that we really need to tighten up.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There used to be a Black Spot Program at locations where there were high levels of accidents. Is that still functioning and do you support it?

Mr CLARK: Yes, it is. I believe the Government about three weeks ago announced that it was going to be putting quite a bit of investment into the Black Spot Program. That should address the high-risk areas. That is something that our industry, our association and our members welcome, because we know where the areas are, the Government recognises it needs to spend some money on it and it provides a safer asset for everyone.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Have they asked you to provide a list of those locations that your drivers are aware of, or could you provide a list?

Mr CLARK: Yes, we could certainly provide a list from our members and our drivers on where the problem areas are, but I think with State and Federal governments, through their departments, and also the police and insurance companies, I would say they have a pretty substantial list on that now. What our organisation is working towards is actually getting that information to drivers in cab as they go along, not only for heavy vehicle drivers, but also available to light vehicle drivers, on where these areas are that are high-risk areas and also where there are rest stops. We work in the background all the time. The Government has a great initiative in addressing those black spots and we applaud the collaboration that we have with those guys to remove those out of the freight network.

The CHAIR: Mr Clark, in discussions with truck drivers, what are the main issues that they have raised?

Mr CLARK: In line with this inquiry, I would say it is to do with suitable and adequate rest areas and the ability to actually get into those rest areas. It might sound a little unusual, but—not at the present time—a lot of the population travels around the countryside with a caravan and an RV. A lot of the time our guys come in at 1.00 and 2.00 in the morning and these areas could be completely full of people that have caravans. These guys are doing it for a living. By law they have to stop or they face substantial fines and impose substantial risk to the general road user. They complain about that quite regularly. But, really, they just want good, solid asset management where roads are upgraded so that it is not as hard on them, it is not as hard on the equipment and they can provide a more efficient delivery of the freight and keep the public safe.

The CHAIR: In regard to roads, when your drivers report to you that there are some roads that obviously need upgrading, who do you report those issues to?

Mr CLARK: Our organisation is national, so it depends on what the issue is and who owns the road. As we highlighted in our submission, sometimes there is a little confusion about who owns the road. We will take those issues directly to the council, to Transport for NSW, to VicRoads—whoever it may be, we will take it straight to the source. Generally we find that the road manager within their ability will try to solve that road issue. There are some issues that they cannot fix immediately, things like bridges and things like that. That is a major bugbear for our sector. The bridge asset impedes our guys a lot and it is the management of those assets that we have to take directly to the bridge program. Depending on who it is, we get onto it straightaway if we can.

Mr NICK LALICH: The only thing I would like to say is that I have a reserve behind my place and every weekend there is about four or five trucks parked along there. The guys must live in the local areas so they park their trucks there and go home. The trucks are sitting there all weekend and sometimes the mechanics come

and work on the trucks during the weekend as well. They are idling the motors, which I understand also works as a jackhammer on the road. The idling wrecks the road. Whose responsibility is that? The truck drivers? We could complain and get the council to come and maybe book them and all that but I do not want to do that. These blokes have got—if you want to call them—small businesses and you do not want to affect their way of life, but they do cause problems for the community. As you know, you cannot see around them and four trucks do take up a lot of room. I could hold up my video now and you could see probably two of them because there are a few trees on the way. You can see they are there now. Whose responsibility do you think that is more? Is it for the police to look after it or the council to look after it all the truck companies to more or less say not to park on residential roads?

Mr CLARK: I think that is a pretty pertinent question and there is a lot of background to the question. There are two things. Truck drivers need to respect the community and the local community. A lot of small operators are in the rural areas and there are probably not a lot of facilities in the rural areas. In some areas there may be but it is a bit complex. I suppose to me I think it is who owns the facility. It is probably the local government that owns the facility but what I urge local government to do is work with these guys because not everyone is big enough to have their own depot. Our industry is such that the barrier to entry is purchasing a new truck and probably working for someone else for five years and then you come in and start your own business. Once you start to buy depots and things like that a lot of these guys cannot afford it but a lot of your local residents are probably these guys that are putting money into your town, they keep you going to the schools, all these sorts of things.

I think it is probably more who owns the road technically. I think it is more probably the local council but I urge the local council to work with these guys as long as they are not impacting the local community too much then they are an important part of the local community and they contribute to the local community. We have major problems with this in city areas where a lot of people come in and start up quite large businesses and compete against the other ones. They do not have depots. Those guys are actually a problem because they are just everywhere and they compete against the bigger ones and they do not have the facility outlay. They take up all the spaces in BP truck stops and all these sorts of things. It is a little different but I would just ask that probably the local guys are the ones that police it because you probably know them a bit better. Work with them to get a mutual benefit would be my suggestion there.

Mr NICK LALICH: Thank you.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: On my way here today there was a truck that had to screech its brakes on because cars constantly cut in front of them and then pull up at lights. There have been in the past campaigns through the Government to make drivers aware of that problem. Has that been something that you would want to see reactivated or are drivers being responsible when moving around in front of trucks?

Mr CLARK: That is a really good question. It highlights a really important point. Our statistics show that I think it is 83 per cent of the time when there is a fatality unfortunately it is the poor guy driving the smaller vehicle. I think those campaigns are absolutely essential going forward and I think we should be continuing to do them until we are absolutely sick of hearing about sharing the road with heavy vehicles because, as you know, until we are absolutely sick of hearing the message, the message is probably only just getting through. I think we also need to build it in through the training courses for our young people getting their licences, our L-platers and our P-platers. The other thing I want to touch on there is that NRMA will do a campaign and New South Wales will do a campaign and National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will do a campaign. There seems to be no coordination. They are all really good campaigns but would it not be good if we could coordinate those across the country, across the council and across industry to get a bigger impact to our road users?

The CHAIR: Good point.

Mr CLARK: Sharing the road with a truck is a difficult thing but it is an essential item on our road. They are not just another road user as we have seen in the past couple of months. We have got to educate our people.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just following up some of the earlier points, sometimes on some of the highways there is a heavy vehicle lane like going up towards Newcastle. Should that be expanded to provide for heavy vehicles to have an actual left lane restricted to heavy vehicles?

Mr CLARK: That is a good point, actually. I think the public gets most frustrated with trucks when they cannot get past them and then the heavy vehicle gets the most frustrated with the public when they are being held up because their time is set very prescriptively to the Heavy Vehicle National Law and they have got to be in places at certain times to make deliveries. Setting an asset build where there is a designated lane for heavy vehicles would be a fantastic thing, but the cost of doing that I just do not know what that would be. Look, it

would be a great thing. They do that sort of thing in Europe and other countries and probably we could look at that in areas of high traffic use like a long that particular freeway you are talking about and see how it goes.

The CHAIR: One issue that has been brought to my attention on many occasions—and I understand the role that truck drivers play and obviously they need to make a livelihood—on highways you have two lanes and quite often you will see two trucks that are side-by-side because one is trying to get in front of the other one. It causes a lot of frustration to the other drivers in the fast lane when they are waiting sometimes for minutes and kilometre after kilometre, waiting for either one truck to slow down to let the other guy in front, or the other guy to give up and go behind the other truck driver. What do you believe could be a resolution in regards to that issue?

Mr CLARK: I think it raises the issue that not everyone does the right thing I suppose. There is an element of the industry—and it is very small element of the industry—that probably does that. It is not also unique to heavy vehicles. Let us face it, a lot of the time you see a small car in the wrong lane and you cannot get past it. We are all in a hurry these days. We are all in a hurry to get somewhere. But to fix that, it is greater education. It is about respect for other users on the roads, and that is something that we need to be doing in our sector. It is really about respect for people on the road. A heavy vehicle is quite frustrating for people when they are holding up traffic and should respect those people. Unless it is some safety issue where they should be getting in the left lane and working it out between the various drivers, then there is probably not a lot of excuse to do that going forward for those guys, really.

The CHAIR: I have noticed some areas, especially southbound [inaudible] towards Canberra. There are some parts on a highway, particularly when you have got a hill climb and they have actually got an extra lane, which makes it a lot easier.

Mr CLARK: Yes, that is correct.

The CHAIR: So you have got that slow lane for the truck drivers, as Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile mentioned. Perhaps that is something we should look at seriously—maybe implementing more of those across our roads.

Mr CLARK: I think that is a great initiative. Let's face it: If we know that there is a designated lane for slower vehicles and they can move off to the left, they are a lot happier with it. You are talking about probably one of the best pieces of road in the country. The M1 going north is obviously a similar sort of quality. If we had the ability to improve our infrastructure to allow slower vehicles to move off the side, that is going to make everybody's life easier, including there. Remember, these guys who are doing it have difficult jobs. They have long hours in trucks alone and they do not want to be causing anyone problems. They just want to be getting on and doing their job. So that would relieve stress for them and get a better result for everyone.

The CHAIR: Going back to your rest stops, when you leave Sydney—again, I am talking about southbound because that happens to be the way that I travel—there are no rest stops. The first rest stop is just before Pheasants Nest, before what we call the twin servos down that way.

Mr CLARK: Yes, that is correct.

The CHAIR: There was an accident there about a month ago. A truck went off the highway and crashed into the rest area. I do not know if you recollect that event.

Mr CLARK: Yes, I do.

The CHAIR: There are a lot of recreational vehicles [RVs]. The only way, I guess, to overcome that would probably be to increase the size of it and make it more accommodating for both sectors.

Mr CLARK: I think you cannot ignore one sector for the other.

The CHAIR: Would you suggest a separate area for RV and caravan users, separate to truck use?

Mr CLARK: Ideally, it would be a separate area because some vehicles are livestock trucks—quite smelly. You have got some vehicles that are refrigerated vans—quite noisy. You have got guys who travel around the countryside. We have got to accommodate these people too. They travel in groups and they might want to have a little party, but that blocks off the road. I think the more rest areas we can get and the more segregation we can get, the better it is. But then they have to be policed and then someone has to police them. They do not have to be Taj Mahals but they just have to have the ability for a heavy vehicle to get off the road. A lot of the safety facilities that they are putting on the road, like the wire rope you have seen along the road—sure, there is no doubt that those things save lives, but they also impede big, heavy vehicles from even being able to get off the road slightly to allow the traffic to get through when they have got an issue. Segregation would be great and more frequently would be even better. One of the big areas that you highlighted, though—southbound, that is your first

one. Then, northbound is—I cannot think of the name, but it is the name of the Hawkesbury River there, which is about the first time that you can stop.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Brooklyn, for that way.

Mr CLARK: Yes. Look at that distance. It is huge.

The CHAIR: The only rest stop that I am aware of once you leave Sydney is if you go Mooney Mooney bridge, on the left there. But, again, you cannot really park there. It is not big enough for trucks to park there. It makes it difficult, especially if they want a toilet break.

Mr CLARK: Yes, this is the challenge and this is why we keep emphasising rest stops and things like that. Again, I just want to highlight that when we are planning new roads and when we are looking at infrastructure and assets, we have got to be looking at these things going into the future because our freight task is set to get bigger and bigger. When we build new roads and abandon old roads instead of digging up the road, is there a facility where a truck could pull off that if he has got a problem with his load or take a 15-minute break if he is falling asleep? The sort of things like that, we have got to plan. Then, when they have to take bigger breaks, they need shade. They need to be able to get off the road. They need to be able to go to sleep without all the traffic and they need to be able to go to the toilet and things like that.

The CHAIR: Yes. With a lot of these rest areas, apart from your roadhouse or your BP service station where they have those facilities for truck drivers—with the other ones that you see on the side of the road every so often, a lot of them do not even have a toilet facility. Would you recommend that some of those areas have toilet facilities and showers as well?

Mr CLARK: Yes, and fresh water.

The CHAIR: Yes, because you cannot drink the water. You are absolutely right.

Mr CLARK: Yes. You have got to realise that we are really relying on these men and women to keep the country going. We have seen it in the past seven months. We have got to start treating them more professionally. Our issue is these guys are pretty skilled and pretty hard workers and we want to keep them in the industry. We want to attract more people in the industry. Do you know what? We actually want females in the industry too, driving trucks, because they are probably as good truck drivers as anyone but when they have got no toilets and there is no water and they cannot get a break, it is a pretty tough call.

The CHAIR: Just thinking about female drivers—even male drivers, really—if you do have these facilities on the side of the road, what sort of safety measures could be put in place, particularly if there were more female truck drivers?

Mr CLARK: Yes, that is an issue. I suppose that one I would have to take on notice because I would like to explore that a little bit further, really.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Are there male and female toilets at truck stops, or not?

The CHAIR: Usually, yes.

Mr CLARK: Some of the facilities are first class and some are not. In some cases, female drivers have to share shower facilities with male drivers. Security is not such a big thing in that area because obviously there are a lot of people around, but that probably is not that great, really. If I was a female I would be wanting my own area.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: This was an issue with the RFS. It had the same problem and it had to start installing female toilets in all its brigade areas. If you want to attract women, that is an area that they would be interested in, I am sure.

Mr CLARK: Yes.

The CHAIR: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr Clark, for attending today's hearing. Unfortunately, we have come to a close. We are running a little bit behind schedule. We may send you some additional questions in writing and 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 CLARK: Definitely, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much again for attending today's hearing.

Mr CLARK: Thank you, Chair and Committee.

(The witness withdrew.)

ANDREW ASPDEN, Manager of Transport Planning, City of Sydney, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

PETER WARRINGTON, Transport Policy Manager, City of Sydney, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

PETER WRIGHT, Road Safety Officer, City of Sydney, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Would anyone like to make a short statement?

