

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

**PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO SUPPORT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL  
LEARNER DRIVERS**

**Virtual hearing via videoconference on Tuesday 7 December 2021.**

**The Committee met at 10:00**

**PRESENT**

Mr Lou Amato  
(Chair)

**Legislative Council**

The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane  
Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

**Legislative Assembly**

Ms Robyn Preston (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Roy Butler  
Ms Wendy Lindsay

**PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**Legislative Assembly**

Mr Chris Gulaptis

**The CHAIR:** Good morning, 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 Islander people who are present.

Today is the second public hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety's inquiry into support for rural and regional learner drivers in New South Wales. I am Lou Amato, the Committee Chair. We meet here today at Parliament House and my fellow Committee members, Robyn Preston will be here in just a moment. Mr Roy Butler, the Member for Barwon; Wendy Lindsay, Member for East Hills, she will be here shortly as well; the Honourable Shaoquett Moselmane; the Reverend the Honourable Fred Nile; and taking part via videoconference is Mr Chris Gulaptis, the Member for Clarence and the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry. Nick Lalich, Member for Cabramatta is an apology today, as is Mr Stephen Bromhead, the Member for Myall Lakes and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Housing.

**KATE MUNRO**, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Action, NSW, affirmed and examined

**ZOE ROBINSON**, Advocate for Children and Young People, Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, affirmed and examined

**DOMINIC TEAKLE**, Chief Executive Officer, Police Citizens Youth Club NSW, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Now, would someone like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions? Perhaps we can start with yourself, Ms Munro? Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Ms MUNRO:** No, I did not have one. Just to say thank you very much for inviting us along. I really appreciate the opportunity.

**The CHAIR:** The Committee thanks each and every one of you for being here today. Ms Robinson, do you have an opening statement?

**Ms ROBINSON:** I do.

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

**Ms ROBINSON:** So I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. I would like to pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging and I would like to thank the Committee for reviewing our submission and including us here today. My role, not just today but every day, is to hold the following principles firm; the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people are the paramount considerations. The views of children and young people are to be given serious consideration and taken into account and a cooperative relationship between children and young people and their families and communities is important for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. We work with Government, business and community to ensure that children and young people's views are considered. Children and young people should be consulted about matters that impact on their lives.

I must acknowledge at the outset that there is a significant amount of work being done by local councils, NGOs and Government partnerships to increase access to learner permits. Many of these efforts the Committee would have previously heard from local council representatives in your earlier hearings and from service providers such as my colleague, Mr Teakle. We here can appreciate what it can mean for a young person to access a driver's licence but access to, obtaining a licence and progressing to your full licence is not an equal experience for children and young people across New South Wales. A driver's licence supports young people's pathways to independence and can provide a critical connection to education, employment services and recreational and social opportunities. This is particularly important for young people in regional and rural areas that are poorly served by public transport.

Just recently when visiting with young men in the Riverina Youth Justice facility, the staff talked about the difficulty in accessing appropriate staff who can come and run the Ls test for the benefit of these young men. To quote some of the young people who were part of the Griffith Project that was mentioned in the Association of Independent Schools submissions, getting a licence means freedom to travel, will help me get a job, make my mum proud. Some of the barriers addressed in our submission include costs associated with obtaining a driver's licence, requirement to complete 120 hours, access to supervised drivers, access to appropriately insured vehicles, access to the 100 points of identification and access to driving courses. I look forward to exploring these more with the Committee and working together to reduce the barriers and increase support for learning drivers across the state. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, very much. Mr Teakle.

**Mr TEAKLE:** I too would like to thank you for the privilege of being able to present to the Committee. I would also acknowledge the lands on which we meet today as Aboriginal land and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. It is important to do so, particularly for our organisation, given we obviously have a lot of regional and remote access to Communities. PCYC [Police Citizens Youth Clubs] has been around for 85 years and I endorse everything that the Youth Advocate said and she said it so eloquently around the challenges so I will not repeat that.

However, our insight comes that we—from a fact that we run Safer Driver courses in 64 clubs across 75 locations in New South Wales. We are supported by a network of over 100 driving instructors. We currently have three driver learning access programs running in regional areas, Wagga and Albury, Lake Macquarie, Port Stevens, Wollongong, Mittagong, Bega, Goulburn and Queanbeyan. We actually fund and do our own based on community access to vehicles in Muswellbrook where we run a driver education program to allow young people access to get more hours up.

Last year, despite COVID, we served 7468 young people to get their licence and 4000 of those young people were regional people. We also do Traffic Offenders Program, which is at the other end of the cycle but it equally is something that we come against very regularly and 3377 participants were in that. The challenge that we have is also around those at most risk and disadvantaged. The fact that our clubs service young people who do not have an identity in the very first instance, is a fundamental issue when it comes to getting a licence and is something that is undervalued in the services that we and other not-for-profits provide. We also, as part of our relationship with police and Revenue New South Wales, allow young people who have prohibitive fines to work them off through volunteering and doing programs in our clubs. To date, we have had \$35,000 worth of fines have been worked out, which enables these young people to get a job and actually get a licence and therefore enables them to live as normal life as they possibly can. I thank you for the opportunity to present and welcome any insights that I can bring to our experiences to the table.

**The CHAIR:** Well thank you. We will now move to questions from Members. To assist with transcribing the hearing, please identify yourself before you answer a question. Look, I will start off with a couple of questions before I pass on to my Committee members. Can you—you just mentioned a minute ago in your opening statement that some, they do not have identity. What—can you elaborate on that, please? What do you mean, they do not have identity?

