

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

**SUPPORT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL LEARNER DRIVERS**

**Virtual hearing via videoconference on Tuesday, 30 November 2021.**

**The Committee met at 13:20 PM**

**PRESENT**

The Hon. Lou Amato  
(Chair)

**Legislative Council**

The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane  
Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

**Legislative Assembly**

Ms Robyn Preston (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Roy Butler  
Mr Nick Lalich

**PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**Legislative Assembly**

Ms Wendy Lindsay

**The CHAIR:** Good afternoon everyone. Before we start I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people who are the traditional custodians of this land. I pay my respects to the Elders of the Eora Nation, past, present and emerging and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people who are present. This afternoon is the first public hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety's inquiry into support for rural and regional learner drivers.

I am Lou Amato, the Committee Chair. With me here today at Parliament House are my fellow Committee members, Robyn Preston, Deputy Chair and Member for Hawkesbury, Roy Butler, Member for Barwon, Nick Lalich, Member for Cabramatta, Wendy Lindsay, Member for East Hills and I think she's appearing by WebEx if I'm right. The Honourable Shaoquett Moselmane and the Reverend Honourable Fred Nile.

Stephen Bromhead, Member for Myall Lakes and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Housing is an apology. Chris Gulaptis, Member for Clarence and Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry is an apology as he has another commitment this afternoon.

**REBECCA COPPING**, Road Safety Officer, Snowy Monaro Regional Council, affirmed and examined

**SUZAN MEHMET**, Road Safety Coordinator, Blue Mountains City Council, affirmed and examined

**NATHAN McBRIARTY**, Traffic and Transport Unit Leader, Wollongong City Council, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much indeed. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions? Perhaps we will start maybe with yourself, Ms Mehmet.

**Ms MEHMET:** I haven't prepared any formal opening statement for today but I'm just pleased that I have the opportunity to inform the Committee on how to better support rural and regional learner drivers today. I feel that there are a number of challenges that face young people in learning to drive and I'm happy to answer questions in relation to those.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, thank you very much. Yourself, Ms Copping?

**Ms COPPING:** Yes, I just echo Suzan Mehmet in that I appreciate the opportunity to be able to come here and provide some feedback on the learner driver program and how that impacts the regions and particularly Snowy Monaro region and the challenges that are faced here, so thank you.

**The CHAIR:** I thank you both for being here today. We're still waiting on one more witness to appear, but while we're waiting we might as well start with some questioning. Any questions?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Shall we start with Mr Roy Butler?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you Ms Copping and Ms Mehmet for being here. Roy Butler is my name, I'm the Member for Barwon, so out west. Both of you in your submissions talked about driving simulators and I'm really keen to hear more about how you think that would look, how you think it would work, how it might count towards hours and what other contexts of driving, for example, country kids having simulated driving in the city or something like that, how that could benefit. It's of great interest to me. Would you both like to make comment?

**Ms MEHMET:** Yes, I'm happy to go first. I believe that it could be an important tool in assisting young people learning to drive. I do believe that it needs to be an evidence based tool. I think that there could be some great opportunities in how this is rolled out. It needs to obviously be [inaudible 5:24] around that. It could also be incorporated in education for particularly high school students, TAFE students and university students. I had some thoughts around maybe making—because the technology I imagine is quite expensive, it would be an opportunity perhaps to have a mobile version of that so it could be taken out to rural or regional areas for young people to have that opportunity. I think it would also provide—it's a good engagement tool and a good incentive around learning to drive. I also think that it would be a great opportunity, perhaps, for city young people also to have an opportunity to learn around different driving conditions. Whether it be geography or weather or dealing with other hazards in the environment, say wildlife. If they haven't been exposed to those things because they haven't done a lot of rural driving, that would be a great opportunity for those city-based or more urban young people.

Yes, I do think that would be ideally targeted earlier for young people in high school, so anywhere from Year 9 onwards. That pre-preparation is really important. Not only do parents and others that we drive with model driving behaviour, but I think that that opportunity to have that experience is important. However I would say that

it doesn't replace that on-road driving experience. That would be a key point, I believe. Young people need to have that time. I guess it would also be a consideration over whether driving simulation would be deducted from the 120 log book hours that young people have to currently do under 25 years. That would be something to be looked at, as well. Whether that would be deducted from that. Yes, I think those are my main points at this point around that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Mehmet. I'm just going to hold it just there. Our other witness is now here. Mr McBriarty, thank you for joining us again today.

**Mr McBRIARTY:** Thank you, no worries.

**The CHAIR:** Terrific. Okay, welcome aboard.

**Mr McBRIARTY:** Thank you.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Mr Chairman?

**The CHAIR:** You've a question?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Copping was about to answer.

**The CHAIR:** Oh, sorry. Yes, Ms Copping, after you.

**Ms COPPING:** No worries, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Hang on, sorry. Just before you start, have you got an opening statement Mr McBriarty?

**Mr McBRIARTY:** I just wanted to flag that the staff member that was tasked with looking after this has actually left my organisation, unfortunately. But I just wanted to still spend time with you all here today to show the commitment to such an important program.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Oh, very nice.

**The CHAIR:** Terrific and the Committee here sincerely appreciates—

**Mr McBRIARTY:** I can be here to answer questions, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, thank you. Now over to you, Ms Copping.

**Ms COPPING:** Thank you. Yes, in relation to driving simulators, our region has been lucky enough to have a driving simulator come down here twice this year. We've actually tested it out with high school students through a collaboration with Snowy Hydro. They're actually using these driving simulators to prepare some of the drivers in our region with the B-triples to drive in the conditions because they hadn't been driven before and they haven't driven in the snow. It's, I guess, a new way for testing that. But within their community engagement they've actually taken these out and invited stakeholders within the community, including Cooma High School. We were able to do an engagement piece with Transport and various stakeholders and speak to young people as they test out these simulators with animals, snow, ice. It was a great conversation piece. One, I learnt that a significant amount of young people in regional areas are driving well before they're 16, on their own properties, which is a separate challenge.

But it was really positive in that, like Suzan said, I don't think it can replace hours but I definitely think it can complement hours. I think there's a time and a place for it. I think it's unique in that we can pull out animals, we can show what ice is like. How early you need to prepare for black ice and we can expose, in a virtual reality, young drivers to conditions that they may never get to experience on their learner drivers just because they're not there when a weather event happens. But they most likely will experience, living in an area such as The Snowies, before it happens. There's obviously limitations with the simulators, but I definitely think through schooling it can be an engagement piece. Accessing high school students and TAFE. TAFE was the one that brought down the simulator and they were more than happy to travel with the simulator as long as we gave them a synopsis of why we needed it and what it was for. Yes, sharing that around across the schools in regional areas I definitely think has a time and place and could be beneficial in complementing a minimum amount of hours, but not replacing the Licensing Scheme.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Nick, did you have—

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I can ask if you want, if you're not ready. Yes, I agree with what you said, Ms Copping. Particularly, my son just got his licence and obviously he's from Sydney. He hasn't had any experience driving on snow or black ice, as you say. Certainly the simulator would be extremely helpful. My quick question, following up on what you said earlier, I'm not sure whether you know but how many simulators are there and do you have to pay for it and what's your recommendation? If it's so useful, do you recommend that there be more simulators available for young people throughout New South Wales? Particularly, as you say and as Ms Mehmet said earlier, that it would be great for high school and TAFE as well as, potentially, university

students to simulate the various driving experiences in the bush or in the mountains, with ice and so forth. Broad question.

**Ms COPPING:** That's fine. In the first instance, I believe Snowy Hydro paid for it. But the second instance, in which it wasn't used for young people but we used it at a heavy vehicle forum, TAFE covered it within their own community engagement piece. I guess it fit their niche of what they wanted to do within the community, so it didn't come at a cost to us. But, yes, I believe there's a very limited amount in New South Wales. I think, from memory, it was under five. Yes, I guess having them more broadly, they do come with a large cost. But it's something that could be shared around New South Wales. Yes, universities, you can reach a lot of young people through universities, TAFE and, yes, sharing it around through the broader institutional agencies allows us to reach a much broader array of young people. I would definitely support increasing them because technology has got a place in the future and it will probably have a place in where driving goes and so other things. I think it could definitely be beneficial for young people in preparing them.

Like you said, I get a significant amount of young people come from the city, coming into my region, and they are a significant group of our crash stats and they're often P platers and that's because they haven't experienced regional driving in this capacity before.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Copping, could I just ask a question? This is more probably with reference to your particular area. But what are the challenges facing young people and particularly those Indigenous communities and those with a lower socioeconomic background? What are the challenges in trying to obtain a licence in order to go to their jobs or further education or TAFE and then how do you think we can improve that?