Mr ASPDEN: Yes. I will be making the statement. Good afternoon, Chair, Deputy Chair and members of the Staysafe Committee. The City of Sydney supports the work of the Staysafe Committee across the years and is with the New South Wales Government a firm supporter of Vision Zero. The City supports the inquiry into trauma on local roads and would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to contribute today. We have made a formal submission and today will make some key points to reinforce that submission and reflect our experiences with the COVID pandemic and we will answer any questions that members have.

We believe that generally there is little disagreement across New South Wales on the key risk factors that contribute to fatal and serious injuries on local roads. We support the Safe System Assessment Framework, we support the NSW Road Safety Strategy, especially its focus on safe and liveable communities. We joined the Local Government Road Safety Program, we support the Movement and Place Framework and we support most of the elements of Future Transport 2056. Importantly, we have made significant improvements in the underlying road conditions in our area. Most of these have been done in partnership with the New South Wales Government. Lower speed limits, more pedestrian crossings and countdown timers, separated cycleways to safely grow ridership and the transformation of George Street has created a world-class, low speed boulevard.

But still we have trauma on our roads. Most of it is various injuries not fatalities, but they often involve the most vulnerable road users, people walking or riding bikes. Fifty-seven per cent of our crashes involve one of these groups. In many instances it is simple maths, so many people exposed to a moderate level of risk. In the city centre 92 per cent of all trips are made on foot. People walking do not get enough space, they do not get enough priority at signals, and there is too much traffic going through the city. Vision Zero dictates that we have to reduce those risks because as the city grows we will have even more people exposed to those risks, up to two million people a day in 2056.

We are very mindful that the situation on many of our local roads is not the same as those facing many of our local government colleagues across New South Wales. Redfern is not Red Rock, and Glebe is not Gulargambone. Our local streets are often narrow, dense and full of activity, and those in the rural areas may often be gravel, important for local access for people and produce, and very long and hard to maintain. For us, grappling with that diversity of the State's local roads is where the key focus of this inquiry should be, getting the planning and the governance right. We know there is not a limitless bucket of money for engineering solutions, so the focus has to be on cost efficient measures that reduce trauma. Luckily many of these are consistent with the liveability we desire on our streets. We see the main enemy of efficiency as duplication and red tape. Our submission outlines some of the approaches to reducing trauma by accelerating the implementation of the things that we all agree on, by trusting the City of Sydney and its relatively large and experienced team to focus on managing its streets in the same way that it manages its planning, its parks and its waste.

We work side by side with government during the pandemic, pop-up cycleways, additional countdown timers and even more of the local government 40 kilometres per hour limit. We are proud of each of these successes and hope that the New South Wales Government representatives feel that pride too. This is what it means to create safe, liveable and productive cities. As we move into the future, hopefully with economic and social activity recovering, our desire is to have more control over the local streets under our authority. We want to be able to be agile in our decision-making process, avoid duplication across levels of government and become a proactive roads authority to reduce road trauma. We want to see local roads become streets again, streets that are safe and pleasant places for our communities to live, work and play in, street space allocation that is open for all road users, accessible and safe. We are happy to take questions now. Thank you.

The CHAIR: In regards to truck deliveries in city areas, I believe council has a lot of restrictions, trucks are only allowed between certain times. If those restrictions were lifted and trucks were allowed in after hours, would that not alleviate congestion and reduce traffic incidents, particularly pedestrians and cyclists from being run over? Why does council not look into that?

Mr ASPDEN: Thank you for the question. I think there are a few different elements in there around truck deliveries and service deliveries into the city. I think we are supportive of the idea of a broader range of times that vehicles can deliver.

The CHAIR: A lot of accidents are caused by trucks because they cannot see cyclists, they are turning, and that is how a lot of the injuries and fatalities are occurring.

Mr ASPDEN: I might have to take that question on notice. I need to double check statistics, but I also think we have made some moves towards allowing access late into the evenings. I just have to go away and check that.

The CHAIR: Thank you. The information that has been coming through the inquiry so far seems to indicate that if that was the case, that those hours could be lifted, it would certainly alleviate traffic congestion and injuries and fatalities. I am happy for you to take that on notice. How does the local community work with your council to identify and deliver road safety initiatives, and how could the State Government support this better?

Mr ASPDEN: We have a very good and close connection with a lot of our local communities. We have a very strong community engagement process whenever we make any proposals through the Road Safety Partnership Program. We are working very closely with the schools, the P&Cs and the principals so we have a very strong connection to our community. In terms of the Government supporting us on those things, I think again when it comes to health and education, departments such as NSW Health and New South Wales education provide us with support and connections to some of those organisations, and again, to continue working with our Transport for NSW colleagues to get plans drawn up and things approved. Does that answer the question?

The CHAIR: Well, yes, sort of.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you very much for appearing before our Committee. I notice in your submission you reported that you have recently introduced a 20-kilometre-per-hour speed limit in George Street and you say that was successful. What feedback have you had on that 20-kilometre speed limit?

Mr ASPDEN: Mr Warrington, are you able to respond to this one?

Mr WARRINGTON: The 20-kilometre speed limit operates in the pedestrianised area of George Street where the tram operates. There was a very long and considered conversation looking at both the interface of the new light rail with all types of vehicles and road users and then what was a reasonable travel speed for the new light rail, which we all support very strongly. Recognising that 20 kilometres is not a widespread travel scheme, I can remember conversations about that for four or five years. It seems to be working really well just because it is such a shared and unique environment of trucks accessing loading docks, people walking through there, people milling around, and then the light rail coming through at fairly regular intervals.

It is understood that the low travel speed creates a safe and reasonably efficient environment given the land use and the place changes we are trying to achieve there. I am not aware of any formal evaluation at the moment; certainly it is on everyone's radar just to get that right balance between the economic and the business case for the light rail and to keep people safe. It is very hard to make that judgement at the moment obviously with reduced levels of activity from the pandemic. We do not want the community to think we have got a broader aspirations for applying 20 kilometres out there on the broader network. It is a very unique piece of the road network on George Street where the light rail is.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Following up on that question with the light rail as well, would it work to actually prohibit vehicles—cars and trucks except for deliveries—in George Street and some of those other city heavily congested roads to encourage people not use George Street?

Mr ASPDEN: So, George Street has been maintained for local access to properties only. There are restrictions in place that mean that vehicles cannot travel multiple blocks. So once you reach the end of a block, you must exit George Street. It has been done to maintain access. I think as the building stock turns over, developments happen and driveways get removed from George Street, we will be able to further remove vehicle access from George Street over time. All vehicles permitted in George Street are there for local businesses and to serve the properties along there.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Welcome, gentlemen. I have a couple of points. Can I ask what the ratio of residents versus businesses in your local government area is?

Mr ASPDEN: I would have to take that one on notice I am afraid.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I am coming from a background of 12 years in the Hills Shire Council and I know that City of Sydney and Hills are on par with the leading councils in New South Wales. There is some

commonality there but very different in the space that you operate in. I talk to a lot of tradies and businesses and they refuse to take any jobs in the city. It is impossible to access and park to do work there so those residents or businesses that might want work done in there really struggle at times to get people to come in and do that work because it is simply not friendly for businesses to come in, to unload in loading docks, for tradies to park to do two hours on a job installing venetians or whatever it might be.

There is the issue there that I think needs to be addressed. Also, you talked about the willingness or the keenness to return local roads into local village sorts of environments and that sort of thing. I have seen myself and others have—and I would love your opinion on it because it is probably going to be contrary—but City of Sydney is a very unique council area. It is not like a lot of other local government areas. It is a CBD. It is very different in that way so the pressures to perform for businesses as well as residential needs has to have that consideration. How do you see trying to accommodate both those needs going forward?

Mr ASPDEN: I think that is a very, very good question. To start with, we work quite closely with the New South Wales Government and Transport for NSW on parking and servicing within the city centre to provide the ability for tradies and servicing to occur within the city centre. Obviously kerbside space is very limited we require buildings to provide off-street facilities for services, for deliveries and for tradies to park. We also work with a number of those developers to try and look at opportunities to work outside of those sites as well so to come to agreements with parking facilities, multistorey carparks and the like throughout the local government area.

We have a trial that is being run in one of the carparks that is owned by the City of Sydney. It allows vehicles to come and deliver goods and packages to be stored in cages then to be collected by bicycle and walking couriers to distribute them around the city. We are working as we can to try to achieve that aim to make sure the city can continue to operate and function for its business needs through those services and those trade responsibilities. When it comes to the city centre as well, we are just starting at piece of work with our New South Wales Government colleagues to refresh the Sydney City Centre Access Strategy, which is a strategy that looks at every street within the CBD, and looks at the function and the role that each of those streets plays to achieve that very difficult balance, as you say, between providing for the residents, providing for the businesses and providing for the customers that come through.

We have a breakdown, which I can try to provide for you as part of our previous response, that projects how many visitors, how many workers and how many residents come into the city every day. Obviously, we try to find that balance to make sure that we are maintaining a city that is where people live, but it is also a major city where people work and activity happens and visitors come to branch that across all of those activities. The other important point is we have a CBD but we also have our outer villages as well. Our local government area is not just the CBD. We focus on the local streets and the residential streets within Glebe and Redfern and Surry hills and those sorts of places, and the areas that we are creating such as Green Square, to create vibrant local streets again where people can work, live and enjoy all their activities in their local community and their local streets.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Following on a little from Ms Preston's question, I get that Sydney is not a planned city and you kind of had to work with what you got, which made it more difficult from a traffic flow perspective. The CBD is becoming increasingly unfriendly to motorists; I do not think anyone is going to disagree with that. It is motorcycle-friendly and that is good. You provide parking for motorcycles at no cost, which is great, and they can use some lanes that other vehicles cannot use. You have put in a stack of "no left turn" and "no right turn" signs. Sometimes just to get from Woolloomooloo to Haymarket, it can take 45 minutes because you can go past three or four blocks without being able to turn off a particular street. Do you have tangible results that show that what you have done has resulted in a net decrease in injuries and deaths?

Mr ASPDEN: Again, I might have to take that one on notice. A lot of those works come from our local area traffic management plans. I will need to see what level of evaluation we are conducting on those activities.

Mr ROY BUTLER: What is the future of movement in the city? If it is going to increasingly become unfriendly for vehicles, what is the future for how people get around the city?

Mr ASPDEN: Our focus is on space-efficient modes of transport because, as you say, we are restricted in terms of space within the city. Movements such as public transport, walking and cycling are much more space efficient. So those are the elements that need to be promoted to ensure that the road space that is available between the kerbs for private vehicles and other vehicles is maximised and is utilised by those who need to be there in a vehicle—so looking to try and provide alternatives for everybody who there can be an alternative for.

The CHAIR: Does the City of Sydney have rest facilities for truck drivers? Is there anywhere at all they can park and rest, use the bathroom facilities or have a shower?

Mr ASPDEN: We have rest facilities for bus drivers holding over in the city. We have public toilets and we have a number of public toilets and locations available on our website. I do not believe we have dedicated rest facilities for truck drivers.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Is that possibly because you do not want them to linger in the CBD? You want to move them out?

Mr ASPDEN: I think it, again, comes down to a kerbside issue. We are working with a limited amount of kerbside space. I think it is in terms of maximising the efficiency of that kerbside space and making sure that it is for the most productive and highest-value use. But I think it is probably something that we would need to go away and discuss.

The CHAIR: Obviously, truck drivers need to deliver goods to Sydney and they have to travel. The City of Sydney would have to consider their safety and the safety of other road users and accommodate something for these hardworking truck drivers, would you not say?

Mr ASPDEN: Yes. I think we might have some areas where trucks can park in the southern part of our local government area, but I would need to go away and check, I am afraid.

The CHAIR: The City of Sydney is a CBD. A lot of roads and pathways continue through your neighbouring local government area. What local road safety issues has your council encountered with neighbouring councils that could need a multi-council approach in their solutions? What consultation processes are currently in place to deal with these?

Mr ASPDEN: Thank you for that question. That is a very interesting question. I will answer the first part and I might pass over to Mr Wright for the second part of it. We are part of the New South Wales Government road safety program. Mr Wright is our road safety officer and has a very close connection, through that program, with the road safety officers of those neighbouring councils. We work on a number of projects where we work with our neighbouring councils. We have a good, close working relationship with a number of those councils and there are a number of projects where we work across the boundaries and across the borders. I do not know if Mr Wright has any examples he could share.

Mr WRIGHT: Yes, I suppose, from an on-the-ground point of view. Certainly both our connections with our neighbouring councils through the Local Government Road Safety Program and work with Transport for NSW. We are strongly connected, certainly in terms of pedestrian education, cycling education and also working through our major campaigns such as drink driving, fatigue and double demerits over long weekends, and working with New South Wales police to publicise and enforce the road rules, including mobile phones. As you have said, Chair, that goes across our borders and many of the major road safety issues that we face are also statewide issues. So it is really important that we are communicating with our neighbours and, even further afield, that we also speak closely to regional New South Wales and country New South Wales to make sure that there is a consistent message across the State. That is really important; that consistency for road users is the main form of education.

The CHAIR: How are you dealing with other councils?

Mr WRIGHT: We meet with them regularly. We have forums facilitated for us by Transport for NSW. Normally we would meet three times a year; that has slightly changed at the minute due to the current pandemic. Also, we would speak to our liaison officers through the Centre for Road Safety and we would speak to our colleagues, basically, on a weekly basis from other councils. So we are basically in contact all the time.

Mr ASPDEN: Just to add to that, as well, I think we also work very closely with our colleagues on a project-by-project basis as well. So some of the place-based plans that are occurring go across the boundaries. A lot of the work that was done through the local strategic planning statements—there was discussion and communication across the boundaries. We worked very closely with all our neighbouring councils on a formal and an informal basis.