**Mr TEAKLE:** So for example, particularly young Aboriginal people who are—for example, have not got a birth certificate and they do not have an identity in the form of being able to go and present their 100 point check to be able to validate, we have got to facilitate that. So that is a barrier for some young people. It is just there in the community. It is not a judgment one way or the other but it is part of those barriers that add up to being able to get to a licence to have access to people who support them to do it. I am sure the Youth Advocate can elaborate on that from her experience from a broader perspective of New South Wales young people but it is an issue that we need to just note because it is a barrier to entry at the very first step.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, no, thank you. So what are the biggest challenges faced by learner drivers in rural and regional areas when trying to get a licence? I understand, both of your opening statements, you've mentioned a few things but what other issues are there?

**Ms ROBINSON:** So as we discussed, if we look at the specific example which we can talk to because both Mr Teakle and myself were part of that pilot, is in the Griffith pilot that is mentioned in the Association of Independent Schools. It includes things from everything like people might be able to get access to their Ls but then the completion to your Ps and getting that 120 hours can be difficult and not simply because of the access to a driving instructor who can assist you and get those hours. It is safe, reliable cars, insured cars and then the access to the adults who can help you get those 120 hours. But as Mr Teakle just mentioned, is if you go back to the very beginning, if you do not have access to your identifying documents, then that is your first big hurdle and that means that you have to work with someone to get those documents. So in the school that the Griffith Project ran in, I think it was something like—and I will take this on notice to get you the actual figures but there was 17 students and I think at least half of them did not have their birth certificates. So the first step was, we had to work with—

**The CHAIR:** Wow.

**Ms ROBINSON:** —Births, Deaths and Marriages to get their birth certificates. Which, to the credit of that department and the people in that team, they did happily and easily and at no cost.

**The CHAIR:** That is good to hear.

**Ms ROBINSON:** But that is the first hurdle. So in that example, and I will take this on notice to get you those, but the majority of the young people in that school will get their Ls but the portion of those who go on to get their Ps is minimal and that is because they do not have access to the cars, adults to assist them with that, safe driving, all of that and the courses.



**The CHAIR:** Okay, so this is something available through the schools. Does that start at Year 11 or is that started earlier?

**Ms ROBINSON:** So this particular school, they are a really new school so they only had Year 10 and Year 11 students so this was for those Year 11 students.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, I just—

**Ms ROBINSON:** It was a program designed by those young people with the teachers.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, so what is it? So they can apply to join it what, at 16, is that right? When they are eligible to get their learner's?

**Ms ROBINSON:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** In regards to funding, if they do not have the—obviously the ability to pay, is there any Government assistance or some other form of assistance for those disadvantaged backgrounds?

**Ms ROBINSON:** We know that there is assistance in terms of obtaining birth certificates and so there are programs that allow that to be free of charge. You still have to know about the programs and you still have to have someone who can assist you to go through that program. That particular pilot program, there was funding provided by the Independent Schools and Transport for NSW. It was a grant scheme under Transport for NSW which assisted in costs and then myself and Minister Taylor also contributed to it because we thought it was a useful pilot to see. But there is barriers of cost, absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Teakle, would you like—anything else to add?

**Mr TEAKLE:** No, just—well yes. From a perspective of accessibility and particularly in remote regional areas, the requirement under the Safer Driver program to have a minimum of six participants is sometimes a barrier to conducting that course. I think, particularly for an organisation like ours which obviously needs that throughput of funding to sustain itself, I think we need to review how that program works in rural and remote areas and have some governance there that allows for the subscribed permission to run a four-person course in say, a Walgett or a Brewarrina or a—anywhere where there is a need based on articulating a business case and saying look, the minimum is six. We will pay for six because those four young people, if we do not do it, are not going to have access to a driver's licence. Now anecdotally, the challenge is that country kids in particular know how to drive. They tend to be able to drive much earlier than non—the metro kids and as a [inaudible 13:37] to drive unlicensed. All that does is create a vicious circle of being picked up and running through that process. So if we could actually get them the Safer Driver course, if we could get them the Ls and put them through that course, then we are on the first step to removing a barrier.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, thank you, Mr Teakle. I will pass you on to Shaoquett Moselmane.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** With regards to the figures you have specified that you have assisted about 7600 young people, 4000 of them—of those were regional young people, can you elaborate on how you assisted them? What the issues were in particular for regional drivers? What costs in terms of funding? In terms of volunteers and so forth, whatever you can assist the Committee with?

**Mr TEAKLE:** Yes, sure. From a perspective of running these courses, it is the Safer Driver course which is funded through Government. In other words, we have gone through a tender and we are one of the Safer Driver providers. It does provide a cost so people have to pay to use it. Our mandate as a charity, however, is that if a young person is disadvantaged, we will fund that. Now, that funding comes from our own resources. It will come from Government grants where that young person is able to access that. Whether it be some financial assistance, so there is not necessarily a program bucket that we understand that it fits or through initiatives such as the Youth Advocate mentioned, where because there is a program or a pilot and we know there is a need, we fund it that way. So the 4000 that I mentioned, the 7468 are young people who book our Safer Driver course as they would any other organisation that is authorised to run the Safer Driver course under the auspices of Transport for NSW.