**Ms COPPING:** Thank you for that question. Yes, in our area we've got a very limited timeframe in which young people can learn to drive. Winter takes out a significant amount of safe driving opportunities for those who are probably in their first 50 hours of the Licencing Scheme. We've got dawn and dusk, which brings significant amounts of animals, and then we've got black ice in those outside seasons. With that you've got parents who are travelling long distances to get to work, so by the time they get home it may be dark and considered unsafe to be teaching a learner driver. In terms of those with low socioeconomic status or from disadvantaged communities, the ability to afford extra help or pay for a driving instructor is not necessarily within their resource capabilities. The median income here is much lower than that of the state average. I guess monetary wise, it's quite hard to fork out money for the Safer Drivers Course. Housing affordability is already a challenge.

I guess supporting those with low socioeconomic status, we need to really reach out to systems that could provide cheaper alternatives, mentoring programs. I guess making use of our Rotary and community groups and how they could better support mentoring young drivers or taking young drivers out. Because it's not necessarily in the parents' here capability and resources to be able to provide learner drivers with the most diverse array of training within their own resource limitations.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have any of those sort of resources in the Snowy Monaro region? Any of those—

**Ms COPPING:** You can apply for, yes, I believe you can apply for discounted Safer Drivers Courses but you have to really meet the requirements. You have to know about the programs and there's not a large array of availability. We wouldn't even have that many Safer Drivers Course opportunities down here. There's about two key learner driving schools. They will travel in the region, but I would assume that even some of our learner drivers are reaching out to the coast. Like Bombala, they're probably going to the coast to look for a learner driver as opposed to within the region. We've also got those challenges of, we border two other territories, so we've got Canberra and Victoria right on either end of us.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. You're not aware of any education program at school where they're perhaps informing the students that there is different forms of help available to them?

**Ms COPPING:** I don't believe it's within the Year 11 and Year 12 curriculum. I myself, within the road safety officer role funded through Transport for NSW, have to deliver learner driver workshops. That does have intake and it's a very useful component. But I guess discussion around getting more people involved in that was if it could be included in hours. It's a two hour workshop, it really prepares supervisors for teaching learner drivers. Yes, if they were to bring along their learner driver, and many do, that would be useful. But, yes, there's not an extensive array of alternative measures.

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

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lalich.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** How can we better support regional and rural learner drivers to overcome the challenges they face when going for a licence? What can we do to help them? What would they need, do you think?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** That's a question to everybody, I think.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Yes, anyone. Sorry, to any of you, yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Anybody can answer that question.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it's open to everyone.

**Mr McBRIARTY:** Yes, I'll start. Just in Wollongong's context, we only have small components of regional areas. But it's kind of timely to bring up that when you're providing log book runs and learner workshops to the community, which council support through Transport for NSW funding. It's understanding all of the layers and the barriers that we need to cross. It's very timely at the moment with the state's challenges with respect to flooding. Wollongong has a significant flooding issue of our beautiful escarpment. Therefore we have been working with the SES but also local emergency authorities on where are those key locations that could cause issues? It's actually creating a bit of interest around a real concern for our region and for a regional area. It's really understanding what are—again, I spoke about it earlier in the previous parliamentary inquiry—but it's knowing site context and the actual specific education programs that we can tailor for those type of people.

Supporting those programs that are within Transport for NSW that are existing, but expanding on them. We've seen [inaudible 20:02] doing these presentations.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, you've frozen. You froze for a moment. You might have moved from Wollongong down to the Snowies.

**Mr McBRIARTY:** Before losing our road safety officer, we'd actually had a huge intake, increased by just doing this remotely. So those people that were busy, to catch up and do a workshop, so for remote areas where it might have been a three hour drive to get to a council building to actually undertake that workshop, had the opportunity due to the challenges we faced this year, to actually offer it to a huge array of people that traditionally wouldn't have been able to get to one of our workshops. There are positives and that would be some things that we would need to explore, is understanding that it is a distance to travel, but how do we combat that with on the ground education programs, but also remote, noting the distance challenges.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I have a question, following on from that.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I think Ms Mehmet was about to answer.

**The CHAIR:** Oh, sorry, Ms Mehmet.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I'm sorry.

**Ms MEHMET:** That's fine. I was just going to say that the Helping Learner Driver workshop that road safety officers do deliver through council and local government road safety programs is great. That is actually something we do a few times a year and it is funded by Transport for NSW, as we mentioned. That's targeted at supervising drivers, so parents or carers or grandparents who might be teaching the young person to drive. It's a really good refresher on what the licencing system is all about. But young people don't always come along with their parents to that. There's a sort of assumption that the schools will do quite a lot of engagement around road safety education, that it's in the curriculum. But as Rebecca mentioned, in Year 11 and 12 it isn't really there. I would also make mention of the Keys2drive program where parents or supervising drivers can get a free lesson. They can have a young person in the car with them and their driving instructor and they kind of get a free lesson on getting the tips and tricks, first up.

But that Keys2drive program is not available widely and I know in some regional areas it's not there. It depends on driving schools being able to deliver it. Also the Safer Drivers Course, which young people have to have done 50 hours already on their log book, they have to have \$140 to be able to pay for that. That's half theory and half practical. It's not always delivered, like in our LGA it's sporadically delivered by TAFE and very occasionally a driving school, but from out of the area. Often people have to travel down to the next LGA, which is Penrith, to join in and do those. I think also it's important to note, for some families \$140 is quite restrictive and particularly for families who might have multiple children. If they've got twins or triplets, which can happen, it can be very expensive to either put young people through formal driving lessons or even those Safer Driving courses.

As road safety officers we do try to get the word out about all those particular programs and they are great. The other thing I wanted to mention was the Driver Licensing Access Program and that also is a bit of a mentoring program to support young people, who often might be Indigenous, to get their licence. Some of those are run through community organisations. We don't actually have that in our LGA and often I get requests from people who don't have family or appropriate neighbours, they don't have access to a car. Those things are out of their reach and they're unable to have a supervising driver that's suitable or access to a car to actually undertake

all the hours. Those are the barriers. I think cost is a major barrier and for some families it's actually having a suitable person within the family unit to actually undertake the lessons and all of them.

Or if there's been family breakdown or so forth it can be difficult. Often when young people go off to study elsewhere, like to a university in another area, they miss out on that opportunity to actually learn to drive and don't often learn to drive until years later. I think we can't underestimate the importance of having a licence. As mentioned, it really affects your ability to access training, employment, health services. If you're a young, solo parent and you've got little kids, it's really difficult to get around. In our area we do have 100 kilometres of LGA, there's 27 towns and villages. We have some public transport, but our trains are infrequent and it can be a challenge to get to health services or training or employment.

I think making things affordable, expanding some of the current programs available and also I really feel that the government can look at expanding the requirements around funding for that Driver Licensing Access Program.

Making it more available for young people who—I applaud them for making it available for Indigenous young people, but I think there's also some gaps in terms of solo parents and also people on low incomes or they don't have family members available and things like that. I think rolling that program out further with the assistance of local organisations would be extremely helpful.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Mehmet, it sounds very good. Do you think that it would help maybe if schools had a direct access to a dedicated learner driving instructor, to be available to those kids? As you were saying, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and single parents and that that might help in the process of obtaining their licence a lot sooner, if that school can provide that maybe for the students?

**Ms MEHMET:** Yes, certainly that would be a really good option. I guess you'd have to just have a look at the funding stream for that, perhaps to be supported through Transport and then also for those driver trainer individuals to be appropriately vetted, in a sense. That they have had all of the checks and balances in terms of working with young people and people from—being culturally sensitive and so forth, depending on the context. Yes, that could certainly be an opportunity that could be investigated. Yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Transport for NSW basically collects money as a result of the traffic—the mobile cameras.

**The CHAIR:** Now, now, come on.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It's only a small proportion of it as you know.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** A small proportion. Could that be an avenue, where from that money it comes towards instructors that would teach at high schools and—

**The CHAIR:** Well that's not—

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Yes, from your question Lou.

**Ms MEHMET:** Certainly. My understanding is some of the revenue from the speed camera program does go towards road safety projects and also goes to the local government road safety programs. Certainly that could be something that could be looked at, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. A question from Robyn Preston.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you for attending. I'm just referring to Wollongong City Council's submission and following on from Ms Mehmet's comments just now, you talk about the only requirement for a family member to train their child or relative is holding a C class licence. Often that might mean passing on poor driving habits that that person might have as well. But it's sometimes the only option that families have because they can't afford to pay someone who's a professional in that area. You touched on the opportunity perhaps for some sort of funding and a program to establish. Is there any other way that we could circumvent the poor driving habits that might be passed on through a family member?