Mr ROY BUTLER: In terms of traffic flows in the city, with less and less people bringing a private vehicle to the city because of the cost of parking and the difficulty moving around, have you done any analysis of the increase in rideshare and whether there is a commensurate increase in the number of rideshare vehicles for the number of other vehicles that have left the city?

Mr ASPDEN: Mr Warrington?

Mr WARRINGTON: Thank you very much for the question. Yes, that is an interesting observation. Certainly, if you go down in the city centre streets, sometimes at lunchtime you will really see taxis, rideshare such as Uber, and delivery vehicles. Certainly the city is a ripe market for point-to-point transport. We do not have data but we certainly are lobbied by the point-to-point industry. We have a good relationship with the

point-to-point commission and we certainly are talking about both the safety and the efficiency issues for that mode of transport. But we certainly have been approached by operators looking for more formal space to allow pick-up and ride. I think that is something we will need to attend to in the update of the access strategy that Mr Aspden mentioned before. No to specific data, but certainly the issue is very front and centre in our minds.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You want to introduce the speed limit of 40 kilometres per hour to the whole of the City of Sydney—all local streets—within five years. You say there is a challenge to build street conditions that help drivers to drive at these lower speed limits. What are those street conditions that you have to build and develop?

Mr ASPDEN: We have some examples where we have introduced new traffic calming treatments to ensure that their speed limits are physically restricted, that could be chicanes or speed humps or narrowing the carriageway. What we have found recently, and actually what we found through the COVID pandemic and the work that we have done with Transport for NSW through the COVID pandemic, is that the implementation of signage in a lot of locations does a lot of that work anyway. By putting up a 40 kilometres per hour sign we get a reduction in the traffic speed. What we are trying to do is look to make sure that we only put those sort of physical interventions where they are needed, to save time, to save cost and to help improve and accelerate the implementation of these things that help to reduce trauma.

Transport for NSW through the Centre for Road Safety undertook an evaluation of the 40 kilometres per hour precincts. We support the findings of that report. A lot of what the report talks about is that signage does a lot to reduce the speed limit and that the implementation of a lot of these measures is not necessary. Really, what we are looking to do through that is just focus our attention, focus our efforts and focus our costs to the places that they are most needed.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I notice that at one stage there was a program by the City of Sydney Council to build bike lanes. Is that still a policy of the council, taking a car lane and converting it into bikes only, in College Street and other places?

Mr ASPDEN: We are working, again in collaboration with the New South Wales Government, to support the Principal Bicycle Network, which is something that the New South Wales Government has developed. We are working with them to try to provide safe spaces for cyclists to help grow that ridership. Yes, that does include the delivery of some separated cycleways and providing them on roads in locations where we are connecting people from where they are coming from to where they want to go.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Has there been a change in policy in some areas where the bike lanes have been discontinued?

Mr ASPDEN: No. As I say, we are working with the New South Wales Government on their Principal Bicycle Network, so the cycleways that we are delivering are those that are identified as the top priorities within the New South Wales Government Principal Bicycle Network.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Following on from Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's comments, can you tell me what your budget is over the next five years for construction of shared pathways for pedestrian cycleways?

Mr ASPDEN: I would have to take that question on notice. Just to clarify, is that around the shared paths?

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Yes.

Mr ASPDEN: Budget for shared paths—I will take that question on notice and I will find out.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I am going to throw a bit of a curly one here and get your thoughts on some hearsay. Looking at the City of Sydney and its uniqueness in that it has the hub and the CBD as its centre core, and then radiates from there with village environments as well, but also residents living in amongst the CBD. There is some thought that the CBD area should be managed and taken over by the State Government and the periphery of that and the village areas should be managed by local government. I would love to hear your thoughts on that.

Mr ASPDEN: I will do my best to answer, but I am not sure I am necessarily the most qualified to be able to answer this question. I think the city has shown through things like the Central Sydney Planning Committee and through the Local Strategic Planning Statement that ability to really understand what the city centre as well as the villages should look like. The development and the environment that has been created in the city has probably been proof that that has been a successful journey over the years.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Transformation.

Mr ASPDEN: Yes, continuing transformation. I think through those works with the Local Strategic Planning Statement, which was obviously done with the Greater Sydney Commission, looking at prioritising jobs as the population grows as well within central Sydney and the infrastructure that is required to meet those. I do not feel I am necessarily the most qualified person to answer this, but I think there is a good evidence base which shows that the city has worked well to manage the CBD.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: And the aim is to have a combination of residential-CBD business dwellers?

Mr ASPDEN: Yes. The city has got its draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy. The focus of that is to try to preserve development for jobs and productive uses within the CBD, while allowing some residential developments to continue. One of the trends that has developed over the last decade or so has been that when residential development became highest and best use there was an increase in residential development over jobs. That can work towards sterilising development by creating striated blocks. It makes it a lot harder for the future. So the focus of the Central Sydney Planning Strategy—not the focus, but there is a focus in that Central Sydney Planning Strategy of trying to ensure that there are jobs continuing to be delivered and developed in the CBD.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: What is the council's policy on high rise and encouragement of people to have walkability rather than car parking under those high rises, with development applications that are put in?

Mr ASPDEN: Thank you for the question. The city has for a number of years now had a maximum rate for our car parking for our new developments.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: What is the floor space ratio?

Mr ASPDEN: All development in the city is permitted to have zero car parks.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: So no car parking?

Mr ASPDEN: They are permitted to provide no car parking. We have maximum car parking rates, which a development can provide a certain amount. Most planning controls have maximums and minimums, the [inaudible] is provided. We evaluate every development on its own merits and on a case by case basis. We have a number of developments that come in and propose zero parking and we have a number of developments that come in and propose the maximum amount of parking. We work with the developers and we work with the [inaudible] to try and understand what is best for that particular development site.

The CHAIR: Would it not make more sense to have parking in these developments? It will take pressure off the roads.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I am thinking for tradies, and people like that. Would you have that in mind, parking at least for vans to deliver and workers, and garbage trucks to come in?

Mr ASPDEN: Yes. Sorry, what I was talking about then was car parking. We also have within our planning controls rates for freight and servicing, deliveries and tradies to park off the street within the private developments. Where we would like to be able to get to is a position where every development can provide everything within its own footprint, within its own basement or ground plan to enable the public domain and the space on the kerbside to be able to be used for those developments or those people who really need to be able to use them.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In your recommendations you have asked that the New South Wales Government investigate the introduction of the burden of care and risk liability legislation to provide greater protection for vulnerable road users. The vulnerable, are they the aged?

Mr ASPDEN: Peter Wright, do you want to answer this question?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It is your recommendation to protect vulnerable road users. Is that particularly the aged?

Mr WRIGHT: Yes. What we mean by vulnerable road users does include those who are in the top age brackets but we are mainly looking at pedestrians, motorcyclists and pedal cyclists. Really the three which if they had an impact in a crash with a vehicle or an object would be likely to suffer far greater consequences than say if they were driving in a motor vehicle.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Would you like the State Government to introduce legislation?

Mr WRIGHT: Yes. The legislation which is recommended there is—in a number of countries around the world, for example, in the Netherlands at the moment but also in New York City, such as scheme exists. It is really where a motorist or a road user is entering an area which is well known to have vulnerable road users. For example, a high-density CBD or a Pitt Street Mall environment. A high-density area that there should be a greater

weighting to a punishment if an offence that may injure or harm someone takes place in that area. The weighting should be greater because the elevation in risk is well-known to the road user as they enter that area. We do not have a lot of those high-density road environments with cars. We have tried to engineer to get rid of them so that they do not have that mix but I think generally speaking where you are having motorists not taking the right amount of liability for the potential in risk which is actually there. The elevation in risk in driving in a high-density urban environment as opposed to driving on a country road and making an error of judgement there. Really it is a tool to make drivers in particular have far greater awareness of the environment in which they are actually in and highlighting that level of risk.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. We may send you some additional questions in writing and 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 ASPDEN: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, gentlemen. Enjoy your weekend.

Mr WARRINGTON: Good luck with your deliberations.

(Luncheon adjournment)

HAROLD SCRUBY, Chairman and CEO, Pedestrian Council of Australia, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

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

Mr SCRUBY: I have appeared for it many times before, Mr Chairman. I am fine.

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

Mr SCRUBY: Yes, Mr Chairman, I would. I hope you do not mind me being a bit emotional about this. Thank you very much for calling the inquiry. I have had over 25 years in road safety. I have appeared before this Committee on many occasions. I go back as far as people like George Paciullo and Paul Gibson. It is almost before colour TV, Mr Chairman.

Mr NICK LALICH: I remember them well.

Mr SCRUBY: I just want to bring Staysafe back into the main field. There is so much opportunity for Staysafe to do so much. I notice so many of your recommendations now just get cherrypicked or ignored. I think there is so much more you can do. You have probably all seen the piece of paper I sent you about pedestrian deaths and that is as of two days ago. Pedestrian deaths are up 40 per cent and 13.5 per cent on the long-term three year when all the other road users except the cyclists are down between 36 per cent and 14 per cent. We have got a huge job to do to fix this road toll and particularly as it applies to pedestrians. You all remember earlier this year we had four children effectively slaughtered on a footpath and three were from one family. In my experience, tragedies like that are often a catalyst for getting some major change but in came COVID, and COVID has taken over all the concern, whereas if you have a look so far we have killed 191 people in New South Wales. That is a lot more than have been killed by COVID and in my view it will probably be a lot more by the end of the year.

We can do so much but unfortunately, in my view—and I am allowed to call it as I see it I think—road safety is just in the hands of bureaucrats. An extraordinary thing is mobility and road safety are always in conflict. If we all did 10 kilometres an hour we would have no deaths on our roads but that is not feasible and logical. The point is that the people in charge of mobility are the same people in charge of road safety, primarily engineers whose major function is more cars faster for improved traffic flow. Look at the result—we have 42 pedestrians killed this year, four of them were young children just walking on a footpath. We can do so much more, Mr Chairman, and I hope you have read my report. What was interesting about you choosing this subject is that so many people are affected. Approximately 50 per cent of deaths occur on local roads and most of those are pedestrians. What we are trying to ask you and what I have written in one of my opinion pieces—Minister Constance a few weeks ago said we have to take politics out of road safety. As an example of that, seven years ago you recommended—or Staysafe did—that the point-to-point speed cameras be turned on for all vehicles. You recommended that. It was totally ignored. It has been recommended by every road safety group in Australia. It is in action in every other State and territory where these life-saving devices occur.

There are 16 people dead in the point-to-point zones all related to speed and the only argument I have heard in nine years since Duncan Gay promised to turn them on is that we have to bring the people with us. I have heard it from everyone. It is like someone has sent a sheet of paper around and is saying, "This is the excuse for not turning them on." About seven years ago you recommended we turn on the traffic lights for countdown on the wait. You recommended as a matter of urgency that they be trialled. That has been ignored for seven years, do you know why? If you actually look at the City of Sydney all the traffic lights are controlled by cars going over a piezo strip—that is a bit of magnet in the road. This 6 per cent of the road users determine the traffic lights for the 90 per cent—that is us pedestrians. And in that time in working hours they deactivate the buttons so that we stand there like Pavlov's dogs pushing the lights.

There is one reason why the people in the bureaucracy will not allow us to have a countdown timer on the wait phase to tell pedestrians how long they have to wait: It is because it will upset their precious little thing called Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System. SCATS is a farce; SCATS is a joke. It controls all of us pedestrians. We should be controlling the way cars move through the city, not the cars controlling us. We could have diagonal crossings through the city, which are in place throughout the world. They mean pedestrians do not have to cross the road twice. Guess what: We cannot have them because they upset SCATS. My view of this—the big picture—is if we want this to work we need a road safety commissioner. That does not mean we do not need Staysafe. We need a road safety commissioner, like an ombudsman or like an auditor general, who is answerable to Parliament—backing up Mr Constance's idea that we have got to get the politics out of road safety so that someone can say, "Why aren't we implementing these recommendations?"

I would love to see Staysafe go back over the past 10 years and look at how many recommendations have been implemented. If it is 30 per cent, I reckon we would be lucky. They just cherrypick what they want. I have been a member of RSAC for 10 years or more; we are called the Road Safety Advisory Committee. We are not an advisory committee; we are an advised committee. We sit there and listen to what bureaucrats want to tell us. We have not given the Government any advice in 10 years. Do you know what? Two years ago we agreed unilaterally that we should do a study into the point-to-point speed cameras. Just as they were about to release it, someone grabbed it and made it Cabinet in confidence. Why are these things secret? We have got so much we can do, Mr Chairman. We can change things, but we have got to get road safety away from those in charge of traffic flow. It is like leaving Dracula in charge of the blood bank.

I would love to see Staysafe become a bit more like Paciullo and Gibson, so that the chairman can get a chance to come out—you are a parliamentary committee—and say, "Why is the Government ignoring our recommendations?" Otherwise, we are a waste of time. I hope I have not gone too far over the edge but I am feeling a very great sense of frustration, Mr Chairman, and I think we, as the representatives of pedestrians, have a right to. There are 42 dead people out there so far this year, and 20 times that number seriously injured. By the way, pedestrians, when they are injured, cost double the amount, normally, of someone injured inside a motor vehicle. So there is a very, very strong commercial reason we should be looking at pedestrians. I am sorry if I have gone over time, but that is how we feel. We would really love to show you some ways we think—we have tried to put some of them into our submission—that we can improve the road toll on local roads and for pedestrians.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Scruby. You advocate for 30-kilometre zones in areas of high pedestrian activity and note the recent introduction of a 30-kilometre zone in Northern Beaches Council. What impact would the broader introduction of these zones have on road safety, and what are the challenges faced by councils in introducing these zones?