**Ms ROBINSON:** If I may?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, sure.

**Ms ROBINSON:** Is—also in some communities, the PCYC and the police are the only option in terms of who you can go to as a trusted adult to help you get your licence. So there is a lot of work that I would say is done simply because the PCYC is the people in the town that people will trust and go to.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Of those 7468, what are the percentage of First Nations children, Mr Dominic Teakle?

**Mr TEAKLE:** I will take that on notice. I can get you that number, I just have not got it to hand.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Zoë Robinson, you mentioned a number of issues in



terms of issues of access and particularly the issue of the IDs and the assistance that provided—and providing young kids with their identification. Obviously some kids—some children with literacy and numeracy problems, what support should be provided for people without proficiency in literacy and numeracy to allow them to complete the driver theory tests?

**Ms ROBINSON:** So if we take it outside of the driving context, we do a lot to support people who have literacy issues in terms of that. There are—there is more work to be done but I think we need to be able to provide access to the right material, be it learning in a different way. So whether it is audible, verbal or you are reading it, as well as time around that and what that looks like. As we—as I said in my opening statement, the ability to access a licence is a—in theory, for every young person, a rite of passage. So whatever that looks like, we need to adjust accordingly. I think we also have to acknowledge that there are just things that can take time.

So if I think about, for example, the young men that I met with last week in Youth Justice, as you are probably aware, Members of the Committee, in terms of literacy rates in terms of young people who are incarcerated but also mental wellbeing and all of that, these are young men who are ready, willing and able to take their Ls test. The thing that is prohibiting them is the fact that they are currently in a Youth Justice facility. So it is trying to work out how you bring people in and they have been given the time and assistance to do that and to bring themselves up to that level but we have to adjust in all things to make sure that we are providing material, processes, access, the experience in a way that is appropriate for that young person.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** If their literacy was too poor to pass the theory tests, are there any other avenue? Or do you think there is potentially another avenue that we could recommend to assist those young men or women to pass their test and get their licences?

**Ms ROBINSON:** I will have to take on notice the first part of that question as to whether there are any avenues. I am not across any off the top of my head right now in terms of programs that may already exist but I would—if I go back to the original part of that in terms of how do we do that? I just think you have to design a program with the young people and figure out what it is that you can do to assist them and support them. It might just look different. It might be that they just take a longer period of time to get to the Ps and there is different accesses to that but I think you still have to think about designing a program for the benefit of those young people.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Mr Teakle, I see you nodding your head. Do you have any further to add on this in regards to these questions?

**Mr TEAKLE:** Yes. I think the co-design with young people is important because you have got to see it through their lens at that point of time because it could be as simple as a stigma. In other words, they get into a test situation and they do not feel supported and they walk before they are able to complete the test. It is just the stigma of failure that they are so disadvantaged, potentially, that they are afraid of failure so they do not do it. We find success in more hands-on class tutorials. So we take a young cohort—I know at Moree, we did it recently and we tutored them through the test. Now, none of this is recorded in a sense because I am not acquitting funds, I am just doing my job with young people. That is the engagement that we do and the police officers or the club managers or the staff, the volunteers, will do that.

But I think in terms of the barriers that this Committee is looking at, we need to understand that kids, young people, interact with these types of things in different ways and I would like to potentially encourage more online interaction. The ability—for example, Rotary had a program some years ago and I know in Taree and Young we have it, where they have driver simulators. Is there ways that we can use the gaming methodology that young people are used to, to try to create that engagement? But coming back to what the Youth Advocate said, I think that has got to be a co-design and I think there are forums that exist, whether it be Advocate for Children and Young People or Regional Youth, that have young people who sit on these committees that ultimately advise Government, who can be channelled in direction that is to their benefit.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Excellent, thank you.

**Ms MUNRO:** If I can just add something, please? Is that all right?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms MUNRO:** So it is Kate Munro. Just thinking about the conversations that Youth Action's had with workers in the sector, because obviously we represent services that work with young people across a range of different contexts and just to agree with what Dominic was saying, there is a whole lot of work that happens every day informally in Youth Services. That is just getting young people through their Ls. It is not unusual that there would be people doing case management work or engaged with young people in other kinds of programs and part of that would be helping a young person get through their Ls. That might be part of their case plan. So it happens in a range of different contexts all the time as well and it is—yes, it sits in that sort of informal space.

**Ms ROBINSON:** To that end, as a good example for you is Stepping Stone House have a partnership with DHL and the DHL drivers assist the young people who are in Stepping Stone House to get their hours up.

Now, that is in Dulwich Hill, so that is somewhat an easier solution. When you are talking about rural and regional areas, there are innovative ways that we could approach this in terms of councillors. I know that there has been a program before, run by New South Wales Government, where council cars become something that you can access and that you work with people in the community to do it. But there are some really innovative examples where people have just come up with a partnership model that works for the young people. But, again, that takes time and that takes an investment in the young person as well.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, I will pass you over to Mr Roy Butler and then we will go to Reverend Nile.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Can I just say thank you for your submissions, they demonstrate a really good understanding of the range of issues that young people face in regional New South Wales and getting a licence. Being from regional New South Wales, I could resonate with all of it. Look, we have spoken about the literacy issues, the identity issues, where I wanted to go to is the 120 hours. You have all referenced the 120 hours as a problem. There is one reference to a trial of 50 hours in six months. I guess, is it a question—and this is to all of you, I would appreciate a response from all of you—is it a question of reducing from 120 hours or is it a question of providing alternatives to physically on the road driving in a car with a supervisor? Are there alternatives to maintain the level of safety and the level of knowledge and skill that people attain without reducing—by increasing the range of methods they can use to get to that 120?