**Mr McBRIARTY:** I think the way that we can combat that is that the driver education and education programs should be ongoing and regular. There are a lot of people driving around now with a C class licence that probably haven't had an update or an open of the road rules for about 30 years. I guess that's why it's really emphasising those programs, as we've spoken about today, those workshops with parents. That if that is the only availability that they do have that initial guidance upfront. Because I think you'll find that any of those workshops that run, a lot of the parents or guardians that are facilitating being the supervisor actually learn a lot and actually go, oh, I never knew that and I'm really grateful that I had that opportunity. I know that in Wollongong here, we do really prioritise those workshops. Because, again, we do know that grandparents, for example, are now supervising our learners and they really appreciate that learning.

But possibly, like we've discussed, is expanding that through into the schools. Schools meet regularly

with the parents of those schools, that we also expand that workshop program, that the road safety officers of each council actually present to each school at certain times to update on road rules. So we ensure that that best of knowledge, that best practice is always with those people being supervisors.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you. Any other comments, witnesses?

**Ms COPPING:** I just had a comment extending on Nathan's point there, in relation to not only just in schools, in workplaces too. We have a lot of young people in our region down here that leave school and take up an apprenticeship and just considering how possibly their employer can replicate what Transport has come out with, with all the road safety in your workplace. How they can possibly get some hours up through driving through work and how their employer can assist them in that and encourage safe driving behaviours at work. Yes, just furthering on from that, for those that are no longer in school.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Wendy Lindsay, do you have any questions? Wendy?

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY:** No, Lou, I'm okay, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** You're good. Mr Butler?

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** All three of your submissions talked about mentoring. Some of you have mentoring available, some of you don't. You all talked about mentoring and some of you have it available, some of you don't. How much of an assistance would a mentoring program that was structured and formalised be to assist in your LGAs?

**Ms MEHMET:** I believe that it would really fill the gaps for the young people that, as we've already described, can't access mentoring in a traditional sense. I think there's also a little gap in terms of, we often talk about young drivers who are 17 to 25. But also there is that gap of people who are just over that age group as well. They might not have to do as many—the 120 log book hours, but they also still need support to learn to drive, because they may have had life challenges. Whether they might have experienced domestic violence or have other personal issues that have inhibited their ability to learn how to drive, whether it be financially or personally. I also think that it is a great enabler. Transport is a great enabler for accessing and improving your life. If you don't have transport and you can't drive, you can't get to work, you can't get to hospital, you can't see the GP. It's so basic and to have that up your sleeve. Many jobs require a licence, of course. I really feel that, for me, it's filling the gap for individuals that miss out. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I guess that would also stop some of the young ones from getting into trouble with the law, as well. Because they have that sense that they need to get around and they do it without having a licence. Yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Just one quick one. Ms Copping, I think earlier you said you were surprised to learn that in regional New South Wales there are children below 16 already driving on their farms and so forth. Out of curiosity, what age do you think we should start having the simulators available? For 14 year olds or 15 year olds or what age would be a good start bracket?

**Ms COPPING:** For the simulators, I definitely think high school, that older 16, 17 year old. When we're allowing them to drive legally on the road, I think that's definitely the right age to start it. Those who are driving underage, I guess my comments around those are more so just the consideration. Whether there's a question in the test where we could ask, have you driven before? Just taking into consideration levels of overconfidence when coming to driving. If you've already been driving a tractor or various other equipment or cars on private property. But, yes, in terms of simulators I think it would be most advantageous when you're learning, you're most likely applying for your learner driver licence, so it can complement that. Yes and as you're starting to drive, so you can foresee those hazards.

It might be useful to have had a certain amount of hours, similar to the Safer Drivers Course, just so that you're not overwhelmed by the idea of how to actually use a handbrake and so forth and then you're starting in a simulator. You need to have at least a basic understanding of how to drive before we spend a significant amount of money on things like simulators. I would also recommend, yes, a certain amount of hours for it to be significantly useful to the learner driver.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Any more questions?

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Just a quick one. In your view, should Year 11 and 12 students be required to undergo mandatory road safety driver training while at school? That's if the school's got a car, I suppose, to be able to train them.

**Ms COPPING:** Sorry, was that to me?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Anyone.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** To any one of you.

**Ms COPPING:** Oh, okay.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Whoever wants to answer it, if you can answer it that is.

**Mr McBRIARTY:** Suzan, you go first, that's fine.

**Ms MEHMET:** I was just going to initially say that, with the understanding that Year 11 and 12 is extremely busy and there's the HSC curriculum happening, so any kind of insertion of driver training needs to be complementary to that. It certainly would be great to see some practical support around that, if it's feasible.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** It would be another stress factor on them.

**Mr McBRIARTY:** On that, just a little bit, I guess it's also leaving it open for the people that really want to do that extra hours. Some people are more concentrating on their studies, but then for those other ones that we've touched on that they're looking for an apprenticeship, it's vital for them to actually get that. I know something we struggle with in Wollongong is the sheer scale and the size for one road safety officer to manage that space. Where we really passionately infiltrate our schools with the Safer Routes to School program but we would probably advocate for the wider resources to be given to larger councils or larger regional councils to give them the capacity to get to those places and support. So even if it was a support road safety officer that was maybe trained up in those skills that could then offer, by a booking system for example, maybe three for each school that really saw it as vital for their career progressions to have that licence. That may not have that support at home, that there is opportunity there for that to maybe work hand-in-hand with council's projects.

**The CHAIR:** I might just ask one final question. It doesn't matter who answers, but it may be more appropriate for Ms Copping and even yourself, Nathan, you seem to have a bit of knowledge there. But what is your view on introducing an accessibility scheme to fund the purchase of suitable cars for learner drivers in rural and regional areas? What are—

**Ms COPPING:** Sorry?

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, go on.

**Ms COPPING:** Yes, no worries. I definitely think that would increase the safety. A major issue down here is, yes, one, access to cars and affordable cars and also I guess having not necessarily the most road worthy cars on really unforgiving roads. That hitting, potentially, a safety barrier could end up fatal because of simply having no air bags. I think there's definitely a place. I'm not sure how that would be managed. But having cars available for learner drivers in regional areas is a major accessibility point to health, education, social life. Basically basic human needs. There's a lot of young people who can't access employment because they can't access a car and it's a cycle that you can't actually solve without—

**The CHAIR:** It's a vicious cycle.

**Ms COPPING:** Yes, without actually someone helping you out. Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, that's why we're all here together. We're just throwing ideas out there of how to make it better.

**Mr McBRIARTY:** I guess something we could look to there is that councils operate community transport and often use retirees to service that actual need. But they're a maintained bus service within the council fleet, to make sure that it's safe and that accessibility. But there you have opportunity of a program that is setting up for, I guess, disadvantaged or people who would need that support and access. Maybe it could be mirrored, similar to a program such as community transports within local government.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Ms Mehmet had some comments too.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms MEHMET:** I think, also, if you were to develop that project you would need to work through a number of issues around insurance and how to manage insurance in terms of accessing that car and—yes, so that would have to be worked through, I believe.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, thank you. Well, that wraps us up for now. Thank you all for appearing before the Committee today and you will be provided with a copy of today's transcript. Proceedings for corrections and any questions on notice taken today will be forwarded to you by the Committee staff. Thank you all again for being on today's inquiry. Thank you. Now we're just going to take a short break and we'll be back at 2:10pm. Thank you very much.



**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**MERYL HINGE**, Road Safety Officer, Yass Valley Council, sworn and examined

**BERNADETTE GAMMON**, Education Team Leader, Community Education, Port Macquarie Hastings Council, sworn and examined

**KIM BUSH**, Divisional Manager, Community Development and Participation, Eurobodalla Shire Council, affirmed and examined

**MARK RILEY**, General Manager, Bourke Shire Council, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Would anyone like to start off with an opening statement?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Ms Hinge.

**Ms HINGE:** I have one.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, go ahead.

**Ms HINGE:** Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. It represents an opportunity to examine the embedded disadvantage that young drivers from rural and regional areas face in the effort to gain a driving licence. There are four key factors that play an immutable role in the lives of rural residents and these are distance, population density, income instability and disadvantage. A number of other submissions have dealt with the issue of disadvantage. Together, these factors can often become barriers to learner drivers obtaining their licences. Distance manifests itself in kilometres between towns and services with no shortcuts available. That is until teleportation becomes viable. Travel is commonly by road and in private cars, therefore not holding a driver's licence greatly affects all aspects of life, especially the ability to earn income, undergo training and maintain health.

Community connection is a strong motivator for gaining and keeping a driver's licence in rural areas. In these areas where population density is low, most transport services are not viable options and active transport is limited. Income instability stems from the higher proportion of primary producers in rural communities, adverse weather events can change the potential of a bumper year to a disaster in only a few days. Take the current rain event. Direct flow-on effects to families can mean the prioritising of costs for obtaining a license is low. Developing support for rural and regional learner drivers is needed to develop a level playing field. This includes professional driving instructors, the Safer Driver course, and opportunity to purchase affordable 5 Star ANCAP rated vehicles. Support for learner drivers must have several streams and it should include financial support. Distance, low population density, income instability and connection to disability are four challenges that need in-depth examination. When choosing change, I ask you to evaluate the effectiveness against the standard of helpfulness, practicality and sustainability.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Ms Bush, do you have any opening statement? No.