Mr SCRUBY: It is politics again. I would like to say thanks to Bernard Carlon. He has been a real mover behind the scenes in this area. He and I have been around to see some mayors and some CEOs. We speak to them and they say, "Terrific." Then they go away and say, "We're going to make it 40." The whole of the London CBD by [inaudible] will be a 20-mile-per-hour zone, which is 32. In areas of high pedestrian activity, 30 will save countless lives and limbs. There are people out there who think we should go to 30 as a default speed limit. I do not agree with that—not yet. I believe we should have 30 in areas of high pedestrian activity. Manly is a great start. The funny thing about it, Mr Chairman, is if you go behind you today you will see a 30-kilometre zone that has existed for over 15 years, running all the way down to Lady Macquarie's Chair. It is the only one that has been in existence until recently—except for, I think, Druitt Street, which is 100 metres.

In areas of high pedestrian activity, 30 kilometres will be a major lifesaver. We have now got 20 where the tram is—fantastic. Congratulations, Marg Prendergast and the team who got that in. We could make the whole of the CBD 30. It took us 10 years from when Carl Scully said yes, we could have 40—that was 1986—till we finally got it. Has anyone complained? No. Has it saved lives? Yes. But let us look at the rest of the world. Most of New Zealand's cities are now 30. Most Western European cities are now 30. It is not rocket science. We can do it. Please make it a recommendation: in all areas of high pedestrian activity, 30 kilometres. That is the number one thing we can do to save pedestrian lives and limbs and improve the access and amenity and community on local roads.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Mr Scruby, thank you for your contribution today. Yesterday I spent the day with Danny and Leila Abdallah and Bridget Sakr. They are the parents of the four children who were killed on 1 February this year. Just on those circumstances, I am reluctant to agree with you on speed cameras. If you know the background of that incident—and you probably do—it was a driver who was heavily influenced by drugs and alcohol. It was a 50-kilometre zone. He was doing 130 kilometres an hour when he crashed and killed those four beautiful children. A speed camera in that area would not have prevented that accident. I would love your thoughts on what other measures need to be done.

Also—and this has been raised with me by the family—in that car as a passenger, there is no responsibility or any liability in that accident for the passenger, and yet that passenger used their credit card to go out and get more alcohol. They drank for 13 hours and took drugs before they got in the car and drove off and did that atrocious activity. I am sorry, it is very upsetting for me to go through this with the family, the way they were. They are a wonderful family. They have some great ideas on what could help there, going forward. In that circumstance, a speed camera would not have helped there. They want to see justice, also, with the passenger being accountable in some way. They want legislation changed. I am talking and they are talking to the Attorney General as well. What other factors could have come into play to prevent that?

Mr SCRUBY: There are three primary factors here. One is drink or drugs; two is speeding; and three is the passenger. Let me go back to the passenger first. I cannot agree with you. There is one immutable law right

round the world, and that is the driver is responsible. It could get down to the fact that I am in an Uber or in a taxi and have some sort of responsibility for the way the driver is driving. You would enter a minefield of legislation, which would never be prosecuted. There is a completely separate issue about someone using a credit card to help someone get drunk, but that could be anywhere. That could be without driving. I think you are entering a dangerous area there. As far as speed cameras are concerned, I am sorry to disagree with you but you have only got to go back and look at your studies, the studies by the Auditor-General and the studies by the Government itself. Speed cameras and all the other technology have dramatically reduced road trauma. A point-to-point speed camera—have a look at the 2011-2020 road safety strategy. It said that in England, where it is being used, it had reduced deaths and injuries by between 50 per cent and 85 per cent. That does not mean—

The CHAIR: Mr Scruby, sorry to interject—

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I do not disagree with you in general. I am just saying, in that particular circumstance, what other preventative measures could we put in as recommendations for that particular case?

Mr SCRUBY: Sorry, yes. We all know we are going to have one-offs. If someone wants to go out and rob a bank, it is very hard to stop them doing it. We can take away guns but you still cannot stop them doing it. We have 50 murders a year. You cannot stop people murdering other people. You can educate; you can do other things. I do not know the answer. That was a horrible, horrible catastrophe. But what I do know is what came from Sophie Delezio's two horrible incidents, is that she ended up being the catalyst for some major changes around school zones, et cetera. I am hoping that the deaths of these four young children can end up as being a catalyst for some major change.

The mobile speed cameras have a very good place here, but we do not use them like they do in Victoria. We treat them as a joke. We have three warning signs, one which is outside the beam, telling the speedsters that that is where the camera is. All the other States and Territories are covert. Why do we do this? All the other States and Territories are bidirectional, but because we have got a union that said we cannot cross the road to put out all these warning signs that make us look like Luna Park, we cannot use them. I am sorry to disagree with you, but there is overwhelming evidence about point-to-point cameras and mobile speed cameras having a dramatic effect on people speeding. That is not going to stop your one-offs, that is not going to stop your one-offs.

I do not know what the answer is in relation to that particular thing. I wrote an article following that and I said we should be looking at the Scandinavian model and the Norwegian model in particular, where it is .02 and I think we should really start considering .02 as a major change. We got from .08 to .05 and I think .02, look at the Scandinavian model, look at where they are. They are down to under two deaths per hundred thousand. They are doing it through major interventions like this. By the way, we have not even mentioned drugs, and that is the next sleeper. That is much worse. That is going to be much, much worse than drink drive I think in the near future.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you, Mr Scruby, for being here and for all the good work you have done over so many, many years now.

Mr SCRUBY: Thank you, sir.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In your submission you are very critical of the slogan "Towards Zero" because you believe it is a nebulous concept. In your submission you say "towards nothing". What is your reaction and what shall we replace it with?

Mr SCRUBY: Towards Zero is a joke. I mean, seriously. If they are talking 2050 I do not think any of us are going to be here to see the results. The Swedes started the idea with Vision Zero, but it was not "towards" anything. If you want to make something "towards" something, make it definite. Have Vision Zero 2050, or Vision Zero 2040, but not "towards". The word "towards" implies we never get there, and no-one wants to put their name to any time limit. It is a ridiculous campaign. We have spent millions of dollars on it. Ask someone, "When are we going to get there?" It is like, as I said in my article, having a public company whose motto is "Towards Profit". Oh yeah, when? It is stupid. Stupid campaign, let us get rid of it.

The other thing I have asked you to consider and I think I said over 20 states in America have now banned the use of the word "accident". These are not accidents. Over 90 per cent of the trauma on our roads are not accidents. They occur when someone breaks the law, and they break the law intentionally. We have got to get rid of the word "accident" out of the road safety vernacular. The last word I would like to get out of the road safety vernacular is "shared". Let us stop sharing the road. Let us stop sharing the footpath. Why are we bundling cyclists up on to the road all the time? We have now got more cyclists on the footpath than pedestrians and they are on souped-up electric bikes. I am sorry I digress, but Reverend Nile, you are correct, or I think you might agree with me, the words "Towards Zero" are stupid. It is meaningless and it allows everyone who is involved in it to go nowhere. That is why we should just call it Towards Nothing.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What would you replace it with? You do not want the word "accident"?

Mr SCRUBY: I do not want "accident". Let us call them incidents and crashes. Let us call them what they are. I remember seeing a woman who had driven past a semitrailer with four children in the car. Everyone was killed. It was a horrible crash, and everyone called it an accident until they found her suicide note. We have got to stop calling them accidents. That is why these American states have banned it, because it dumbs it down. It means no-one was responsible. Accidents mean no-one is responsible. "Incident" does not have that same connotation. Let us include this in the recommendation that we stop using the word "accident" until someone can prove it was.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Mr Scruby, I want to reinforce those comments because I was with Colleen Vassallo—Philip Vassallo died in 2014 in his vehicle—and she took offence when I said the word "accident". She said it was a crash, it was premeditated, so to speak. You raise a really good point and I think the Committee should note that, rather than the word "accident", it is a crash.

Mr SCRUBY: Crash. It is a bit hard to apply a crash to a pedestrian incident.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Correct, but vehicles, yes.

Mr SCRUBY: Incident is just as good, but as long as we can remove the word "accident"—I notice even the State Insurance Regulatory Authority is no longer the Motor Accidents Authority, which is a good move.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Thank you.

Mr SCRUBY: Thank you.

Mr NICK LALICH: Thank you for the great work you have done over many, many years. I remember George Paciullo and Paul Gibson well. George Paciullo brought in the breathalyser. I remember the rubbishing he got out here in the western suburbs, not only from the clubs but from just about everybody in the community, but there are people alive out there today who owe a great stake of gratitude to George Paciullo for bringing that in. I remember Paul Gibson as well. Paul Gibson told me when he was Chair of this Committee, that every year, every time they came up with new policies, they would go overseas and look at the situation and see what it was like over there, come back and make recommendations. Some got approved and some did not. He said nowadays you cannot go overseas because the media just rubbishes you. The Tory media will attack, no matter what happens. Yet they can go overseas any time, taking people to Africa, wherever they like, all those journalists go each year. It is okay for them, but it is no good for anybody else.

Mr Scruby, you would remember the same as I do because you are probably the same vintage, back in the sixties, seventies, we had 1,400, 1,500 people killed each year. Now we are down to about 300 or 400. Yes, let us get it down to nothing, but we have to say it has taken 30 years to bring it down by 1,000. Let us hope it does not take us 30 years to get down to zero. We have to keep working and I thank you very much for the great work you have done. As you say, people on drugs, I do not know what we are going to do about them. There are always idiots out there on the road. I do not know what we are going to do but I thank you very much for the great work you have done and what you have brought to this Committee. Thank you.

Mr SCRUBY: Thank you. That is really nice. I remember George Paciullo's funeral and I hope someone could say 5 per cent of the words that they said about me when I go, because he was a game changer. If you look at it, we were 30 deaths per hundred thousand in about 1978, and we are down to now around four. What a win. But there is so much more we can do. We can get down to the Norwegian level. We can do it, but we have to bring in interventions like 30 kilometres per hour zones, like high technology. In France every police car has a mobile speed camera in it. The technology is there. We can bring in point to point speed cameras in local streets. When was the last time you saw someone being booked for speeding in a local street? It does not happen. It is the highway patrol, they are out on the highways. We have got the technology to monitor the local streets. Shove a mobile speed camera in the local streets once in a while and do not tell people.

The CHAIR: Out my way in regional New South Wales the police have a presence and they book people in streets.

Mr SCRUBY: Do they?

The CHAIR: The day before yesterday I saw them pull over and book two people.

Mr SCRUBY: That is great. That is terrific. We do not see much of that in Sydney. It is mainly on the highways and the main roads. We are looking at that thing from the Federal Government, 50 per cent of traumas happening on local roads. We have got to have another look at ways of again patrolling those roads but not having police—police should never be chasing people for speeding because they risk everybody's life. We have got

mobile speed cameras; we could put them everywhere. We could rotate them through school zones. Do you know that 98 per cent of school zones do not have any effective speed control in them? We have got one school in Sydney which they can use the mobile speed camera in. Why are we not using this technology? It is just first class. Let the police do other things. Why do we have police chasing people, unless they are real bad people? They are risking their lives. They are risking the life of the perpetrator. It is a silly thing to be chasing them.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just a quick question. You recommended that the Parliament appoint an independent road safety commissioner.

Mr SCRUBY: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Is that a State commissioner or Federal?

Mr SCRUBY: Yes, absolutely. I think COVID has taught us something has it not, Mr Nile, that we are in charge of COVID—the Prime Minister even said it. We run the police. We run the hospitals. We run this and we should be in charge of it. We should be using this idea. I reckon if we had a commissioner here—let us give it a go: a commissioner who answers to Parliament. If the Minister is right that we have got to get the politics out of road safety then a commissioner is the only way out of this. We have got good people like Bernard Carlon, but when they are under politics they just cannot express themselves. They cannot give you the value of their experience. If they were under a commissioner we would hear different words. That commissioner should be completely independent.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Scruby. Unfortunately our time is up, but I would like to thank you for coming today.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Hear, hear!

The CHAIR: And thank you for all your years of dedication to this cause.

Mr SCRUBY: Thank you very much, Mr Amato. I appreciate the ability to talk to you.

The CHAIR: It is our pleasure, and certainly my pleasure. We may send you some additional questions in writing and your replies will form part of the evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to our further questions?

Mr SCRUBY: Anything I can do to help, sir.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. We may catch up and have a chat ourselves. Thank you again so much.

(The witness withdrew.)

LINDA SCOTT, President, Local Government NSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome Councillor Linda Scott. Have you been listening to the proceedings during the day?

Ms SCOTT: Unfortunately I have not been able to, I am sorry.

The CHAIR: That is fine. Before we proceed, do you have any questions about today's hearing process?

Ms SCOTT: No.

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

Ms SCOTT: I would like to make a brief opening statement, thank you very much. I thank the Staysafe Committee for inviting me to present a local government perspective on its inquiry into Reducing Trauma on Local Roads in New South Wales. As the peak body for local government we have long advocated for increases to both road funding and road safety funding specifically to help address the high numbers of people dying on local and regional roads, particularly in regional areas. Although councils manage nearly 90 per cent of the road network in New South Wales, local government receives nowhere near 90 per cent of the funding directed to roads or road safety. The majority of the funding for roads and road safety is directed towards State and Federal roads, despite the fact that in New South Wales around 70 per cent of fatalities from road trauma occur on the local road network.