**Ms ROBINSON:** Okay, I am happy to go. So one—if I can come back to the hours that are required, one of the—obviously is if you go to a driving instructor, you get the benefit of multiple hours and as you can understand, the cost can be prohibitive around that. Certainly children and young people themselves have suggested a difference and certainly a difference between rural and regional in terms of what that driving is like verse metro driving. So could there be some changes to that? I do not—and I can take it on notice and maybe my colleagues do, I do not know that we have demonstrated that well. Like I do not know that we have actually designed a program that is effective around that. I know that Mr Teakle and PCYC run the course and that you get a benefit against that as well but again, if it is not available in your community or if it is cost prohibitive, maybe that is not the best access to it. But I certainly know that children and young people when I was in Moree were talking about, can't there be a difference for us? Because the kind of driving we are doing, or the long distances we are doing is very different to the short distances that people in metro might run. But I am not aware of anything that we have designed that answers that.

**Ms MUNRO:** Yes, I will go—

**Mr TEAKLE:** I am happy to go next, Kate—

**Ms MUNRO:** So it is Kate—

**Mr TEAKLE:** Are you going first? Sorry. Yes. Sorry, Kate.

**Ms MUNRO:** Thank you. Yes, no, no, that is all right. I—look I did not have much to add either, other than I know that they had that trial in the Northern Territory. I do not know how transferrable that is but it is an interesting example of doing something differently. I definitely agree with what Zoë was saying, that it is different. Young people in regional areas and workers in regional areas talk about it is different and the capacity to access it is different. I mean, if the 120 hours were easier to access, then that would be fine and they could do that but I think the two things combined is causing a pretty significant barrier.

**Mr TEAKLE:** Mr Butler, thank you for the question because you do know that we sit in some of these very remote communities. The key thing for us, I feel, is about planning and coordination and just some consideration of the rules. We have got to be clear that we want safety first. Young people have to have time behind the wheel to get their hours up and qualifications. I think that is important. If 120 is what is deemed to be safe, let that—lets it be safe. My concern is getting access and my concern is coordinating that access to a plan. It goes back to some of the barriers to that, which is the minimum number required to be able to have a course. Because if we can do the four kids in Brewarrina and I can run that course in a sustainable way, which the sustainable way is six. So pay for six, get four. Then I can get a vehicle out there and I can run the hours.

The irony of young people in the country, if I drive down to Dubbo and back, that is seven hours. So that is actually quantifies in a driving sense, much longer bang for buck from a perspective of getting kids in cars with hours up. So I think it is just about planning and coordination and I feel sometimes if we can create a panel of trusted suppliers that can respond to a need of a community in a manner that fits the Government governance requirements, then PCYC as an example, could respond to a regional area because we can outreach with existing vehicles et cetera to respond to the need. So I think it is coordination and planning, primarily, not necessarily about the barrier of 120 hours.

**Ms ROBINSON:** Sorry, Mr Butler, if I may add to that? If you talk about the cohort of children that we all represent, which the 2.5 million in New South Wales, you have also got to add the layers to that of a child in care, a child who has experienced homelessness, a child who is in Youth Justice. So the access becomes varying



in that case and if I think of the example of Lake Cargelligo, police are the only real option in that town in terms of being able to provide that support. Now, I know and Mr Teakle knows, the police are very willing to be that and my mother many moons ago was taught by police. So I agree with what Mr Teakle is saying, how do we get those trusted members of community who can provide support to the various cohort of children and young people we are talking about?

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you and Mr Chair, just a follow up to that, am I hearing in between what you are saying about the distances and it is different in the bush, that is there a suggestion that the kilometres travelled should be considered as opposed to just the hours?

**Ms ROBINSON:** I think it is worth talking about what a design process looks like that includes that for children and young people. Children and young people in Moree, as I said, said themselves, it is different when we are driving out here to when you are driving in the city.

**The CHAIR:** Actually, if I can just follow up from what Mr Butler was saying? Tell you what, you mentioned a little bit earlier about young kids and they drive on farms and so forth. Should there be a way to consider what they are doing there as well? Because you can get different kids and some other kids can jump in a car for a couple of hours and they just know how to drive because they have got abilities, especially on farms. Versus others who may not have that same ability. I do not know whether we should look at maybe changing things? Doing it different? I do not know. What is your thoughts on it all?

**Mr TEAKLE:** Yes, thank you. From what I have seen with some of the simulator technology, you could almost create that barrier testing or competency testing which might, for example, if you got through, it is a bit like, using the gaming analogy, if you get through level 10, then you get a bonus as a consequence of doing it. Because some of these things, they throw deers at you, they throw little kittens at you, they throw people running across the street, a truck stopping. You know, I did not pass five minutes of it so the point is that young people can sit in these simulators and look, they train racing car drivers on them. They train train drivers on these things. I am sure the technology is—

**The CHAIR:** And airline pilots.

**Mr TEAKLE:** Yes, airline pilots. Yes. It is, I think, an accessibility because if you imagine even if it was put on the back of a little light bed truck, you could move these around and actually set them in a—a bit like the Lifeblood, giving blood. They take them out to rural areas, set them up, bring the young people in, run them through, get their hours up based on a quotient that is governed by people who understand driving and safety. I think there is something there to be explored but coming back to the point that was made by the Youth Advocate, I think we have just got to make sure that that makes sense for young people as well.