**Ms BUSH:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have any Mr Riley?

**Mr RILEY:** Yes, thanks Mr Chairman. I'm talking to you today from Bourke, approximately 800 kilometres from where the Committee is sitting today, so thank you for the opportunity to do this via teleconference. Bourke, in the far north west of the state on the rapidly rising Darling River. Certainly it has its own set of challenges in respect of rural and regional learner drivers. Certainly our population, approximately a third of the 2600 people are Aboriginal and 50 per cent of them are aged 24 or younger. A driver's licence, as I think we all know, it brings freedom, opportunities for education and employment. In employment at Bourke, just recently an abattoir up here has been sold. That will bring some 120 jobs, a game changer for the community. But the issue there, it's 17 kilometres out of town. We've got to get these kids, the opportunity in terms of getting jobs, they'll need their driver's licences. We don't really want to be putting them on a bus, we want them to have their freedom.

Certainly in the community, the financial capacity of individuals or families is a very large issue. They don't own a car in a lot of cases, people have a lot of fines. They can't afford the fees to commence the process for learner permits. Literacy rates are quite low, unfortunately, and that makes it difficult for people to do their tests. Then of course there's the whole issue of getting someone to supervise them for 120 hours of assisted driving. It is a catch-22 situation. They certainly need the experience to drive safely, but certainly 120 hours is a long time. Especially if you have to utilise friends or family to do that. In a lot of cases unfortunately we see regular advice in the local paper in terms of people just not worrying about a licence and that's a real challenge. They find the

process too hard, but they're still happy to drive. Unfortunately it just becomes a bigger spiral in terms of the whole issue of not obeying the law. I will leave it at that and I would be happy to take questions as we go through.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks Mr Riley. Just in relation to that, is that more prevalent within the Indigenous community?

**Mr RILEY:** I beg your pardon?

**The CHAIR:** In relation to a lot of young people driving without a licence, is that more prevalent within the Indigenous community?

**Mr RILEY:** I would say yes.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, okay, thank you. What I'll do now, I'll pass you over to—

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I'll ask one now.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, okay. Mr Shaoquett Moselmane.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Thank you so much for appearing before us and for your submissions. We have a general question, that anybody is happy—we're happy for anybody to respond or all of you to respond to it. I know that in some of the opening comments you've alluded to some of the challenges. But in your opinion, what is the greatest challenges faced by learner drivers in your council areas? You might want to go first, Mr Riley.

**Mr RILEY:** Yes, I'm happy to go first. I think the biggest thing is taking that first step in terms of being able to get that learner's permit. What we do have in Bourke and certainly around the state is the Birrang Enterprise Development Company. They're doing a lot of work with not only kids, but talking with them recently, they're certainly doing work with 30, 40, 50 year old people to get them to get their licence. They help not only in respect of the finances, but they also help in terms of the whole literacy issue in terms of getting across that hurdle of being able to, one, take a test and, two, being able to successfully achieve the required results so that they can move on from those Ls to their Ps. I think certainly that's probably the biggest hurdle in terms of getting people to make the first step.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Ms Bush.

**Ms BUSH:** I would concur with Mr Riley's comments about the starting process. We successfully received a tender to provide a range of entry into learner driving recently and one of those components is Learner—getting your Ls. We've just recently had to put on a staff member to help with that because that has become an issue for us. Before they can even start to learn to drive they have to get their Ls. Literacy levels, also people with a disability, it is very hard, particularly in rural situations where there's probably multiple issues in a home that's preventing a number of people from getting their licence. But they also come with a number of other contributing factors that may be barriers to them getting a licence in the general way that other people would. One of the things, particularly in my area after the Black Summer bushfires, is the high level of anxiety that young people are experiencing at the moment which may come out in the future. About being confident and able to be able to get their licence.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Would anyone else—can I just pick up on a point there, if I may? You talked about having to employ someone to run a program. Is that because of the popularity of it or because of the intensity of the program?

**Ms BUSH:** We have a waiting list for our program and most of the people that we would have on our learner driver program have levels of disadvantage and with that comes literacy. Our current project officer is unable to cope with the level of support that that particular issue is requiring of our program. So we've had to employ a person that just does that part of the program because of the need. We have about 14 per cent of our current program that have disabilities and about 20 per cent that are—40 per cent that are Aboriginal, sorry.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Do you think it should be council's responsibility to run a program like this or should it be a Rotary group or community groups that might be able to take up this challenge?

**Ms BUSH:** I think it's hard. We've been working with our neighbouring shire and a Rotary organisation to look at doing a similar program to ours. The logistics around vehicles is the issue there. Council is well placed because we have fleets of vehicles that have regular servicing and have the required insurance for those vehicles and maintenance, whereas the local Rotary club is less equipped for that. However, it doesn't mean that project costs could not contribute to that if there was another group that could do that. We have really tried to make sure that our program could be taken up by others and we've done a lot of work to really put everything in writing on how to present the program if someone would like to pick it up and roll it out in another area.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Just a broad question. Would Education New South Wales have a role to play in this?

**Ms BUSH:** Possibly. It's about having the staff, the communications and the vehicles to be able to roll that out.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Hinge, I note you're shaking—are you in agreement? Do you want to speak?

**Ms HINGE:** In our area, it's not so much the ability to get a licence but the ability to access professional drivers that have good standard driving practices to teach. But, by the same token, I really like the sound of Ms Bush's program. But in our area, all our voluntary organisations, you just can't ask them because they're significantly elderly and while they have great intentions, they don't have great ability or capacity to fill that up. We've partnered with PCYC, who's based in Goulburn, for some of these things so that's a younger, more—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That's a good idea.

**Ms HINGE:** —vibrant group. I don't mean to diss some of the Rotary and Lions, et cetera, but unfortunately a lot of these volunteers are aging.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** The PCYC that you're partnering with, where is the vehicle coming from?

**Ms HINGE:** We don't have a driver training program, as such, but we have partnered with them for driver awareness training and some of the other programs. Some of those are run through the school, some of those are run through the council as individual programs.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I think Mr Riley wanted to—and Ms Gammon.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Mr Riley, you had a comment too and then we'll go to Ms Gammon.

**Mr RILEY:** Thank you. Yes, I don't want to jump in too quick. I would be concerned about council's ability to be able to deliver those programs, certainly in the west of the state. But someone asked a question, one of the panel asked a question in respect of the role of education. I see that as being very high in terms of the potential for structured courses to come forward through the education system in terms of driver training and whatnot. Yes, it would cost a bit, but what price a life? We're trying to get our kids to school. Our rates of school attendances in the west here are very poor. That just might be something that assists those kids. Oh well, I am interested, I want to learn to drive, I will go to school. If that's all they learn, that's a bonus as well.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Gammon, I think.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Ms Gammon.

**Ms GAMMON:** Thank you. I'm trying to recall the first question, but I think it was around why the need for—

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I can ask it, if you like.

**Ms GAMMON:** That would be great, thank you.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** The question was, in your opinion, what is the greatest challenge faced by learner drivers in your council area?

**Ms GAMMON:** Yes. For where we live, I guess a lot of that's around the affordability to get a licence and the access to a driver who can take them around. Whether it be affording initial fees, the petrol, having families that don't have a car or don't have a person who can actually drive a car in the family or who have other responsibilities, maybe a sick child or a disabled child that they can't spare the 120 hours to take their student out. A lot of the time it's the petrol cost or, as we were saying earlier, some of the cars that these students are using are probably not even roadworthy. It's quite a diverse range of students and situations, but I think it's sort of money and access. A lot of them live further out, as well, so even trying to access other sorts of support can be very challenging. At council in Port Macquarie Hastings we don't have a program ourselves, but there are a couple of not-for-profit organisations that do try and reach this need. One of them is still currently running, the other has run out of the funds that they used to have to do it.

They have, I think it may even be a program that Transport for NSW have supported, the L2P Program, and they use volunteers to take the students around, so it's very much reliant on those volunteers. Each student costs just over \$1,000, I think, to put through the program. They get a couple of workshops on driving attitudes and driver safety. They get put through the licence knowledge, the driver knowledge test financially and they go for three professional driving lessons, as well, and are put through the Safer Drivers Course. On top of that, the rest of it's all volunteer so that's using donated cars. They've had two car yards who have donated cars to the program, so new cars which have been painted up with the L2P program on it and the volunteers access those cars to take the students out for the driving.