Despite this imbalance in roads and road safety funding, councils do as much as they can within their limited budgets and resourcing to address the road toll on local and regional roads under their control. This really is one of our most significant priorities for councils. When viewed through the lens of the Safe Systems approach to road safety the funding that councils receive to address road safety falls under the Safer Roads NSW pillar of the Safe Systems approach. To this extent, local government in New South Wales directs its road safety efforts supported by funding sources such as the Black Spot programs to improving road treatments at accident-prone sections of the road network to make them more forgiving to road user error or to mitigate against it. This is in line with the current national governance arrangements for road safety in Australia. Data from the Federal Government shows that the Black Spot Program has reduced fatal accidents at these sites by more than 30 per cent on average. While councils also contribute to the other three pillars of the Safe Systems approach—obviously Safer People, Safer Vehicles and Safer Speeds—most of the funding in these areas is directed towards State and Federal government road safety initiatives.

Under the Local Government Road Safety Program some 80 councils across New South Wales are provided funding for a road safety officer on a 50-50 cost-share basis for a 12-month period and with an \$11,000 annual budget to deliver road safety campaigns and advertise graduated licensing scheme workshops. This has helped raise the profile of road safety in many areas across New South Wales. However, feedback from our councils indicates that these road safety officers [RSO] are underfunded. Because of this they are unable to make a significant impact on road safety outcomes. Furthermore, some 48 councils in New South Wales do not even have an RSO. We would like to see this program revised to properly fund and appoint RSOs for a three-year period in order to foster the development of long-term road safety outcomes and culture and increase the funding allocation to help councils contribute better to the Safer People pillar of the Safe Systems approach.

With the current New South Wales backlog on road maintenance on local and regional roads estimated to be over \$2.1 billion and the relatively small proportion of road safety budgets directed to councils it is time to seriously rethink how we direct the existing road safety resources and to increase the funding directed to road safety across the board. Among the recommendations made by the inquiry in the National Road Safety Strategy was a call for the establishment of a national \$3 billion annual road safety fund. This is just 10 per cent of the total cost to the economy of fatal crashes, which is estimated to be \$30 billion. Road trauma is a serious and ongoing problem and it is time for a major injection of funding to help make a real impact on driving down the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads every year. Local Government NSW made a number of specific recommendations in our submission to this inquiry and I am very happy to speak more about those throughout the session and answer any questions Committee members might have. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Councillor Scott. I know you have already touched on a couple of these topics here, but you noted in your submission that councils need additional funding—we have heard that throughout the inquiry—resources and governance arrangements to sustain road safety outcomes. What changes to existing funding and governance arrangements are needed?

Ms SCOTT: I think as I indicated the large proportion of accidents, deaths and injuries are occurring on local roads and yet the large proportion of funding is not being directed to those roads where those accidents

and crashes are occurring. In order to see a movement or any shift in the safety statistics, local governments are calling on that funding prioritisation to change to better direct road funding more closely to align it with where there needs to be safety changes. As I stated, the Black Spot Program, for example, we know has been actually very successful when funding is allocated to those black spots in increasing safety and reducing harm and death. So, for example, shifting more of the funding to the Black Spot Program, more of the program to be directed to our local roads, we feel would lift the safety outcomes and improve the circumstances for people in New South Wales.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Thank you for joining us this afternoon. Ms Scott, I just wanted to ask your opinion. You said there would be an injection preferred of \$3 billion to local government for road improvements on local roads. Do you think there needs to be a mandatory budget allocation of council's funds each year on those local road upgrades, upkeep and improvements? Sometimes it depends on the whim of the councillors and their priorities and what they want to drive as their accomplishments at the detriment of basic road maintenance and upkeep. How do you manage that if you are asking for \$3 billion in funds and yet there is no mandatory obligation to spend a percentage of council's budget each year on that?

Ms SCOTT: Thanks for the question. Just to be clear, I just noted that the recommendation made by the inquiry into the national road safety strategy in that there was a call for the establishment of a national \$3 billion annual road safety fund rather than that being Local Government NSW's position.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Yes.

Ms SCOTT: Look, I certainly hear you on the call that council budgets are under extraordinary pressure and there are always competing priorities, be they road or cycle funding. I had media calls this morning about the need for councils to invest more in seawalls in coastal areas and in parks and employing local people. You know, there is a huge range of pressures on our budgets just as I know that there are at a State and Federal Government level, especially with COVID—never more so now than ever before.

I think the point is that much of the State Government funding and Federal Government funding that already is on offer is matched, so it is required that councils match that funding. Much of the funding that is already provided by State and Federal governments is very targeted. We do not have a circumstance where funding is given to councils and they can choose to spend it in any way. It is targeted funding to boost the capacity of roads. I think your question though goes to the choices that councils make about their own roads.

Through Local Government NSW all New South Wales councils are represented by us when they join. Obviously through the Australian Local Government Association, they sit on a range of bodies that also release and make decisions about national safety targets. So councils are well aware of obligations, both national and State. They are also well aware of their funding obligations when accepting funding from other levels of government about the requirements that that brings.

Then, like any elected body, they need to make priority decisions to meet those targets and balance that with their own priorities as an elected member or their own priorities as a community. I do not think, just as local government would not presume to tell the State how to spend their budget and mandate certain things in that, we would not presume that the State Government would seek to do that with council budgets, but rather that we could all work together in a collaborative way to try to bring down those accident and injury statistics with national goals.

The CHAIR: Yes, but councils still have a responsibility to the ratepayers to utilise that money for the benefit of the ratepayers, particularly when some councils increase their rates specifically for the purpose of infrastructure of the local roads and that money seems to be diverted to other causes that do not benefit anyone except maybe for a very small group of people.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Hence the need for mandatory budget allocations.

The CHAIR: Therefore, ratepayers' money is being wasted. That is what it is about. Would you say in relation to councils that have a very large monetary base it would be of good use if that money could be spread from that council to maybe neighbouring councils who are not as affluent as they are? That could help towards the roads in order to save people's lives and reduce road trauma.

Ms SCOTT: If councils were to do that, if they were spend money outside their local government area, that is a breach of the Local Government Act as determined by the New South Wales Parliament. If the Parliament changed that Act, maybe councils could lawfully consider that but right now they cannot do that. That is unlawful.

The CHAIR: Yes. I have just seen some councils that have a lot of money coming in and you see other councils that have not got it. I could be wrong but they seem to waste it on some projects whereas if they just

spent that money to help some other councils out, it is amazing what that could do for communities. But, yes, you have a point. I will look into that one.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have a quick question. In your recommendation 1, you refer to improved road safety on local roads and you have emphasised in recommendation 2 local roads. Do you have any figures of fatalities on local roads? Are local roads the main concern regarding fatal accidents?

Ms SCOTT: Yes. Unfortunately, local roads really are where we know the majority of these incidents occur. I am sorry I do not have the crash statistics to hand, but we do know that councils manage, as I said, 90 per cent of the road network. Local government does not receive anywhere near 90 per cent of the funding allocated for road safety but about 70 per cent of the fatalities from road trauma occur on that local road network. There is this discrepancy between where the fatalities and injuries are occurring—predominantly on local roads—and where the safety funding is being allocated.

Really to go to the earlier point about the decisions that councils make, well here we are talking about State and Federal funding. Again, when State or Federal funding is given to councils for the purpose of upgrading a road or the purpose of fixing a black spot, there is a requirement to show, of course, that councils have acquitted that appropriately in line with the funding guidelines and they do that; otherwise, they would obviously need to give the funding back. I mean, I just want to be very clear that councils are upholding their obligations when they are provided that funding.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms SCOTT: The issue is that the funding provided does not match where we know the evidence is showing where the crashes and fatalities are occurring.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Councillor, as I was saying earlier, sometimes you will see two roads that cross each other. They will do a road up to a point and the upgrade stops. You would think they would have some cooperation with the other and maybe finish the project. Are there ways for councils in New South Wales to share knowledge and learnings with other councils across the State in relation to excellence in road safety projects and initiatives?

Ms SCOTT: I think that is a really excellent point. As the peak body we try very hard to ensure that councils are really working hard to share knowledge and best case examples. We are also very happy to welcome the Government's commitment about the hand-back of 15,000 kilometres of regional roads. I really want to compliment the Government on that engagement process. It has been done in a very thorough way with the chair, Wendy Machin, and the panel. There has been a lot of discussion actually as part of that process about how councils are already collaborating on a regional basis to make sure, as you say, we do not have boundaries showing up different standards of roads but also that councils are thinking regionally about the road network and trying to collaborate in that way.

Can I say this though: There is a myriad of fantastic examples. The Bega Valley Shire Council, for example, has installed rub rails, which are a very cost-effective intervention on existing guardrails on heavily trafficked motorcycle routes. It stops motorcyclists, for example, falling off their motorcycle from sliding onto the crash barrier steel posts, which obviously can cause very big injuries. Motorcyclists are so overrepresented in crash statistics. So there are some really innovative examples of councils putting in place low cost innovative treatments that do make a road environment much more forgiving of an event going wrong. Certainly the Australian Local Government Association, for example, annually holds a conference to talk about roads and the work that councils are doing to share best practice. There is a lot of work going into not just New South Wales but across the nation's 537 councils sharing those best practice examples.

Mr NICK LALICH: I follow on from your original comments about the rich city councils having heaps of money which they put away for rainy days, and I think that should be spread out amongst the poorer councils that just do not have the rate bucks.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that.

Mr NICK LALICH: I agree with that. The other thing that I would like to say is, if you remember back in the Gough Whitlam days, when Gough Whitlam bypassed the State Government—now, I am not attacking Liberal or Labor. It is every persuasion of government. They were getting funding for roads, but the State Government was siphoning off the amount that they wanted for themselves and gave the rest to the local government. Gough Whitlam said, "This is not what the money is for. The money is for the local government." He was going directly to local government, giving that money to them. I don't know if the Federal Government would have the gumption at the moment to do it but I think we probably should look at getting them to give the

money directly to local government, not giving it through the State Government, which then siphons off what they want for their coffers and just gives the local government the little, puny amount that they feel they deserve.

The CHAIR: Do you have a question for Councillor Scott?

Ms SCOTT: I am happy to respond to that if you would like. Thanks for the points, Mr Lalich. I guess I have two points. Whilst as a new Sydney councillor I might add that generally I agree with the persuasion that metropolitan councils do relatively financially better than their regional and rural cousins, can I say that the pandemic has put that in sharp contrast. As an example, my council in six months lost \$75 million in revenue and other losses as a result of the shutdown. We are projected to continue the losses going forth. I do not put that forward by way of complaint; I just note that the traditional economic outcomes for local governments have been put in stark contrast and there has been some significant volatility as a result of the pandemic.

Just to go to your point on the Federal assistance grants, as you rightly note, the Whitlam Government for the first time injected Federal assistance funds directly into local governments. That is an enormously beneficial program. It is still in operation today and along with Roads to Recovery, the other Federal source of funding for councils, these really do keep councils going across Australia. At the moment the percentage of GDP nationally for Federal assistance grants is 0.55 per cent. Under the Keating Government it was as high as 1 per cent. Councils across the nation continue to call on the Federal Government, and have done so for many years, to restore that level of Federal assistance grant to 1 per cent of Commonwealth GDP. That injection of funds directly to councils would make an enormous difference not only to the road funding they are able to inject, but to the safety outcomes and a whole range of other things. So we agree with you; it is a very good program. It has been cut now to 0.55 per cent of GDP. That is extraordinarily low and increasing that does need to be a Federal Government priority.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Just a quick one in regard to RSOs. Local Government NSW is in a very unique position to observe and work with a number of councils. We have heard from a stack of witnesses in regard to RSOs some concerns around consistency of induction training and standards. I just wondered, given your unique position and unique view of the world and councils, if you could make some comment about what you think needs to happen in regard to the induction training and standards for road safety officers.

Ms SCOTT: As the employer body, we are always trying to think of new ways to ensure that councils have appropriate budgets for professional development, for induction and training of our staff, and we are very proud of the fact that we employ nearly 55,000 people in New South Wales in local government. Making sure that we do not forget what fantastic staff we have and making sure that they are always skilled and up to date is a real priority for us and for our member councils. I have to say I do not have individual knowledge, I am sorry, about the inductions that RSOs in your part of the world might have received. If there is any concern, as you know, I am very happy to meet with you to talk about it individually. I know you cover a lot of local government areas. It is one of the biggest geographical seats in the State.

However, I do think that—as others have suggested—we do work hard to make sure that we, with the Australian Local Government Association, have conferences that staff can attend. We have options to create a network of staff across local government. For example, we have networks of staff members in planning, in child care, in the arts and creative sectors that we work with to help us with our policies, to form submissions and to help us with member engagement. We are very happy to work more closely with RSOs as a network of council staff members to support them collaborating and professionally developing, if that is of assistance.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Just to clarify, that concern in some instances was raised by RSOs themselves, so there may be an opportunity there to do something.

Ms SCOTT: That is good to know. Thank you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I note in your submission you were quoting the figures of 229 people were killed driving on country roads, which represent 66 per cent of all New South Wales roads. What is the reason for such a high percentage of fatalities on country roads? Are they lacking proper resources or maintenance through lack of funds for local councils?

Ms SCOTT: Whilst it is easy to look at statistics, it is always devastating to remember that each and every one of those are an individual life, and we really do mourn those. But I think it is, as you say, important to look at the trends and try and understand the causes for that. Of course the causes of every crash are often multi-factorial, including tiredness of the driver and a range of other factors. But when we start to look at the accumulation of these kinds of incidents, as I said, we do see an extraordinarily large, disproportionate number of accidents and deaths are occurring on local roads. We know, for example, that the Black Spot Program is an effective mitigator when it comes to funding upgrades that prevent these accidents.