**Ms ROBINSON:** The simulators are in Youth Justice facilities. So I do not think they are in every Youth Justice facility, so we should definitely do that but that is one of the programs that they are running in Youth Justice, having those simulators there.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** With simulators, if I may, Chair, just to follow up before we pass on?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** The kids have to have 120 hours to get their licences. What percentage of that 120 hours could be accredited to a simulator? That is, say, two hours or 10 hours of that 120? What is your view? And that is across the panel.

**Mr TEAKLE:** Yes, look, I think respectfully, I am flat out being a youth advocate, let alone a driver expert. From a perspective of that, I think there are industry standards that benchmark what pilot hours are, what testing regime goes and I think you could find it pretty quickly if you had the right technology. It is getting that technology which simulates properly driving conditions et cetera. It will not be cheap but the benefit long term about getting young people where this is a barrier to employment, where this is a barrier to their life, would have long-term effects. So I would not want to venture the hours but there would be a metric there, I am sure, that would qualify it. It might be a three-to-one or a five-to-one ratio but it would not only be that. They might be able to accrue 50 hours and then they still have to do 50 hours of real driving, is how I would see it.

**Ms ROBINSON:** Having not done a simulator and being slightly concerned that I have been in a car with Mr Teakle and he did not do very well, I think the balance is that we have to—there is a lot about being a responsible driver. Being on the roads and the safety on the roads is absolutely paramount and we want to make sure that children and young people are safe in the first [out] but then it is also understanding all of the other things that go into being a responsible driver. So understanding speed, understanding the impact of alcohol, understanding the impact of having people in the car. All of that. So I think the programs that deal with both the



practical side of things in terms of being on the roads and then everything else that is a part of it, there needs to be a balance on that. But I would support what Mr Teakle is saying in terms of understanding what is—and there are greater experts than I on this. What is that level that we need to make sure that they are comfortable around in terms of going into a car park, being on a rural and regional road for a long period of time. All of that plus all the other elements of what it means to be a responsible driver.

**The CHAIR:** I will pass you over now to the Reverend Honourable Fred Nile.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Good, thank you, Mr Chairman. Just a general question, what is your view on the New South Wales Government's previous restricted P1 provisional licence pilot? As you know, that allowed a person to get a restricted P1 provisional licence after holding a learner's licence for six months and completing 50 supervised driving hours. Do you have any support for what was there but the Government has scrapped it? Should it be reintroduced or not? Mr Teakle?

**Ms MUNRO:** Yes, I am happy to—I mean, look, it is Kate Munro. We looked at that and we could not—we—my lovely policy officer was trying to find an evaluation of it to see how it ran. It is quite hard to find information but I think that it is an interesting idea that is worth exploring because it kind of sits in that space about what are young people's needs in terms of being able to drive. If they can prove that they are safe drivers, are there circumstances where that is going to be okay and they can do that? But yes, it was—I am not—again, we can take it on notice in trying to find more information but we could not find a lot in terms of what the actual final pilot outcome was but it—yes, it definitely sounded like the sorts of things young people are asking about.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Yes, I think the simpler the better.

**Mr ROBINSON:** I would suggest that it would be something worth exploring because as we have—everyone has touched on in different ways here, there are some children in rural and regional areas who may have been driving from a very young age, noting that with the parameters of everything needs to be safe and the paramount safety of children and young people should be front and centre. But if it was a successful program or from our perspective, if children and young people see the benefit of it, then that is absolutely something that we should explore.

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Chair, Chris Gulaptis—

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Just another general question—

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Sorry. Sorry, Reverend.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Go ahead.

**The CHAIR:** I will come to you in just a moment there, Mr Gulaptis. I will just finish off with Reverend Nile and then I will pass you over to yourself.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Okay. Just a general question, what qualifications or criteria would a volunteer need to meet in order to become a suitable learner driver supervisor? Anyone?

**Ms ROBINSON:** At the very least, a Working with Children Check from our perspective and a Police Check. But then in terms of what the rest could look like, I think that is worthwhile having a conversation about co-design. In terms of what community—you know, when you are talking about some communities, understanding what trusted adults are available in that community who are willing to assist may be very different from community to community. So when you are talking about smaller, if it is that it is the police, then we know—well arguably, we could say that that is probably good people who could do it but if it is police and librarians and councillors and all of that, then I think you have got to look at what is available in that remote community or regional community as well. But from our perspective, at the very least a Working with Children Check and a Police Check.

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

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Gulaptis.

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Thanks, Chair. I certainly live in one of the regions of New South Wales and I understand the importance of a driver's licence and a car to get around because we just do not have the access to public transport that young people have in the city to get around. Can I just say thank you for your advocacy for supporting young kids getting their licence and to be able to be mobile so that they can get an education and go to a job, whether it is a trainee or apprentice or whether it is a full-time job. Really, the question that I have got is thank you for the programs that you run and we know we try to run programs in school and programs like the PCYC, Dominic, that you run. What about the kids that fall through the gaps? Do you have any data on the young people that do not have access to the programs or to driver training schools or family that can actually provide them with those hours that they need behind the wheel of a car to get a licence? Do we have any data on the number of kids that just are not in your programs and just fall through the cracks?