They also go through a first aid test. They are also given a course with a professional driver to assist them to be a good mentor and are given, I suppose, support from the coordinator of the program in that space. So it's very reliant on volunteer and not-for-profit support.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for that. Mr Roy Butler.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thanks for your time today folks and Mark I'm going to come to you, but I'd also welcome comment from anyone else. The program that's been run by Birrang in Bourke and the fact that they will help people get their ID documents together, help them through the process, hold their hand through the process, seems to be a way of overcoming significant barriers to people getting their licence. Do you believe that's a program that could be duplicated or something very similar duplicated into other local government areas?

**Mr RILEY:** Yes, most definitely and my understanding is that they have rolled it out in quite a few number of places around the state. Their funding is derived through Transport for NSW. Initially here in Bourke they started off doing five or six weeks a year, now it's a full time driver or person who provides the driving lessons. But unfortunately she's not accredited at this stage, but she was certainly pushing a lot of kids through. Yes, it's working well and I think it could work throughout the state.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Okay, so when you say not accredited, she's unable to do the three-for-one hours for 10 lessons, but she can do the one-for-one that any open class licence holder can do?

**Mr RILEY:** That's correct, yes.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Okay, thank you. Would anyone else like to comment? I know, Ms Bush, you were talking about a program that was under the umbrella of council and, Ms Hinge, you mentioned some—or it might have been Ms Gammon—mentioned some non-govvies who were running driving programs. Is there an opportunity here to duplicate something that's already working and see if Transport for NSW would look at funding in your areas?

**Ms BUSH:** Transport for NSW is already currently funding our five year learner driver program. I just wanted to respond to Ms Hinge's issue about the aging population. We have 25 current volunteer mentors, one of them is in their 20s, one's in their 40s, six are in their 50s, 11 are in their 60s and five are in their 70s and they are excellent and they find value out of the relationship that's developed over the time in the vehicle. They're an untapped resource in most communities with our aging population. We get—have no problem getting volunteers to help with this program. But, as I say, ours is based on the submission that we put forward to the Committee. The Victorian government has a program that we largely based ours on. This community based driving education support, we've really seen the benefits of it in our community and it is transferable to any other community.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY:** Chair, could I ask a question please?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, certainly. Wendy Lindsay.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I think someone else wanted to make a—

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY:** Hi, I just wanted to, just with some of the remote communities like Bourke. For an example, my children here in Sydney do a two year course in Year 9 and 10, it's a subject that they can elect to choose as part of high school, which is called Oceans Alive. Part of that does do marine biology and a variety of subjects. But at the end of it, and throughout the course of the two years, they actually get their boat licence as part of that course. I'm just curious, is there something perhaps—and this will only, obviously, capture high school students—but is that something, perhaps, that we can look to bespoke for some of the more regional communities within Department of Ed? Clearly there's already that ability with this particular course in relation to a boat licence and it's through Service NSW. They get a proper boat licence like a car licence. Is that something that perhaps we can look at doing for some of the regional communities, along that vein? Where it takes two years to complete, but it's part of their elective subjects for high school?

**Mr RILEY:** Yes, I think it's part of that structured approach that I spoke about, through education, and I think that's what you'd need to do. Obviously the Committee would need to talk to education as to what their thoughts are in respect of that. But I like the idea of education very much getting involved. As I say, I think it's a double-edged benefit there in terms of the kids learning but also getting the kids to school. That's such a big issue in the west.

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY:** Okay. Well, like I said, it's certainly already in place. But I'm just unsure whether it's particularly teacher-driven. Like if there's a teacher that's interested obviously in undertaking that subject, therefore it runs at that particular school. But perhaps we can have a conversation with Minister Mitchell in relation to rolling out something similar.

**Mr RILEY:** Yes.

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY:** Okay, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Actually, I might just carry on a little bit from what Wendy Lindsay was saying. In your view, do you think perhaps Year 11 and 12 school students, maybe they should be required to undergo mandatory road safety and driving training while at school?

**[UNIDENTIFIED 67:23]:** Or as an elective.

**The CHAIR:** It's open to everybody.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Gammon put her hand up.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Ms Gammon.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, go ahead Ms Gammon.

**Ms GAMMON:** I think it's a possibility and it's certainly a good way to capture everyone. I do know that the school curriculum is already quite at capacity, that would possibly be one issue. The other thing is it would probably need to be bespoke for different areas, as well, and look at the different safety issues and the different concerns of the regions that people are driving in. So not, maybe, one course for all. Maybe something that can be manipulated a little bit. I do know a lot of schools take up driver safety type programs. Maybe not formally through the school curriculum, but through external people who come in, looking at drugs and driving and being tired and how to look after your mates and those sorts of things and that then is up to the school to take that up. It's a bit of a tricky one. It certainly is a way to capture everybody.

But from my perspective, the L2P problem is around finding the 120 hours. Whether it be finding someone to do it or the money or the time. It's not so much about the driver safety. The driver safety is exceptionally important and needs to be addressed at the same time, but it's the access to achieving 120 hours. Whether it be through where you live, who you live with, how much money you earn or don't earn, that's stopping you. It's those barriers. So having programs that will reach out to those people and knock those barriers over are probably the most important.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, well that's what I think, if you make it mandatory, right, then obviously the students there would be able to accumulate certain hours that will go towards them obtaining their licences.

**Ms GAMMON:** As in, like the Safer Drivers Course through school?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, through the school and then that perhaps can go towards it.

**Ms GAMMON:** That would go towards it, yes.

**The CHAIR:** That whole—yes. Anyone else got any comments?

**Ms GAMMON:** Yes. As long as they have the access to be able—because that takes 20 hours—to get the other 100 hours. Because the 20 hours will run out after a certain length of time. So it would need to be, yes, hand-in-hand with other support to get the other 100 hours.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Would anyone else like to make a comment? No? Ms Hinge? Mr Riley?

**Ms HINGE:** From the perspective of being able to fit it into the school curriculum, I agree with—sorry, Ms—

**Ms GAMMON:** Gammon.

**Ms HINGE:** Ms Gammon. I made a suggestion that you might be able to do like a camping program, that was focused around learner driver skills and road safety as a whole and part of that could contribute towards the 120 hours. It is a thing that kids from country areas often do, that they go away from home and into intensive camps. So it could be like an intensive road safety program and it could be possible to run those during school holidays. Although some school holidays, kids use that as the ability to earn money doing jobs, so it's a balancing act. I do take on board what you say about being able to tweak it for particular areas.

I have to say that, in terms of rural areas, our area is relatively affluent and a lot of our kids travel—a lot of the parents travel into ACT for work. So that colours the ability to pay for things here, but it doesn't change the effect that income instability happens because of just rural ways of life. It does make a difference and I take on board what the others have said about people with disadvantage in their families. The other thing that rural families also have to cope with is the aftermath of rural accidents. The disadvantage in rural areas is extraordinarily broad and complex, really.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Yes, Ms Bush.

**Ms BUSH:** I'd just like to add to that. There was comment made previously about disadvantage and trying to keep kids at school. So if you've got a program that's in school, we're not targeting, probably, those that

are more disadvantaged to get their licence. I do have to—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that's an excellent point.

**Ms BUSH:** Our local driver licencing, Service NSW, knows when—our program is called Y drive. They know that one of our students is coming in because they've actually had the time behind the wheel with mentors. They've had a number of professional driving lessons, ones that happen before their test, and they've got support all the way. They tell us every time that it's so noticeable that they've had proper driving instruction. One hundred per cent of every participant we've had still has their licence and has gone on to do good things with work and social, et cetera. They are majorly disadvantaged students or young people rather.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Mr Riley, what's your thoughts on it, being out at the back of Bourke there?

**Mr RILEY:** Yes, look, it's not a case of one size fits all.

**The CHAIR:** No.

**Mr RILEY:** It's more of a horses for courses and what's going to work. But if there is a possibility for some form of structure to be brought in by education, I certainly see benefit in that. As I say, I certainly—if it's attractive for the kids, maybe they'll turn up for school.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, well that's our thoughts on it. Actually, just following on to that, I've got another question. Should the example online test for learner drivers be replaced with interactive teaching modules which rely less on numeracy and literacy skills?

**Mr RILEY:** I think that would certainly be beneficial. Stats going back to 2017 in terms of the Aboriginal community, only 57 per cent of Aboriginal applicants passed the driver's knowledge test compared to 74 per cent amongst other groups. That's a fair disparity in terms of numbers so anything that assists in that would be of benefit, there's no doubt about that.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, so that type of program would certainly assist in those more remote communities and disadvantaged communities.