It is the case that the state of the infrastructure and the design of our intersections on our local roads—the cost to do that is one of the contributors to road deaths. It is one of the contributors to unnecessarily high road safety problems. The reality is when councils have their rates capped, as they do here in New South Wales where we have had decades of rate capping, that has provided a constraint on the ability of councils to raise revenue as our populations grow and as our road network grows. That has meant that we now have a backlog. The NRMA *Funding Local Roads* report last year, for example, identified a road maintenance backlog in rural and regional roads of \$1.7 billion, up to \$2.1 billion when you add in metro roads. There is a funding backlog; we have just got to be frank about that. Councils do their best, but with tight budgets that are rate capped, there is just only so much we can do.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Perhaps there should be a State government grant or emergency grant for road repairs or road maintenance for one or two years.

Ms SCOTT: Certainly increasing the Black Spot Program and a range of other programs that we know are effective would be very welcomed by councils.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I will make just a couple of points. The Chair did mention whether there would be an opportunity for well-to-do councils to support neighbouring councils with funds. Just with that thought in mind, and having had amalgamations where you have had quite substantially budget-surplus councils amalgamating with those that are less fortunate, have you seen a difference in the way that distribution of funds has been spread across the region that is now amalgamated?

Ms SCOTT: It is a good question. I will probably refrain from going into individual examples, but I might add that generally a number of the councils that were merged by the State Government in the last round have done some very thorough analysis of the costs of that and the implications of that on their ratepayers, and on their assets and maintenance. If I had to characterise it, I would say that generally the trend is that those councils are financially worse off.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: The combined councils or the original ones?

Ms SCOTT: The combined councils. In moving from original to merged, the financial picture of the council becomes worse. We have the Auditor-General of New South Wales report to draw on for evidence, which of course she tables having audited every council in the State each year to New South Wales Parliament. There is quite a clear mechanism now for tracking that, given that everybody is audited in the same way by the Auditor-General. For example, we have seen high-profile examples of councils in regional areas that were merged having a very significant increase in their rates above the rate cap and having to seek permission from the State Government to do that. They are granted permission because the cost of the merger has been so significant that it has made the councils' financial state worse.

The CHAIR: How do the metropolitan ones fare?

Ms SCOTT: Generally, councils find that across areas the cost of mergers is very significant. Rarely do they find themselves in a stronger financial position post-merger. This analysis is still being done, I should add.

The CHAIR: You did not really answer the question about metro. I understand regional, but the case with metro could be different. We will wait to see what comes out of that.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I want to follow up on a different tangent—some of our witnesses earlier in the day have talked about seniors and the care of them. I want to talk in particular about road and pedestrian trauma, and crashes not accidents, I suppose—or incidents with pedestrians. My thoughts are from a local government perspective. Where you have got applications coming in to council for seniors living areas—what I am finding now is that we have seniors living developments and all of a sudden the seniors are coming to me as the local member and saying, "There is no safe access to and from main roads from our development." Why is that not part of council stipulation—to have traffic lights at intersections near where you have got a cluster of seniors coming together? They are not as confident on the road and they are trying to cross roads as pedestrians, yet councils do not stipulate that there needs to be much-improved and upgraded intersections when they are taking on these developments. What are your thoughts on that?

The CHAIR: That is a good question.

Ms SCOTT: I will start by prefacing my comments with the fact that I am not across the details of the issues in your electorate, so I cannot comment on those. But I am sorry to hear that you are having those problems. They sound very frustrating.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: It is across many local government areas. It is common.

The CHAIR: It is.

Ms SCOTT: I am sure you would know that the government reforms to the way that councils do their planning mean that planning decisions are either made under delegation to council staff or via an independent planning panel in the metropolitan areas. In regional areas, increasingly development decisions are not made by councils. They are also made by regional panels. For example, as a City of Sydney councillor, when I was first elected eight years ago we literally sat and asked questions about this and determined DAs to add in those conditions. Now we have a panel. They are not elected. They sit in my council chambers and make decisions about DAs. That system has fundamentally changed and it means that perhaps you do not have councillors who know every street corner in their local government area asking those kinds of sensible questions at the development application [DA] determination phase in order to make sure that those traffic changes are reflected.

The other significant thing is increasingly development is being done via State environmental planning policies [SEPPs], or via other planning codes, and done with the Department of Planning. To give you a local example, in my local government area in Rosebery approvals are now subject to a new medium density housing code. If there is an application submitted to change a house or do a certain type of dwelling, it does not come to the council. The application is entirely done through the Department of Planning. The resident next door is only notified of the planning development a very short time before construction begins. They are not given an opportunity to have consultation. With the increasing introduction of SEPPs and planning codes that are centralised and taken away from councils, they lose control over these decisions.

We are increasingly seeing SEPPs being put in place for aged care, for child care, for boarding houses—for a range of things that take planning control away from councils. That means that you get a less localised development approval which would respond to the area and the very local things that need to be done. I absolutely share your frustration. We absolutely advocate very heavily to ensure that councils retain these planning powers so that those decisions can be best made locally and so that the conditions of the site—different from one place to the next—can be reflected in the decisions of development approval.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: But there can also be a recommendation from the council offices in their report that goes to the planning panel for those sorts of improvements.

Ms SCOTT: It can. That is right. Some council offices have delegated authority to approve these things themselves, typically with minor developments. Nevertheless, so many of these decisions are being taken away from councils and so you miss out on those things. As you and I know, when these things go to the elected body—because we as locally elected representatives have heard from our community about a concern about a particular development and the increasing traffic congestion, or a concern about how to get young children across the road at a childcare centre or elderly people across the road for an aged-care home—it is often the elected people who make representation at that level of the approval to see those things inserted.

The CHAIR: Are you aware of examples of State government engagement with local government in road matters in other Australian jurisdictions that we should examine and consider for New South Wales?

Ms SCOTT: There are different models around the country. I know that you have got fantastic parliamentary research officers. I am sure that they will be guiding you to some good examples. I certainly endorse and encourage you to do that. In New South Wales, the traffic committees that we have are all given different terms. I think my council's is called the local pedestrian traffic calming committee. Others are just called traffic committees. They typically have one council representative, one representative from the police, one representative from the local member and then a range of other attendees.

The CHAIR: I have been on one myself.

Ms SCOTT: Good for you. They are quite unique and use quite a unique and evolved system of governance. Other States probably have models that create a more straightforward approval path, if I might put it in that way. However, particularly with the City of Sydney, some of the details of those fine-grained traffic and pedestrian treatments are very important. Having a detailed look at those is appropriate. I think that the system in New South Wales is complex.

The CHAIR: How should local road safety be best incorporated into a council's community strategic planning?

Ms SCOTT: That is a difficult question for me to answer. I cannot really answer on behalf of councils because they will, of course, all have a slightly different approach on that. However, we know from our policies at our annual conference that councils have called for New South Wales speeding zone guidelines to be reviewed because speed is obviously an important consideration. That was a motion moved and adopted at our conference by Leeton Shire Council. I think that councils would like to see that. We know that the range of methods used to incorporate safety provisions into a council's strategic plans or with the State Government are working well. Looking at those successful examples, where they work, is a good idea. Ultimately, and I come back to this, this

is a question of a shortfall of something. We know what works in road safety. We have an abundance of very good quality evidence about what can reduce harm, what can reduce injury and what can reduce death. A lot of this goes to the maintenance and quality of the roads, and the financial inability of councils to be able to currently fund that, and the mismatch between where the accidents occur and where the funding is allocated.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I note your recommendation 7 asks that our Committee considers recommending that the Federal Government fully adopts recommendation 3 arising from the Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy, which calls on the Federal Government to establish a \$3 billion road safety fund to address road trauma. It is in your submission, so I assume that you want us to proceed with that in our report.

Ms SCOTT: We would welcome it if you did that, Reverend Nile. Yes, that would be something that councils would warmly endorse.

The CHAIR: How do council local traffic committees work towards road safety outcomes and how can this be improved?

Ms SCOTT: They are a collaboration between the State and local governments, and I think that whilst they all operate within a similar framework, they all operate quite differently. I would add to my earlier comment that the current system is quite complex. If I could add a local example, a local public school in my electorate has had a series of near misses at an intersection on a main street—King Street. When a truck was stopped over a traffic light intersection on King Street we had children walking underneath the truck as it stopped. We have also then at that same intersection around the corner had children on their scooters going to school and scooting down the footpath. It transferred into a shared zone, but the children did not pick up the difference and kept scooting around the corner into the shared zone without stopping. A truck turned the corner and there was an NBN box on the corner, so the driver's visibility was impaired and the child would have gone straight under the truck were it not for the parent who grabbed their child by the scruff of the neck and to stop—

The CHAIR: How lucky.

Ms SCOTT: We have seen some very near misses. I have now been advocating on this issue to get that intersection improved for years—literally years. The council is doing the work to improve the safety of the shared zone but because that takes a long period of time to do—to budget, to plan, to actually do—the council is now itself paying for safety officers to stand on the road to protect the children's safety. The State Government—about the intersection at King Street—have come back to me and said that it is possible for the council to apply for funding next year. It might be awarded the year after that and it might be begun the year after that, so it is three years away. The processes are complex. There is not enough funding—

The CHAIR: Is that particular road a State road or a council road?

Ms SCOTT: The intersection is a State road—King Street—and around the corner it is a local road. What it should be is a perfect partnership between State and local governments to fix the traffic lights on the State road and to improve the safety of the shared zone around the corner.

The CHAIR: And that is near a school?

Ms SCOTT: Yes. Multiple near misses. The advice I keep getting time after time is that this will take years to fix, and I fear that a child is going to be killed. I am sure that if you went to every councillor in the State they would have the same story, and, can I say respectfully, probably every MP in the State Parliament would have the same story. The system is broken and we should not have to have so many barriers to improve road safety outcomes, especially in areas where there are repeated near misses. This is a complex system and there is not enough funding, and the combination of those factors is putting lives at risk. I cannot be more frank than that.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Following up on what you have just said, you have presented the problem, what is the easy solution?

Ms SCOTT: I think the solution is to better align the funding for roads where there are safety problems, and we know that is, from all the evidence, on local roads—rather than on State and Federal roads. And it is also to work hard to reduce the complexity around the local traffic committees, to make sure that there is recognition of the fact that the time frames for these kinds of approvals are far too long, and there is monitoring of this by councils and local governments to create solutions that work.

The CHAIR: To fast-track it all. Thank you so much for appearing today, Councillor Scott. 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?

Ms SCOTT: I am happy to. Thank you for your time.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

BERNARD CARLON, Executive Director, Centre for Road Safety & Maritime Safety, Transport for NSW, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

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

Mr CARLON: No, I do not.

The CHAIR: Would you like to start by making an opening statement?

Mr CARLON: Transport for NSW has prepared a submission on behalf of the New South Wales Government and I am here today to clarify any aspects of the Government's submission and respond to further questions that the Committee may have. The New South Wales Government is investing a record \$1.9 billion into road safety in New South Wales over five years to support the Road Safety Plan 2021. The plan includes a number of actions that are delivered in partnership with local government across New South Wales. These include the Safer Roads Program. This program is a partnership between Transport and local councils to install road safety infrastructure on existing roads which across New South Wales was proven to reduce the number and severity of crashes. The New South Wales Safer Roads Program has two initiatives. One is the Saving Lives on Country Roads initiative and another is the Liveable and Safe Urban Communities initiative.

Following the announcement by the Government in June 2018 of the funding boost to support road safety, the available allocation for councils has increased from around \$50 million in 2018-19 to \$190 million in total up until the 2022-23 financial year. Expanding 40-kilometre high pedestrian activity areas is part of the plan. The plan also includes identifying high-risk roads and, in consultation with the local community, reviewing speed limits where there are limited road safety features protecting people if they are in a crash; partnerships with councils and community groups and industry to support that grassroots Towards Zero initiative; and the Local Government Road Safety Program, which you have heard a number of the council road safety officers actually give evidence about throughout the proceedings.

As you have heard, approximately 90 per cent of the New South Wales road network is under the control of councils. This covers roads that are administratively local or regional roads. Each year there are over 9,000 people who are injured in crashes on local and regional roads managed or under the control of councils. This is just over half. It is 52 per cent of all casualty crashes in New South Wales. Similar to State roads, the majority of those fatalities occur on country roads managed by local government, while the majority of the serious injury crashes occur on the metropolitan roads. Vehicle occupants account for more than half of the fatalities and certainly a large proportion of those fatalities in the country areas are on high-speed roads. In the metropolitan area, a significant proportion of those are serious casualties, so serious injury crashes. The majority of people killed and seriously injured in crashes live locally within the council where they crash. The councils with the highest number of serious casualties are those with the highest resident populations.

Run-off-road crashes account for almost half of the fatal crashes and 42 per cent of the serious injury crashes. However, there are variations by degree of crash and by urbanisation. For example, the leading crash type in the metropolitan fatal crashes is pedestrian crashes, at 40 per cent. This is due to that higher number and mix of pedestrians and other vehicles on metropolitan local and regional roads. In contrast, on country local and regional roads, the off-path, run-off-road crashes account for 60 per cent of those serious casualty crashes. One in six—16 per cent—of the fatal crashes on local and regional roads in country New South Wales involve a head-on, which is not an overtaking crash, where somebody has drifted across the centre line. Excessive and inappropriate speed is a factor in 44 per cent of fatalities on local and regional roads, and this is higher than fatalities on State roads, at 37 per cent. The incidence of excessive or inappropriate speed in those crashes is higher for country local and regional roads—50 per cent—than for metropolitan local and regional roads, down at 31 per cent.

Funding programs such as those which are part of the delivery of the Road Safety Plan, such as the Safer Roads Program I have referenced and the Australian Government Black Spot Program which you have heard information about, prioritise projects based on estimated road safety benefits. These include the number of fatal and serious injuries saved per project. Transport for NSW acknowledges the key role that councils play in road safety management across the State. As previously mentioned, councils deliver a number of road safety programs such as the Safer Roads Program and the Local Government Road Safety Program.