**Ms ROBINSON:** I can take the data question on notice and we can come back to you around that but what I would say is that in consultations that we have done with children in out-of-home care, some children in out-of-home care will say it is absolutely part of their care plan and their leaving care plan but then also there is children and young people say it was difficult to access and it was not part of their care plan. So when you are talking about—and then of course, layer that with children who are in specialist homelessness services and having access to a responsible adult who can do that. Then, I apologise but I do not really, if we keep talking about Youth Justice, but I have been there recently and it is a very big problem for those young people who are in Youth Justice as well. So I will take on notice the data but there certainly is not, I would say, a relatively large percentage of children and young people who are falling through the gaps but also, if we go back to the very beginning, if you do not have access to your birth certificate, if you do not know where your birth certificate is, you are not even starting that journey.

**Ms MUNRO:** If I could add something?

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Yes. Yes, look—sorry?

**Ms MUNRO:** Sorry I was just going to add—yes, I—we do not—I do not have any input about data but one of the things that I thought I would add in answer to this question is getting a—like the—as the Advocate was saying, that getting a driver's licence is a real rite of passage and it is also—it is an amazing opportunity for youth services who are already engaged with young people, it is a great soft entry point to bring young people into a service and the kinds of young person—people who do not have access to a birth certificate, who are struggling with multiple challenges in their lives, they will benefit hugely by being connected to a local youth program. Whether it is PCYC or whether it is one of the services in their area. So I see it as a real opportunity to have.

I, in a past life, I worked at an inner city Sydney service that had a Driving Change program. They ran it with young people there and it was such a wonderful program for bringing young people into the service and it brought them in in a really empowering way. I mean, everyone needs a licence. There is not a problem attached to that, there is nothing wrong with you. You just need to come and get a licence. So it was a great way to bring young people into the service. It was amazing for the volunteers. To watch that—it is an incredible relationship for a young person to have a really positive life learning experience and the volunteers got to share that journey. It was—those young people thought those volunteers—I worked with some of those young people for years. I could not—I had a—did not have a patch on how great they thought their driving instructor was because that was—it was such a momentous thing. So I think there is a real holistic opportunity as well to bring young people who need that support and exactly the ones that you are talking about who go through the gaps, to bring them into services that are funded to do that. Not just money and subsidised to go to a driving school but maybe it is through a PCYC. It is through a local youth centre. It is through a local council program.

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Yes and I guess that is where I am coming from is because we know—and especially for some of those kids that are in the youth justice system, they fall through the cracks at school, they fall through the cracks through the community and so they are young, they are in detention and a lot of the times it may be because they have been driving without a licence or for some misdemeanour. Maybe we need to focus on some of those kids that are falling through the cracks because they are the ones that at the end of the day need our support more than the kids that are within the system. I am just wondering whether we need to look at focussing on some of those kids that fall through the cracks, in particular in regional New South Wales, because we know we just do not have those same services and facilities that they have in the metro areas and there is a lot of support for young people in the metro area. Whether it is through transport—subsidised transport or through just the fact that you are close to where you work or where you go to school. Where in the country, it is very different. So we have got a large cohort of kids in my opinion and it is not necessary a large cohort proportional to the others but it is a large cohort in terms of our communities that need that level of support. I just wonder how we can provide that level of support so that we can give them a future?

**Mr TEAKLE:** So—

**Ms ROBINSON:** I mean, we obviously absolutely echo what you have just said. If I can give you an example of where there is another layer upon a layer. There is an incredible service that I am sure the Committee is familiar with in Armidale called BackTrack. They do a lot of work with young people who have—may have experienced the justice system or have had interactions with police. When I was recently there, one of the concerns was—is that there were young people in the program who were getting fined and having issues with their licences. Now, one of the examples I was given was a young man who was caring for his—who was the primary carer for his child and had been on a restricted licence which said he could go to and from work but as he was the primary carer and daycare was not on the way to work, there was this confusion of the layer upon that. So in a community like that, where they have a really good relationship with police and can manage that, you can navigate through that but we have got to understand that people's situations and circumstances need to often be considered in this. For him, his biggest concern was if he did have to drop his child at daycare or if he did have to go to Woolworths, someone might catch him on that way and then he would be told not going to and from work.



So whilst I had never—being a city kid, never heard of the fact that you can have this restricted licence and they can tell you, you can do certain things, I think there are layers upon that which means that we are regulating an individual to a point where things that he is trying to do and the way he is trying to care for those around him becomes incredibly restrictive and the concern is there. So look, I think there is a lot of work that the people in Youth Justice are doing and I applaud them for that. There is a lot of amazing services that support those young people in Youth Justice but I do agree with you, I think there is a real opportunity for us to support those young men and women at a time where they are already vulnerable but that they are keen to start to shift and they do some of the programs that Mr Teakle's talked about, working off fines and a licence is a good way to help them shift their trajectory.

**Mr Chris GULAPTIS:** Yes, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I believe Ms Robyn Preston, Member for Hawkesbury has got a question. Robyn, can you hear us? Robyn? Robyn, are you on mute? No? Anyone else got a last question? Actually, since we cannot get hold of Robyn, I will ask a final question. If, once the young people have an opportunity to obtain their licence and obviously it is a challenge and we hope to find some better resolutions to make it easier or let them give them opportunities. What about cars? Is there anything out—yes, so what sort of vehicles? Is there anything out there in the rural and regional areas that you are aware of? Or perhaps we should become aware of? Some type of assistance? Some sort of Government program that we can help them to obtain? See it is not just a licence, it is also a vehicle in order for them to be able to drive to, say, TAFE or to their jobs or to sport and so forth.