**Mr RILEY:** Definitely.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Ms Bush.

**Ms BUSH:** Since providing information to your inquiry, our council has just recently had two students from the University of Canberra studying occupational therapy come and do a review of our program. They have just sent me today their report. I quickly read it because we've got this event this afternoon. One of the recommendations was in fact about providing a range of ways, because we don't—we can't cater to that one size fits all. Particularly for people with a disability or mental health issues. Some diversity in the way that you can obtain your licence is one of their recommendations. I'm very happy to send the information to the Committee if you're interested.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, no, we would certainly appreciate it. Yes, no, thank you very much Ms Bush.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Nick.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Mr Chairman, thank you. Should the Safer Drivers Course be available to persons above 25 years of age in the regional and rural areas? It should be, that's the answer?

**Ms BUSH:** Yes.

**Ms HINGE:** Yes. I think it should be available to anybody who wants it. It's just part of the reason for it being structured the way it is is that drivers under 25 have to do their 120 hours and drivers over 25 don't have to. But I think the benefits of doing the course are very well known amongst testing staff for Service NSW and they always make comment that they know which potential drivers have done the course and which ones haven't.

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

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Thank you so much for attending. Earlier this morning we had Snowy Monaro Regional Council, Blue Mountains City Council and Wollongong City Council talk positively about driver simulators. Do your councils currently have a driver simulator program?

**Mr RILEY:** No.

**Ms BUSH:** No, we don't.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Would you see a benefit in having a driver simulator in your regions?

**Ms HINGE:** In Yass we have access to a driver simulator program which is useful for showing kids who've never driven before. It's usually tested on the Year 9 and Year 10 students. But I've had a go at it myself and it really doesn't reflect—the one that I have access to really doesn't reflect anything that's close to normal driving experience. I would be really concerned if young drivers think that that's what it's about. In addition to that, the kind of driving conditions that are come up against by young drivers, especially novice drivers in rural areas, are much wider than people in more urban areas. For instance Snowy Monaro probably would have told you that they have the largest animal strike rate in all of New South Wales and their range of animal strike goes from rabbits through to deer. I mean, it's huge. These are the kinds of things that are replicated across a number of LGAs in New South Wales where conditions are changeable and need a greater level of driving skill and experience to be able to successfully cope with that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Gammon.

**The Chair:** Ms Gammon.

**Ms GAMMON:** I'd just like to sort of agree with Ms Hinge there. But the simulator, I'm no expert and we don't have one that I'm aware of in our area, but I think what I'm hearing from the groups that are taking people out driving, that they'd like to see more, is actual real driving experience as opposed to simulated. Maybe supporting programs that might take students out to—like there's one in Sydney, I think I sent through with my submission, where they have police come behind them with the lights on so that students, when that happens to them, don't panic and they know how to pull over safely. They have breathalysers set up so they can do practice breathalysers. Fuel, how to go and fuel up at a petrol station. Incorporating real programs that will give them hours, plus teach them some safe skills.

Particularly in our regional areas, when they pull over to the side of the road there's often not a verge or there are pot holes or they're unsafe spaces. Having real life experience as opposed to simulated experience would be much more beneficial if the money was going one way or the other. The simulation is great fun. It gets people engaged and having a go, but I don't think it benefits in the same way that the real experience can.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Good, sure.

**The CHAIR:** No, I understand that. What we're looking at is ways of how to reduce those hours to make it more accessible for young people to obtain their licence in order to be able to go for, whether they're going for apprenticeships or jobs or further education. We're just trying to find solutions to make it easier.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Bush.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Bush.

**Ms BUSH:** Yes. In our submission we did say we think the balance is about right with the hours. Because it's not just about getting your licence, it's about road safety. Pushing people through quickly might get them a licence, but it might change the infringements and the cyclical disadvantage, let alone the lives and things that get lost from people that don't drive well. We see, as others have stated this afternoon, that practical driving experience is the way you learn to drive.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. That's right, you can't beat experience. The more you're on the road, the better you get.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Hinge.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Ms Hinge.

**Ms HINGE:** I have to agree with Ms Bush about the necessity for practical driving experience and that it's really key for being able to be competent in your driving skills. But I think in addition to just being able to actually drive a car, some of the additional experiences, for instance, you see on TV in some TV programs that they do tests with university students about how alcohol and drugs can affect you and that's in a controlled environment. Being exposed to something like that would be beneficial to actually see the benefit of making a safe choice, because the effect of not making a safe choice is really dangerous to them. Hopefully that would reduce their risk-taking activity because it really is the very novice driver. So within the first six months of having your P plates, those are the highest rate of crashes for that age group in New South Wales.

It's really important to try and reduce the risk-taking behaviour of young people once they have their P plates. The 120 hours really helps to do that, but having them exposed to a range of the consequences of the risks that they might take is also an important factor.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Out of curiosity, do the police still come—do they still go through the schools and they educate the children on the dangers of taking illicit drugs, of drinking? Is that still occurring these days?

**Ms HINGE:** Yes, it is. In our area we have a program specifically for learner drivers and their parents, talking about some of the risks and the responsibilities. I have to say that for the last five years, I think partly because of that program, but also one of the young people who come along to that program and speak is a crash survivor. She survived two crashes and her story is particularly impactful on young people. So I think it makes them really embed at an early age the thought that risk-taking will produce—in her case it's severe disability.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, thank you. I believe The Honourable Reverend Fred Nile has got a question.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Yes. I'm not sure if you've answered this question already. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge faced by learner drivers in your council areas?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Yes, we've asked it.

**The CHAIR:** We've done that one, Fred.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** We've done that one. Okay.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry Reverend.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Can I maybe step in while you're thinking about some other questions. At the end of this we will be making recommendations. What, in your view, would be your priority recommendation that the Committee should make in this regard? That's to anyone. Yes, Ms Bush.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Bush.

**Ms BUSH:** To support community based learner driver support programs where you have mentors and vehicles available for people to learn to drive where families and disadvantage exclude you from being able to go for a licence.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr RILEY:** Yes, I'd probably say—sorry.

**The CHAIR:** No. Yes, go on Mr Riley.

**Mr RILEY:** I'd probably go back to the education piece. Better education at schools and structured courses for all students as part of the curriculum for schools.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, I tend to agree, to be quite honest.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Gammon.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Ms Gammon.

**Ms GAMMON:** I probably agree with Ms Bush, to a certain extent. I think the funding needs to be able to be applied for to suit the needs of the area applying for it. That may be community groups or whatever, but it needs to be able to be broad enough that they can match their needs. Because I think they're all quite different. You'll have some areas that do have great volunteer programs and volunteer programs work and you'll have others that that may not work so well. So therefore maybe they can apply for different—the funds to do different things. One group in our area does the volunteers but another group feels the volunteers are too hard to manage. They have to keep a register of them, keep them upskilled, they lose them and then they have to try and find new ones again and that slows the program down.

In their group, they don't get the whole 120 hours to the students but they provide a certain number of professional lessons, some workshops and that's the way they use the funds to get the students through. I think it needs to be flexible funding that allows the community to be able to meet the needs of their young people and what they have in their area.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Look, it's a good point you're making and I think this is part of our challenge. Is that every area, every region is different and they have different needs and requirements and so forth. Perhaps we need to look at—this is where council can also come into play a lot. By telling us, okay, what are the needs of your particular community out there? Perhaps we need to have some different systems in play to cater for those needs for those communities. Any other questions?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Yes, I've got a quick one.

**The CHAIR:** The Reverend Honourable Fred Nile has a question.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Should the Safer Drivers Course be available to persons above 25 years of age in rural and regional areas?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, we've asked that one too unfortunately.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** We did. But would you be able to encapsulate that briefly, if one of you would



like to offer that for Reverend Nile?

**Ms GAMMON:** Yes.

**Ms HINGE:** We definitely think that the Safer Drivers Course should be available to any learner driver who would like to do it. Part of the reason for the structure of the Safer Drivers Course was because the 120 hours is such a big target to try and meet and it's designed to help learner drivers not only gain skills but also to realise the risks and responsibilities of driving.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Good, thank you for that answer.

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

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Thank you. Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lalich.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** I don't think this question has been asked. I don't think so. Could I just say that this question is to Kim Bush. This is more for Eurobodalla Council. Your council runs a Y drive project which pairs a learner driver with a volunteer mentor driver. This is to get the learner drivers past their 120 hours. Does Eurobodalla Council ensure that the volunteer mentor drivers have the right skills to be assisting learner drivers or are they qualified instructors?

**Ms BUSH:** Thanks for the question. We have a process by which we vet all of our mentors upon application. We make sure that they have things like Working with Children Checks. We generally have a pool of people that are retired teachers, an interest in that. We also get our local driving schools, as a part of our steering committee, that provide tuition to the mentors as an induction process prior to being matched up with the learner driver. Funnily enough, just through some of the other questions that you've asked, a lot of our mentors, because they're now involved with the program are saying how much their own driver knowledge, our road rules and things have improved significantly by having to reinforce them with the students that they're supporting. I think there's a note to self that you probably need to review those driver rules at some stage in your licence. But, yes, we're very mindful of the people that we're connecting with our young people. That they're safe and that they're there for the right reason and have the competency to undertake the role.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** You people have some obstacles in your way living out there in the rural and regional areas, don't you? We don't even know about them out here, or down here, whatever you want to call us.