They work closely with community road safety partners in non-profit organisations like Little Blue Dinosaur Foundation, which are now partners with 50 local councils across New South Wales, in their important road safety work. Building on this relationship and acknowledging the important role councils play in their local communities, the Centre for Road Safety is currently working to develop a Towards Zero community partnership program with councils, institutions and businesses to improve local road safety outcomes. Through this

partnership, we are aiming to work with councils and the community to integrate road safety into local government planning to build a safer culture and accelerate innovative local road safety solutions.

I would like to point out before I close that we have in fact had a 25 per cent reduction over the last five years of casualty crashes on local government managed roads, so there are benefits that are being delivered and reductions that are being achieved through the investments and the programs that are run in partnership with local government. As the Executive Director of the Centre for Road Safety & Maritime Safety at Transport for NSW, I lead the development of the new policies and programs to support the Government to achieve its road safety outcomes. I am pleased to answer any questions from the Committee.

The CHAIR: You just mentioned there had been a 25 per cent decrease in casualties on local and regional roads. Has there been a similar reduction in casualties for all roads in New South Wales?

Mr CARLON: Yes, there has—on State roads as well.

The CHAIR: Has this trend continued to date?

Mr CARLON: This is a trend that has happened over the last five years of the Road Safety Plan. I would point out that we are in a fairly unique year, with the bushfires, floods and the COVID conditions that operate across the network. However, we have seen significant—as of today there are 191 fatalities across New South Wales, which is 30 below where we were at the same time last year. But I would actually point out that there has been throughout this period a significant increase in the speed-related fatalities on our road network. In March-April, up around 60 per cent of our fatal crashes were speed related. As you would have heard reported in the media, we have seen significant risk out there of people actually speeding across the network. In fact, police over the holiday period fined more people for speeding than they did in the previous year. In that March-April period the speed camera speeding fines actually increased, when we had a significant reduction in traffic volumes on our road.

The CHAIR: Speed camera fines actually increased. I was just thinking about a previous witness who mentioned that the signs did not help. Obviously, even with signs, people are still getting booked. That is interesting to note.

Mr CARLON: In terms of our speed camera network.

The CHAIR: More people are being booked and the signs are still there warning people, so it is interesting. We should note that one. How many councils do and do not participate in the Local Government Road Safety Program?

Mr CARLON: Around 80 local government councils. We have some joined up ones as well that have road safety officers. We are investing around \$5.85 million this year into that program. It has been pretty consistent. We manage that program through our local regional road safety officers. There is great work being done across all of those local communities. We are trying to build a stronger support network for the development of that approach for a Towards Zero communities program that integrates at the local level the Safe System approach within local councils. In particular, with our work [inaudible] the development of a toolkit for developing road safety plans locally that also fits within the integrated planning framework for local government. If we can build a longer term view of the management of trauma on our local roads through the local planning framework for local government—we see that as a priority in order to also have a quality process that ensures we get a Safe System outcome at a local level. We have been providing resources around the Safe System for those local road safety officers to implement within their local government areas.

The CHAIR: Is there any data that shows how road safety outcomes differ between councils that do and do not participate in the Local Government Road Safety Program?

Mr CARLON: There are a significant number of councils that clearly do not have a road safety officer. Where that is the case, the effort of local councils is not necessarily driven by having a road safety officer. It is in some instances, but there are some councils that have not availed themselves of that resource and are still securing significant funding in terms of local programs that are being delivered within the council area, as well as in particular the Safer Roads Program. In 2015 we had around \$15 million which was being allocated in that Safer Roads Program to local councils. This year that will be \$68.2 million. We are providing resources to local government. Whether that is coordinated through RSOs, through their engineering services department or their planning department, there are councils that do have a strong commitment to the integration of road safety within their planning and the delivery of programs for their local community.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: We had a recommendation during our hearings from witnesses from the Pedestrian Council of Australia that there should be an independent road safety commissioner. Has that suggestion been considered on your level?

Mr CARLON: No, that would be a matter for the Government. The Centre for Road Safety provides a very comprehensive and transparent program of initiatives under the Road Safety Plan which the Government—not just Transport for NSW but there are very strong partnerships in delivery of that plan with the NSW Police Force, with local government, with the education department and with a whole range of community organisations, as well as other government agencies like Justice and Health. The Road Safety Plan—the five-year plan—has been very successful in initiating significant drug and alcohol reforms and providing additional police resources for regional enforcement, where we know that the behavioural factors in the regions run at much higher rates.

There are a lot more crashes associated with drink driving and speeding on our country network than on our metropolitan network. Fifty-five additional police officers were provided. Those arrangements are key in delivering the Road Safety Plan. Setting strong targets is also really critical in ensuring that we continue to drive down the road toll. There is a 30 per cent reduction target which we are still striving for by the end of 2021 as part of the Road Safety Plan. But no, an independent road safety commissioner has not been a matter that has been considered.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Some of our witnesses have given their views on the slogans the State Government is using and whether they are meaningful, such as Towards Zero 2050. How much impact does that have on the public, because Towards Zero means towards nothing?

Mr CARLON: All of the international experience around the Vision Zero, as it is expressed in European countries, has actually seen a very significant drive across society to reduce preventable deaths and preventable serious injuries on our roads. The Towards Zero vision, which is part of our strategic approach, states that we can design our system to prevent death and serious injury. Although we tragically had two fatalities of high school age students in the last five years, we have had zero fatalities in the last five years of primary school age children in our school zones. There were eight local government areas last year that had zero fatalities in their local government area. Like work health and safety, many people 40 or 50 or maybe 60 years ago may have suggested that striving for zero fatalities in the workplace was not going to be achievable. But in many workplaces where there was death and serious injury, that has been achieved.

It is clearly a long-term approach to mapping out the measures that we need to implement to get to zero by 2026, as expressed in our future transport vision. But there are many countries that have had that vision within their planning framework for road safety for a number of decades and they have half the rate of fatal crashes compared to us. Our research around the sorts of campaigns that we have been running where Towards Zero is part of the Plan B and other campaigns shows that we must engage people in understanding that these deaths are actually from people's families. That motivation is very strong and in those campaigns where we have used the Towards Zero approach there has been a significant impact in shifting people's attitudes towards the need for change. We have evidence to that effect in the monitoring of those particular communication campaigns.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Your submission provides evidence of the value of permanent 40-kilometre zones in high pedestrian activity areas—local traffic areas. Your evaluation showed a 100 per cent reduction in fatal crashes in high pedestrian activity areas and a 50 per cent reduction in fatal crashes in other permanent 40-kilometre zones. I assume that you recommend and support the introduction of 40-kilometre zones in New South Wales in those areas?

Mr CARLON: Yes, that evaluation was of the implementation of that program—it has happened for more than a decade now. We have evaluated more than 200 of those high pedestrian activity areas, which have gone from 60 and 50 to 40 and did deliver significant reductions in trauma in those local areas and created, within that research, more vibrant and successful local shopping precincts and centres. It had a benefit in terms of creating more liveable locations as well as reducing trauma, which I think is a key factor in creating places that are well managed in terms of the vehicle movements that match the use of that local area—in terms of place mapping. The evidence is very clear and the Road Safety Plan 2021 has been focused on that reduction. We have seen a significant number of those speed zone reductions creating more 40-kilometre per hour high pedestrian locations.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Some of our witnesses from the local government sector have talked about the applications for grants and the criteria that are set. Oftentimes it is the number of crashes that are reported to police. They struggle in getting clear data because often it is a local down the road who will ring the council and say there is another crash. It is not reported because police do not have it on their records. They are not able to collect accurate data for crashes at those pinch points where they want to apply for funding because that is not available. One other way to access that knowledge and data would be to tap on insurance companies because people will put in claims for their vehicles even though they might not report it to police. Is that data something that could be obtained by Transport for NSW to use and assist councils in their applications for funding?

Mr CARLON: Yes, that is possible, but I think the tragedy of all of this is the volume of fatal and serious injury crashes on our network and the distribution of them right across the network. In all of our funding

rounds for programs—particularly in the Safer Roads area—we have significantly more crash locations where we do not have the additional funding. The good news is that funding has been dramatically increasing under the Road Safety Plan and this year the Federal Government has contributed an additional \$140 million—a significant proportion of that on local road projects—as part of the stimulus measures under COVID. At the moment, we actually do have that approach, which is around fatal and serious injury crashes, but more and more we have started developing models for assessing risk on the network rather than just crashes.

We do have, for example, an intersection risk model, which local councils have access to in developing projects for managing high-risk locations that may not yet have turned into a series of casualty or fatal crashes. Similarly, on the country road network we have a risk model associated with high-risk curves across the network. That is now being incorporated and added to the trauma that happens on the road network, so that we have both the risk approach—a future looking approach to resolving the future crashes—as well as a retrospective look, which is addressing where the fatal and serious injury crashes have occurred.

Increasingly, we are moving to those sorts of approaches and in particular we have—I note that you would have had some evidence in regard to the safety star rating for roads under the International Road Assessment Program [iRAP] and the Australian Road Assessment Program, or AusRAP, and we have done that work for the whole of the State road network, but we have now started to also work with local government. We have just done an iRAP rating of the Lismore City Council, Bega Valley Shire Council and Eurobodalla Shire Council road networks as well as a pilot to better inform investment in the future, which is about eliminating the risks from our roads or putting treatments on corridors. When somebody does have a crash those safety treatments are there to reduce the impact and severity of that crash, or to avoid it in the first place. Audio tactile on our road network is one of the avoidance strategies that we have, and wire-rope flexible barrier systems is one of those, which reduces the impact of a crash when it happens.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I note that in your submission at appendix A you listed the serious casualties on local and regional roads. What caught my attention was the very high number of fatalities in Central Coast at 54 and, virtually next to that, Mid-Coast at 37, whereas in many other council areas it is only 10 or 12 et cetera. Has there been any evaluation as to why those councils have such high levels of fatalities compared to other regions?

Mr CARLON: Yes, certainly. Again, it is the population distribution but also some of the characteristics of the road network in those council areas which have contributed to those sorts of outcomes in terms of fatal crashes. I would say there is a significant number of the Safer Roads projects that actually are being allocated to those local government areas, in terms of the investment that we are making to address those situations, as well as the engagement with local councils. The road safety officers and the local government strategies are being developed in those local councils to try and engage their local communities in proactive measures that actually reduce that level of trauma. Yes, certainly you can see that there is a significantly high number in those areas—both in the regions but also in the metropolitan area in the high population local government areas.

The CHAIR: Going back to the road safety officers, has Transport for NSW received feedback that road safety officers should be appointed for longer periods in order to assist the development of longer term road safety strategies. We heard earlier from some of the other witnesses that they were not in those roles long enough, so by the time they had learned something they moved on.

Mr CARLON: What I would say in that regard is that we actually clarify this in the Road Safety Plan 2021, where we identified that for that five-year period we were committed to the continuation of that program. To that effect, at the beginning of that plan we issued three-year contracts to local government, where it had previously been an annual process. The budget process for the New South Wales Government clearly is an annual budget process. Our view is that we do need to try and align to a longer term framework for the funding arrangements, but we did move to a three-year contract which was extended for a fourth year as part of the Road Safety Plan. That was in response to the concerns that were being raised by local councils.

The CHAIR: The contract now says for three years.

Mr CARLON: That is correct.

The CHAIR: Then they have to reapply again. I can see there is a challenge there, particularly in regional areas, to attract people and keep them in those communities. It is very difficult if you have a mortgage to pay and you are trying to raise a family, and yet you only have a three-year contract. It does make it very difficult to keep those people in those regional areas.

Mr CARLON: I acknowledge that and I think that our view was to move this into a rolling arrangement where it was three years plus an annual review which led to a continuation of those arrangements for the three-year period. What we are attempting to do is align to the planning framework within local governments, where they

move to a four-year process for their plans with an annual commitment. Our view is that we should move to locking in those sorts of agreed financial commitments with local government. We have done this with the Safer Roads Program, which used to have to be delivered within the annual budget. We did a business case for a 10-year program and we have been gradually extending the life of individual projects over one, two and three years so that councils had certainty that they were able to do the design and then the implementation of projects over a longer time frame. I agree that is a much more sustainable approach.

The CHAIR: How does Transport for NSW work with local traffic committees to improve local road safety? Can this process be improved?

Mr CARLON: Our regional operations people and safety people [inaudible] in the local government traffic committees along with New South Wales police and local representatives. That process led to a commitment in Transport for NSW to provide resources, expertise and knowledge, and to work with the local community and local government in those committees. I am not able to specifically comment on their effectiveness as I am not involved directly in each individual local government traffic committee, but I think they do play an essential role in bringing forward safety-related issues and concerns from the community. They are a highly valued forum for community engagement around the changes that are needed at a local level in order to reduce the risk of trauma on local roads.

The CHAIR: Are there any other ways that local communities can assist in identifying and delivering road safety initiatives?

Mr CARLON: Absolutely. We know that New South Wales police and local police play a really significant role in delivering safer outcomes for their community. Community members are quite often advocating local police for increased enforcement or particular approaches that police might take. They support the local community on road safety related matters, as does the Department of Education and the other sectors—the Catholic and independent school sectors—and deliver road safety education programs at a very local level with their community, both inside the classroom and also reaching out into the school community, outside the gate and into people's homes through their children. That connection, locally [inaudible] is a critical part of developing that Towards Zero approach and engaging local communities in the conversation about making the changes that are necessary to reduce the tragic level of trauma that we have on local roads.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: We had some evidence earlier that where development projects are handled by the local planning panel and not the council the council gets the criticism for the lack of lights or pedestrian crossings and so on. Is there any way we can make it so that the local planning panels consult with the relevant local council to check whether it has any concerns before the panel finalises its report?