**Ms ROBINSON:** I have not heard of a hugely successful program that is supporting young people for the purchasing of their own car and also with the layers of that, the purchasing of your car, your insurance, the maintenance and all the layers upon that. I do know, and this is informed from a previous colleague of mine, that there was a Government program that was funded in terms of council cars and the access to Government cars. So having not known a huge background of that, I think that there is a fleet of cars that can be made available that it would be worth exploring that program again but I do not know of anything that is particularly successful in terms of supporting young people to buy their first car and then maintain the—everything else that comes with that as well and you know, safe cars and access to safe cars is such an important thing when you are talking about rural and regional drivers as well.

**The CHAIR:** Yes because that is the other difficulty. When they get their licence, some of these communities, then they still need that car.

**Ms ROBINSON:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms MUNRO:** I think—the only thing I could add to that is again, that layer if a young person is connected into a youth service and this is part of some sort of case plan. That is very often something that you are talking to the young person about because that is kind of part of the excitement about, I am going to get my licence, what do I do about a car? It might be that there is some kind of—it is a savings plan or it is a—you know, that sort of financial management stuff. It does not solve the problem because cars cost money but it definitely—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, look if—

**Ms MUNRO:** —helps a young person see that as part of that journey about getting their licence.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, if they are going to get a job or an apprenticeship or something, I can see there is a way forward that way. I am just trying to see if they are going to do studies, all the rest of it, that becomes a little bit more—

**Ms MUNRO:** Really hard. Really, really hard.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it is just difficult. Yes. I think that—

**Mr TEAKLE:** If I may?

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

**Mr TEAKLE:** Sorry, if I may? I know we are short of time.

**The CHAIR:** No, no.

**Mr TEAKLE:** I just wanted to very briefly just respond to Chris briefly and then I will talk to your question, Mr Chair. Look, from a perspective of PCYC, the irony is that we tend to pick up those kids who have fallen through the cracks because they come to the attention of police and as a consequence, they are brought back into the club and we run them through the programs that we do. I think it goes back to the question of trying to remove any barriers that are there as a consequence of a tender process which gets a requirements document which



fits 95 per cent but does not have the five per cent of flexibility to be able to respond to the nature of challenges that you are talking about. Young people who have not got access, et cetera, et cetera. So to do that, it comes back to the point I raised before. If there were trusted people, and I think I could validate—the PCYC could conform to that, that we could say to Government, well we will take it on.

We are going to target these young people as long as at the end of the year, if we tallied it up and showed you the outputs, that we would get some return as a consequence of making that investment. Because what you are paying for is the outcome, not just a bucket of money that says we will run this program whether it is successful or not. So it is in other words, two kids come into the Grafton PCYC. They are identified by youth services that there is a barrier. We put them on an SDC [Safer Drivers Course]. We put them through driving and once they have got their licence, we come back to Government and say, this is what we have done. This is what we have achieved. Now can we have compensation based on metrics that are pre-agreed around cost price et cetera, et cetera. I think it is a bit unique but it is flexible.

With respect to Mr Chair's question, the GoGet cars that are available in pools that you can book online and go for, I feel there is a social investment bond application there that could motivate financial institutions, insurance associated with those financial institutions and then banking organisations that might be able to provide a solution that we could trial based on a social investment bond. In other words, they pay the money up front, we work out the metrics on the return back to government and then pilot that for three years to see whether or not it is something that could generate because money is always the barrier. There is a lot of companies out there, if they deal with a charitable partner they trust, they are happy to invest in their social benefit requirements that Government—sorry, corporates are really looking on. There is a direct benefit, both economic and future for young people if we get them a car because it is the rite of passage, et cetera, et cetera. So I would be interested if that is something you want to workshop, I would be happy to sit with anyone and try to come up with an idea and do the work to get it done.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** It would be great if you could put that as—by way of a recommendation, we can have a look at that.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. No, thank you very much, Mr Teakle. Right, well, I would like to thank each and every one of you 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 Committee staff. Thank you so much. It is a pity we do not have more time, it is so interesting but thank you all again and I am sure we will catch up very shortly. Thank you.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**JENNY LOVRIC**, Manager, Community Engagement & Partnerships, Just Reinvest NSW, affirmed and examined

**WARREN JOHNSON**, Chief Executive, Youthsafe, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions? Perhaps we can start off with yourself, Ms Lovric.

**Ms LOVRIC:** Thank you. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Country we are each meeting from today. I am speaking from the Gadigal Country of the Eora Nation and I pay my respects to Elders, past and present. We thank the inquiry for hearing from Just Reinvest New South Wales. Just Reinvest New South Wales is interested in the area of learner drivers because just reinvestment in practice is about addressing the underlying issues that lead to interactions with the criminal justice system. Through addressing these underlying issues, the communities we work with aim to shift resources out of and away from the harmful and costly criminal justice system interactions and into community-led solutions instead. In doing things this way, we shift the systems that hold disadvantage in place.

We know that licensing issues are one such pipeline into the criminal justice system. The Departments of Communities and Justice has recently stated that driver licence offending and re-offending has been identified as one of the top three most common reasons for incarceration and a third of all people in prison in New South Wales for unauthorised driving offences identify as Aboriginal. We and others before this inquiry know that driving is not just about getting a licence, it is also about social and economic inclusion. It is about life skills. It is about wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem and providing employment and education opportunities, particularly in regional and remote New South Wales where public transport infrastructure and coverage may be poor and expensive.