**Ms BUSH:** There's some creative solutions though, that work really well. I just really also believe, like Ms Hinge was saying, thank you for this opportunity. It's really important to us. I provided a few case studies in my submission. It's been absolutely life-changing for young people. One Aboriginal family, the student we had first was the first person in his whole family, ever, to get a licence. He's done it and now his brothers are now getting their licence.

**The CHAIR:** That's fantastic.

**Ms BUSH:** They're able to go to work and connect with other families or remove themselves from harmful situations, as well. We have young mothers. It's just life-changing. It's an important task at your feet, to provide recommendations and any further support we can provide, happy to give it.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, thank you so much Ms Bush. It's encouraging to hear some good news stories and we certainly encourage councils and local communities to provide us with ideas and we're happy to take it on board. At the end of it all we hope to come up with some great recommendations that are going to help the communities.

**Ms HINGE:** Can I just make a small statement in that road safety officers are often local experts in their local area and they are already partly employed by Transport for NSW. So they're often a good resource when you're looking for particular information or idiosyncrasies that are common to the LGA. They're available on tap for whenever you want to do it. But I'd just like to congratulate Ms Bush and Ms Gammon on the programs that they run in their area. Because I've read their case studies and their case studies are amazing. They're really wonderful case studies and I'd really urge the Committee to have a look at those and see what a difference some of these programs make. But also come to an understanding of some of the complexities of the kind of barriers that really face rural and regional young people in trying to get their licences.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, thank you very much. Yes, Ms Gammon.

**Ms GAMMON:** Just something I haven't probably had a chance to mention. With our programs, because they are reliant on mentors, in 2020 we had no mentors able to take people out due to the COVID issues. Then this year only three came back. There was only four, so they only lost one, which was very good. The limitation in the mentors means there's a limitation in how many people can go through. In 2020 we had 100 people enquire, so none of those got through. This year we have had 12 go through, well six go through the program since COVID restrictions have opened up, six that are part way through and a waiting list of 40 and they're just the ones that know

about the program. It's really important. There's a lot of kids that this is going to make a difference to if we can get these sorts of support programs up for them. Because without it, they won't have a licence and their whole life changes once they get it. Their whole life, it's incredible, and their family. It doesn't even just help one person and it will often take them out of poverty and whatever their situation is. There's a whole lot of different situations. By gaining them independence, education, employment, all of those sorts of things.

**The CHAIR:** It's life-changing.

**Ms GAMMON:** It's life-changing and there's a lot of them, so it's great. It's great that the inquiry is here. We really appreciate it.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, thank you. Any further questions?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** No.

**The CHAIR:** No?

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

**The CHAIR:** Oh, Reverend Fred Nile has a question.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** What support should be provided to complete the driver theory test for people who may have lower proficiency in literacy and numeracy?

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, we've asked that question.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Have you?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

[Over speaking]

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It's a very good question.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** You can ask it if you like, Fred.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Oh, actually that could be—expanded on, Reverend.

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

**Mr RILEY:** It's probably not part of the terms of reference but it would be good if the Committee somehow could bring a focus to the backlog of learner driver tests at the moment. As a result of COVID, the backlog is enormous.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes. Yes, there's a terrible backlog. That's noted.

**Mr RILEY:** I know that the government has put on 100 extra driver testers throughout the state, but they certainly need a lot more than that because there are kids who this year were hoping to have their licence to get involved in harvests and whatnot. Well that's just gone by the wayside. They don't have a licence, they haven't been able to get their test done. Anything that could be done in that regard would be appreciated.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes, I'm aware. Port Macquarie has got apprentices up there that can't get their tests completed.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** My son now has his, he did his test just last week. But he waited for six to seven months. His exam dates were delayed, delayed, delayed. Three or four times, cancelled.

**The CHAIR:** It is an issue.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes. This is a common problem around New South Wales.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. We might take that up with the ministers, as well.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Ms Bush has a comment.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Ms Bush.

**Ms BUSH:** Just to answer Reverend Nile. Just to expand upon that slightly.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms BUSH:** It's really important that people with low levels of literacy are able to access support in the community to help them get their L plates, in the first place. Then there was some discussion a little bit earlier about maybe looking at different ways or different modes or modules that people with either disability, learning issue, et

cetera may be able to access their licence. We don't have the one-hat-fits-all. We need a bit of diversity in that and support.

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

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Yes, Ms Gammon.

**Ms GAMMON:** Just to add to what Ms Bush has said there, the obtaining of the driver knowledge test may be something that would really work in schools and in the education system, more than getting the hours, but just getting that assistance with the literacy and numeracy. But, again, that's a problem I think that was mentioned earlier, it's if they go to school. There are some that have left.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Well hopefully if there's some programs in school it may encourage them to come in.

**Ms GAMMON:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** That's part of it. First of all, may I thank each one of you for attending today's hearing. If I could, you've got a couple of programs there running in your councils and they're very, very good programs. Is there any chance of you providing the Committee with your programs?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Ms Gammon and Ms Bush.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Gammon and it was Ms Hinge, was it?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Bush.

**The CHAIR:** Oh, Ms Bush. That's right, Ms Bush. If you could do that we would sincerely appreciate it.

**Ms BUSH:** In my submission I gave an overview of the program.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That would suffice.

**The CHAIR:** Oh, okay, no, that's fine. That's fine, yes. We'll go through it again. No, that's perfect.

**Ms GAMMON:** I've been sent a manual by the group that ran mine, so I can forward that manual to you.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

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

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

**The CHAIR:** Yes, well thank you all again for appearing before the Committee. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections and any questions on notice taken today will be forwarded to you by the Committee staff. Thank you again from all of us, so much, for all of your help and your involvement.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It's been very good.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it's been excellent. It really has been excellent. Thank you, again.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**KENNETH PATTERSON,** Special Projects, Rotary Club of Wingham, sworn and examined

**FRANK LINCOLN,** Simulator Coordinator, Rotary Club of Young, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Do either one of you want to do an opening statement?

**Mr LINCOLN:** I sent in an opening statement.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Would you like to do one? Would you like to give an opening statement?

**Mr LINCOLN:** I have given one by my email.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, okay. All right.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Patterson, have you got an opening statement?

**Mr PATTERSON:** Yes, I have. I've been involved with this simulator driving business for some time and this is the reason for this statement. It has been suggested that I have been recommending—sorry, I'll start again. I have been—

**The CHAIR:** By the way, just relax and take it easy, you're amongst friends. It's all good.

**Mr PATTERSON:** It has been suggested that I have been recommending doing away with in-car driver training. I am not and I have not and will never suggest or recommend this. In-car driver training is very important for this—an important part of driver training. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, questions. Yes, Ms Robyn Preston.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Gentlemen, thank you so much for what you do as Rotarians. I have the highest respect for both of you and your organisations.

**The CHAIR:** Hear, hear.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I work closely with many Rotarians in the Hawkesbury electorate and beyond and I'm in awe of the effort and the time and the voluntary hours you give to your community, so I just wanted to put that on the record.

Can I ask you, from your perspective do you see Rotary playing a major part in educating young drivers in rural areas or should it be left to councils or the Department of Education with the schools? How do you see Rotary playing a part in educating young drivers and getting them safely into the driver's seat? Mr Patterson, would you like to comment?

**Mr PATTERSON:** Yes. I have been involved in Rotary or community service for 40 years and I have seen the numbers drop off, because of age. Unfortunately I think this will be a problem for any service organisation to do this. I believe it should be done officially with a government department in some way there.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you, that's a good point. Mr Lincoln, would you like to add to that?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Yes. I definitely agree with Ken about us getting older and I think Rotary Clubs across the board are getting older. However, what we've done over the last six years has got that much help from other Rotary Clubs. Say when we go to Yass, for example, we go down and we've got Rotarians trained up there. We leave it on the Monday, go back Friday and pick it up. The same thing happens at Tumut. Rotary Clubs now, down the far south coast, Bega, Merimbula, Pambula have already got enough money to buy the simulator and do exactly what we've been doing through their part of the state. Rotary Club at Orange have got funding, so they've got a new simulator and they'll be starting this next year at schools. Also Parkes Rotary have got their funding just recently and they'll be doing it through the central west.