Mr CARLON: I am not able to speak directly to that; maybe you want to take it up with the planning department. I believe that was in reference to ageing communities and communities where there are significantly more older people in the community, and as they start to grow you have an ageing population. From our point of view, both future transport and the planning system outcomes are being delivered around place making to try and make places better places for the type of community that is living there. From a safety perspective, as we know, young people take risks and are not as experienced as older people and that is why they tend to be over-represented in the road toll, whereas, as we start to age our frailty increases and our capacity for decision-making can sometimes be impaired, and that also adds risks. That is, to a large degree, the reason why older citizens are over-represented in our road trauma.

Planning and developing places that are safe for the movement of older people in our community is absolutely critical. In terms of our long-term goal of reducing the amount of trauma on our roads, we need to continue to focus on the mobility and safety of our older members of the community at a very local level to ensure that they have access to transport and mobility. At the same time we are managing the risks of our ageing population needing to move around our network. It is a key issue for road safety in that we know that there are increasing levels of older community members in all aspects of trauma, including bicycle riding, motorcycle riding and drivers, but also pedestrians and other people who are vulnerable on our road network. We need to be thinking from a safe systems perspective about how we can design that mobility in our community for older members of the community so they can move around safely.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Is it possible to have a requirement where the local planning panels consult with the relevant local council before they make their final recommendation?

Mr CARLON: Again, I suggest that the Committee might want to take that up with the planning department as a follow-up to this inquiry.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I want to reiterate what Reverend Nile was raising there, and perhaps this Committee could liaise with the Department of Planning about that. I would like to get your thoughts on whether

Transport for NSW, possibly in conjunction with local councils, can look at auditing traffic signalled intersections for pedestrians and senior drivers. As you said we have an ageing population, we have more aged drivers on the road still enjoying their independence and being able to drive. I have had representations from seniors who asked if we could just make those traffic signalled areas for pedestrians last a little longer. People are ageing in the area and you have got an aged care facility—it takes them longer to get across roads. It is a slower pace for them to drive out of those intersections. Are we looking at auditing, with councils, those intersections that have a heavy grouping of seniors that we need to cater for?

Mr CARLON: Absolutely. I point out that we are already taking action on the conflict point for pedestrians on intersections. We have successfully converted more than 560 locations across the network, which had the green light for the vehicles and the pedestrian green light coming on at the same time. We have actually delayed the green light for the vehicles so that the pedestrian is able to cross the road before vehicles start turning when they have got their green light. That green-on-green conflict is delivering significant reductions in risk across the network. We are also investigating technologies that track slow-moving pedestrians on a crossing because, of course, it is not just our older members of the community but also people who have disabilities—they also need that sort of support in managing their movement at intersections.

We are currently investigating some technology solutions that may address those sorts of issues, as well as looking at local places where there are a high proportion of older people living in the community. We are looking at those intersection conflicts that may be able to be addressed in a number of different ways, including countdown timers on some of those crossings, which give people a clear indication of how long they have to cross before they leave the pavement, as well as other technologies. I agree with the Committee: It is an area where we can do more work. Transport for NSW is actually investigating those sorts of new technologies to try and address those issues, particularly in those local places where we have ageing populations.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: In relation to school parking, and when new builds are happening in new estates with new schools, what input does Transport for NSW have in relation to the adequate number of car spaces at new schools? Because I can give you at least three examples of new schools with totally inadequate parking for drop off, pick up, kiss and drop, and families to park and then it filtrates through the streets. The roads are narrow; there are issues with pedestrian safety there. I am just wondering from your department's perspective how you deal with that.

Mr CARLON: Transport for NSW is working very closely with the education department—particularly that section which is actually building new schools across New South Wales and in particular across the metropolitan area—to look at the safety issues associated with the movement of young people getting to and from school, encouraging designs within local areas that actually do promote our more active transport approaches for local schools, or walking and cycling. The Government has recently committed to an additional 300 school crossing supervisors at our primary schools across the State as well. We are in the second year now of delivery of that commitment of increasing those school crossing supervisors.

Certainly there are design standards which have been established for ensuring that we get appropriate speed zoning around schools in order to protect those people as well. I have got to say the system has improved dramatically over the last decade with all of the elements of the education within the school gate as well as the infrastructure and flashing lights standards for speed zones, but we still get quite a lot of community feedback that there are risks, particularly in the behavioural aspects of that. It certainly is an issue that Transport for NSW is working on very closely with the Department of Education in terms of the design of those new schools and the broader design of the places where those schools are being built in order to get the community to be able to move their children to and from school all the more safely in the future.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: I just wanted to go in a different direction now and look at reducing road trauma by encouraging people to take public transport in a particular way. What are your thoughts on park-and-ride arrangements—where people travel short distances, park and then catch public transport? Is that something that could be implemented?

Mr CARLON: I think any infrastructure development that actually gives people a safer form of transport for their journey from their home to wherever they are travelling and back again is going to have an impact. Rather than with population growth and traditional vehicles being registered and a lot more movement across the network—rather than that just growing exponentially—significant initiatives like the new metro that is being built, the other services that are being built like the B-Line and giving better access to safer forms of transport for people are actually a really important part of the total picture of reducing trauma over the longer term. Those sorts of activities reduce the risk for people because the more people that are not on the network in higher risk sort of transport modes, the better the outcome for the broader community.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In your submission you have the details of the Road Safety Plan 2021, which is commendable. Obviously we have not reached the end of that period—that would be, I assume, 2023. Has there been any ongoing evaluation of that Road Safety Plan 2021?

Mr CARLON: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The budget was \$1.9 billion. Is it on track to spend that type of funding?

Mr CARLON: Yes, currently we are on track for delivery of pretty much all of the initiatives that are outlined in the Road Safety Plan 2021. It actually coincides with the end of the aspirational target of the 30 per cent reduction in our road toll by 2021—so at the end of 2021 compared to the three-year average in 2015-18, I think it was. Currently we are still tracking above 2014. We were below the target rate to achieve that 30 per cent reduction. We are currently around 21 fatalities over that target rate so we are focused on what more we can do within the next 18 months.

Clearly, the environment has changed significantly with regard to COVID, but we remain focused on the delivery of the reforms outlined in that program and we are evaluating the impact of those reforms. The additional investment that we are making out on the road network, particularly regional roads, in implementing wide shoulders, addressing those dangerous curves, putting audio tactile out on the network, the flexible barrier systems for when people actually do crash—there is ongoing evaluation of all those measures which are in place. We are on track to deliver both the expenditure under the plan but also more importantly all of the measures which are outlined, which are all aimed at reducing the fatalities and serious injuries on the network.

The CHAIR: I will look at some statistics here from the calendar year to 12 August 2020. There were 42 pedestrians—I believe they have been killed. From what I can see there has been an increase in pedestrian deaths up to 12 August. Do you know why that is the case?

Mr CARLON: Yes. Tragically we are 12 fatalities over where we were this time last year. There is a range of factors that are contributing to this. We did have a lower number of fatalities compared to the past few years last year; however, during this period we have seen a significant increase in pedestrian activity during the COVID period as well and we have seen an increase—as referenced earlier—in speeds and speeding on the network. All of that, particularly the increased exposure for pedestrians but also the increased speed, affects stopping distances and affects people's survivability of a crash for pedestrians as well. Tragically we have seen a number of children killed this year as well in very abhorrent behaviour which [inaudible]. It is an area which we are focused on, in particular the older age profile of those fatalities as well and the measures that need to be implemented both short and long term from an enforcement perspective, but also from a design and a network design perspective in terms of reducing the risk for pedestrians on our road network.

The CHAIR: Was the increase in seniors that were killed?

Mr CARLON: I beg your pardon?

The CHAIR: It was an increase of seniors, was it?

Mr CARLON: Yes. We have seen an increase in the age profile over a period of time of pedestrians. Tragically this year we have also seen some of those fatalities—they are young children and teenagers in pedestrian crashes as well.

The CHAIR: Has the increase been mainly in metropolitan or in regional areas?

Mr CARLON: In the metropolitan area has been the most significant increase, but we have seen—there are a number of pedestrian fatality crashes that are happening in urban areas in the regional area as well.

Mr ROY BUTLER: That is tragic and any deaths on the road is too many.

The CHAIR: Absolutely.

Mr ROY BUTLER: When I saw that number I wanted to understand more about it because as a number it does not really unpack or give you any details about how that occurred—whether it is pedestrian behaviour, whether it is driver error or whether it is the prevailing conditions. I wondered if you have any insights into how those deaths have occurred?

Mr CARLON: Yes. Without specifically going into [inaudible] I am more than happy to provide an additional report, in particular in the trend associated with pedestrian deaths over the last five years and this year, which we can provide to the Committee. In general terms, what we have seen is some pedestrian risk-taking activity around mid-block crossing, where people are actually not making wise choices and taking risks associated with that mid-block crossing. There is normally around 25 per cent of the cohort which actually are alcohol

affected and so—again, a judgement issue in terms of their access to the network and moving across the road inappropriately. We do see a number of these which are vehicle speed related, where vehicles are actually travelling at high speeds, unable to then control when they come across the pedestrian crossing the road legally. That happens at intersections in particular. I am more than happy to provide a bit more of a detailed profile of the pedestrian fatalities to the Committee.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you. That would be great.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You mentioned a moment ago about the impact of the virus, which we all obviously are very unhappy about. But it may assist your statistics because there are less people driving, less people walking and people working from home. Will that help you to achieve the targets by 2023?

Mr CARLON: What I would say in relation to that—clearly, yes is part of the answer. What I would say is that we would have expected a much more significant reduction so far to date this year. Unfortunately the speed related facilities, which are significantly higher than what we would normally have in an average year, means that speeding behaviour which—a range of factors which we believe are playing into that, in terms of the types of behaviour where we get less traffic on the road and people assume that it is safe for them to travel at higher speeds. Also the type of people and vehicles, when we had a significant reduction on the volume of traffic, were the vehicles which are more likely to be in crashes as well. So, the utilities and other vehicles that have lower safety features—but also those speeding-related crashes associated with those vehicles increased significantly. Had we not had this really significant increase in speed-related fatalities we would have been much lower this year than what we currently are.

The CHAIR: With regards to pushbike riders or pedal cyclists, do you know where most of those deaths have occurred? Do they occur in more metro areas, where they have a separate bike lane and cars or trucks did not see them and turned in front of them? Or was it more in, say, country or smaller roads, where the roads are more narrow and obviously the driver comes around the corner and does not see them?

Mr CARLON: There is a range of factors here. Certainly there is around 12 per cent of those fatal crashes where the bicycle rider has actually died as a result of losing control of their bicycle. The majority of the fatalities are actually bicycle and truck and passenger vehicle crashes that have occurred. Compared to the rest of the road user groups it is the lowest number, but it is still 10 too many and we are at the same level that we were last year. When we look then to our serious injury data, where there is a significantly larger number of bicycle riders who are admitted to hospital—that is up around 1,800 crashes—there is a combination of vehicle conflicts.

The rate of serious injury crashes where the single bicycle crashes goes up to around 50 per cent. So, it is also about the network and the provision of a safe network that bicycle riders able to access. Certainly we are strong advocates for the separation of vehicle movements and more vulnerable road users like bicycles and pedestrians. The initiatives to increase the pop-up cycleways and those sorts of infrastructure changes are really very welcome from a safety perspective. They do tend to happen clearly both in high-volume areas but also, to a degree, on high-speed roads as well.

The CHAIR: Most of those deaths that occur—do they occur in the Sydney Metro area?

Mr CARLON: The majority are in the metropolitan area, yes.

The CHAIR: In the metropolitan area in part of the city they have introduced a lot of no left turns and no right turns and so forth. Perhaps Mr Butler might like to take it up from here. So, there has been a significant decrease in fatalities obviously since that installation?

Mr CARLON: Certainly wherever we manage those risks we see a reduction in the crashes that result in people being seriously injured and killed—so, yes. Wherever we do those we also get significant benefits for not just the more vulnerable road users like motorcycle riders and bicycle riders but also passenger vehicles because in vehicles a lot of those serious injury crashes that happen in the urban area, where the majority of the serious injury crashes happen—almost 70 per cent of those serious injuries are drivers and passengers in vehicles and 40 per cent of those actually happen at intersections.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Did that new requirement about having a space for cars passing a bicycle—

The CHAIR: Yes. Was there a separate lane where those incidents occurred?

Mr CARLON: Again, I would have to look to the detail on those crashes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: No, I am just commenting on the space that has to be there. Where drivers often would go right up against the driver of the bicycle, they now have to leave that reasonable space. Has that helped reduce some of the accidents occurring to bicycle riders?

Mr CARLON: Certainly from our research around motorists we know that the majority of motorists now are actually aware of and are attempting to practice the minimum passing distance of one metre in under 60 kilometre an hour zones and a metre and a half in over 60s. And so, that pilot that we ran and the introduction of that law for minimum passing distance—certainly our research indicates that there is a much stronger awareness amongst motor vehicle drivers and that they do make efforts to increase the space that they give to bicycle riders. Of course that significantly reduces the risk. That said, many bicycle riders still experience people passing them too close and too fast. That continues to be a concern but the measure that has been brought into play by increasing the minimum passing distance has significantly decreased the risk for bicycle riders on the road.

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

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Hear, hear!

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

Mr CARLON: Yes, absolutely. If the Committee would like to include the reference to the details around pedestrians we would be happy to include that in our response.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Carlon, for attending. Have a great weekend.

Mr CARLON: No problem. Thanks very much to the Committee.

(The witness withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 16:01.