I can see Rotary having, yes, a position where it can help. Also, I had a Zoom meeting with three Rotary Clubs in Canberra and they're looking at doing something exactly the same in the ACT. So, yes, I believe Rotary still has enough younger people or middle aged people coming through that can see the benefit of what we've been doing.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Well done. The Honourable Fred Nile.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** In view of the simulated hours, what proportion of hours should be simulated hours and what proportion should be on-road training?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Oh, look, the American university paper that we looked at said competency on a simulator for two, two and a half hours was lowering the accident rate in the first two years of having a licence compared to a general population by two thirds less accidents. On the road, definitely what they've been doing now. But the two and a half hours or getting to a competency on the simulator was having that extra effect.

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

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lalich.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Thank you. Could I ask, Frank Lincoln from the Rotary Club of Young, could I ask a question?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Yes.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** What aspect of your SimworX driver simulator has made it a success? What aspect of it?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Just basically all sorts of situations can be put on the simulator and in a perfectly safe environment. That's basically the basis of it.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** So everybody is happy to have crashes in the simulator.

**Mr LINCOLN:** For example I had a student at Yass, the first time in for him, he was going for his licence in a few days' time and he'd been driving since he was 10. He had an initial lesson and got through that really well. He drove well. He must have been driving on the farm, as I said, for years. His mate hadn't turned up so I said, you can do the texting module, which he did. At about the third text message that he had to answer or press these buttons on the steering wheel, yes or no, he just looked away a fraction too long. He looked up, saw just in time to have a head-on with a bus. Everything goes bang and stopped and this kid just sat there stunned and then he said, Jesus. I said, where's your phone going to go? He said, out the window. That's the sort of situation where the simulator has that nothing else can replicate that.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Frank, do your learner drivers love the simulator or would they rather be in a vehicle, do you think?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Yes. Look, all the school situations we've been in, they all enjoyed it and have got heaps out of it. As far as other lessons on the simulator, the students that have done it, yes, they've got benefit out of it. Other students have said, did the hours count towards the log book? We say, no, at this stage, and they've sort of shied away.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** If I may ask you, you don't have to answer if you don't want to, what sort of money does that simulator cost you?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes, that was my question.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** That's my question.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Oh, here we go.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It's a good question.

**Mr LINCOLN:** Ours cost \$38,000 and that was with the paraplegic hand controls to go with it. There's a mob in Queensland—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Does Rotary raise that money?

**Mr LINCOLN:** How did we raise it?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Yes.

**Mr LINCOLN:** The Rotary Club gave us something like \$13,000 and we asked for sponsorship in the wider community and we only asked for major sponsors for \$5,000. We had those in two weeks out of the community.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That's a lot of money to raise for one simulator though, with the community.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Does the community, when you call for support, do they still—I know you said the Rotary Club members are ageing, but is the community still supporting the Rotary Club to support such projects?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Yes, well ours do, yes. They're amazed and at just what we've done with it.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Are there many of these simulators at different Rotary Clubs or is it one that gets shared around or how does it work?

**Mr LINCOLN:** The Young Rotary Club owns it and we take it to schools, because that's what it's mostly doing now. It spends most of its life at schools. We charge \$200 a day plus travelling costs and, yes, that's how it operates.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Can you tell me what it's like? I haven't seen one of these simulators. Is it like a—

**The CHAIR:** Like those arcade ones, I guess.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** How does it work? What does it look like? Can you describe it for me please?

**The CHAIR:** Is it a bit like one of those arcade ones?

**Mr LINCOLN:** When we first looked at purchasing it we found that there were simulators and simulators. The American university paper that we—which I think I mentioned in my opening address—looked at single desktop monitors, multi-screen desktop monitors and the in-cabin type that we've got; multi-screen, in cabin. They were the three basic types of simulators. This one's just like driving a car. Dashboard, we've got three screens, multi-

screens, and it was the one that came up with the two thirds less accidents in the first two years of having a licence. The single screen desktop was the same accident rate, the multi-screen desktop one was a third less accidents. This university paper definitely pointed us in the way of this multi-screen, in-cabin.

**The CHAIR:** Right. At this stage—

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Does it fit on the back of a ute or a truck? How do you transport it on the road?

**Mr LINCOLN:** No, it's on wheels, it fits in a trailer to cart it around. It's just like a single seat with a steering wheel and everything. It's just like half of the front of a car.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Do you get any government funding or grants? Do you apply for any grants to purchase this type of equipment?

**Mr LINCOLN:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lincoln.

**Mr LINCOLN:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** You stated earlier, if the kids do this simulator, they do two and a half hours but it doesn't go towards their 120 hours. Is that correct?

**Mr LINCOLN:** That's right.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. In your opinion, do you believe it should count towards the 120 hours?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Definitely.

**The CHAIR:** Do you think two and a half hours is enough per student on the simulator?

**Mr LINCOLN:** This university paper said competency. Some students would be competent after half an hour, other students in two and a half hours.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It's a good point.

**The CHAIR:** What university was this study from? What university was it?

**Mr LINCOLN:** The American university paper? I haven't got the information right in front of me but I did put it in my forwarding email that I sent to you guys.

**The CHAIR:** Oh, okay, thank you.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Mr Chair, could I ask a question?

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

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Gentlemen, thank you for your time today. Just acknowledging your comments that the hours should count towards the 120 hour log book hours. If that was to be the case, how many of the 120 do you think should be able to be done in a simulator?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Probably if they spent two hours on the simulator, four hours off their log books.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** So you would look to giving them additional hours off the log book than the hours they actually do, similar to when they drive with an instructor?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Correct.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, that's good, that's positive.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That's good to know.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** We did hear earlier from other witnesses that it's not as effective as it ought to be. That's not your experience. It's worthy of including a couple of hours at least into the 120 hours or something, right?

**Mr LINCOLN:** Yes. All of the students that we've spoken to, I think if you spoke to any of the schools that we've been to you would just get that response.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** Could I just ask Ken, we've been leaving him to the side, Ken have you had any experience with these simulators?

**Mr PATTERSON:** Yes I have actually. I received funding for one, which I have placed in the PCYC here in Taree and they find it very helpful. They're using it in conjunction with their Stay Safe program. As late as

yesterday I spoke to the manager and he is very happy with the operation. That particular simulator is the same simulator that a government department recently purchased six of to put into the juvenile justice areas. It's exactly the same unit as the one I put in Taree.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** That's interesting.

**The CHAIR:** How is that working in the juvenile justice system? Is that going towards their licence?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I'm sorry?

**The CHAIR:** You mentioned about the juvenile justice system. You said they purchased six of them, is that correct?

**Mr PATTERSON:** They purchased them. They actually rang me. Someone, a young lady from the justice department rang me to ask why I selected that particular simulator.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, yes, all right.

**Mr PATTERSON:** I explained the reasons why I selected it and apparently she went off and her department ordered six for the six juvenile justice areas around New South Wales.

**The CHAIR:** Gee, that's okay.

**Mr PATTERSON:** I would be very surprised if the six of those costed the government \$100,000.

**The CHAIR:** For six, \$100,000.

**Mr PATTERSON:** The one that I put into the PCYC in Taree was just on \$19,000.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Does the juvenile justice system use the simulators for any support—

**Mr PATTERSON:** I'm sorry?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Does the juvenile justice system use those simulators to supplement the learning of those juveniles when they want to get their licence? Is that what it's for?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I've got no idea, to be honest with you, where the—why the—

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** We could check with Minister Roberts.

**Mr LINCOLN:** We've been to the Juvenile Justice Centre in Wagga twice—

**Mr PATTERSON:** The one that went into the PCYC—

**Mr LINCOLN:** Sorry Ken. We've been to the Juvenile Justice Centre in Wagga twice and all they were interested in was us doing the under the influence lesson and the destruction lesson, just so that those young people realised the dangers inherent in both of those activities.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Right.

**The CHAIR:** Right.

**Mr PATTERSON:** Well that's up to the Juvenile Justice Department, how they use them and that. But the unit they purchased was the same as the one that I purchased for the PCYC in Taree. It can handle up to 400 scenarios, does everything you require it to do. More than happy with it. Just moving on a bit further, in the previous group of people you had there, the gentleman from Bourke, he mentioned Birrang. I have been involved with discussions with Birrang, both at Orange and in Bourke and they are begging to have a simulator there for them to operate in their units. At the moment they have six accredited driving instructors that are travelling around western New South Wales doing driver training and they would love to have a driver simulator to be used with that. The same situation is at Bourke, I should say Moree, the PCYC in Moree would like to have one there to operate on the same basis.

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

**The CHAIR:** Very good. No further questions?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** No, I think that's it.

**The CHAIR:** No?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It has been really informative.

**The CHAIR:** That's all. Well thank you to both of you gentlemen for appearing before the Committee today. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections and any questions

on notice taken today will be forwarded to you by the Committee staff. Again, thank you for the good work that you provide to the community. All of us here are sincerely grateful. That concludes today's hearing.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 15:50.**