The main barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entering and staying in the driving

system are multiple and they have been set out in multiple inquiries, studies and reports. These include and have included for many years, the cost of driving lessons, low literacy and numeracy, getting identity documents, the logging 120 hours, getting access to a car and a supervising driver, sitting courses if there are courses at all or sporadic and short-term courses and unpaid fines and licence sanctions.

The Committee will be aware of the Auditor General's 2013 performance audit report on improving legal and safe driving among Aboriginal people, which found that Government responses had, to then, had little impact. That report and indeed the 2017 Staysafe inquiry, outlined other inquiries and reports in between and thereafter that have discussed Aboriginal people's interactions with the criminal justice system and have all found that while the barriers within the licensing and vehicle registration process, fines enforcement process and the justice system are generally well understood, this knowledge has not led to significantly effective or efficient responses.

With the Committee's indulgence, I would like to set out one of our case studies in Bourke, where Just Reinvest has been working since about 2011. In 2014, Bourke had some of the highest rates of driver licence offences in New South Wales. To address this, we partnered with philanthropist Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, Birrang Enterprises and Driving Change to create a circuit breaker between driving and the criminal justice system. Through that program, between December 2015 and January 2019, around 310 people got their L and P-plates. Ten people got jobs as a result of getting licenced. There was a 38 per cent drop in the number of people proceeded for driving offences and there was a 72 per cent drop in young people proceeded against for driving without a licence. We are currently, along with Red Cross, IAG [Insurance Australia Group], Kimberwalli, Revenue New South Wales and Births, Deaths and Marriages, launching a learner driver program for Aboriginal people in Mount Druitt next week. In Mount Druitt. The aim of this program is to devolve management to the Aboriginal Community Control Sector within one or two years.

The Audit Office report examined Government-delivered programs and found that small-scale and short lifespan programs delivered by governments suffered from constraints including insurance coverage, volunteer driver reimbursements, lack of program ownership and uncertain funding. It also noted that the lack of consistency in coverage meant that programs have not been effective in reducing driver licence offences. It found that utilising connections into Aboriginal communities, having program champions and involving Aboriginal people in program development and delivery were factors that contributed to longevity and effectiveness in driver programs. We agree.

The Audit Office also recommended that Government lead an inter-agency which would develop a strategy that should engage with Aboriginal non-Government organisations. Just Reinvest New South Wales, which is auspiced by the Aboriginal Legal Service, has been seeking membership of this inter-agency but all our requests have been ignored. We note that the expansion of DLAP may be—may appear promising, its implementation, its reach, however, is sketchy and unclear. Any overarching coordination is not apparent and the community-based providers are themselves victims to short-term funding. Just Reinvest New South Wales works with Birrang and its learner driver program in Bourke but Birrang is situated in Bourke full-time, are involved in other community-facing and community-led programs involving young people and families. Being part of the community is what works and what delivers. Short-term and ad hoc programs and literally drive-in and drive-out short-term program delivery just does not cut it.

We know that the 2017 Staysafe inquiry into driver education, training and road safety recommended that Transport for NSW investigate how the aims, objectives and achievements of the Literacy for Life program, a place-based committee-led adult literacy program, can better inform the DLAP program and the way it is being delivered in the future. Professor Jack Beeton is the CEO of the Literacy for Life Foundation and also a Co-Chair of Just Reinvest New South Wales and has informed me that this has not happened. The current inquiry into access—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you—

**Ms LOVRIC:** I have got a bit more but I will break it off there but I just—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, thank you. Otherwise we won't have enough time to ask questions, that is all.

**Ms LOVRIC:** Not a problem. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** But if you can get a copy of that to the Committee, it would certainly be much appreciated.

**Ms LOVRIC:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** We will go to Mr Johnson.

**Mr JOHNSON:** All right, thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. So Youthsafe is a charity that partners to prevent unintentional injury of young people. The statistics are very clear about where our energies need to be directed in relation to unintended injury and let me just qualify it. Unintended basically is what people think of as accidents. It is—there is no—the young person has not intended injury to themselves or anyone else. So our



attentions are very much taken up with the road space. Road use. Whether it is in the context of driving or cycling or being a pedestrian or being a passenger. We also look at workplaces because of the high incidence of unintended injury with young workers and we also have regard to the sporting space. Concussion is never as high as it is with 13 and 14-year-olds and we are learning more and more about the long-term consequences of concussion.

The matter, of course, that brings me to this hearing today relates to our work in the road safety space and we have been a state-level provider, train the trainer of the Safer Drivers course, since it was initiated in 2013. We provide a whole range of safety sessions in the community and in schools. We have recently become a DLAP, a Driver Licensing Access Program provider in a number of LGAs. But the focus of our two submissions to this Committee was around our experience and continuing work in relation to learner driver access programs. We have been involved in that space, well for over a decade. We developed the first development guide that provided programs of that nature with a whole range of best practice around operations, governance, recruiting volunteers et cetera. We have since, with the support of Transport for NSW, digitised that development guide. We have developed a face-to-face and an online training session for mentors.

So the two submissions we put in, the first, the online program we had not yet developed the training prototype when we submitted our initial application in May. So we—while we anticipated the relevance and usefulness of such a training opportunity, we very much articulated what we considered to be best practice in terms of learner driver mentoring programs. So these programs that bring young drivers, provide them with access to a roadworthy vehicle and a qualified licenced supervising driver. We identified in our submission four critical ingredients that need to exist if a learner driver mentoring program is to be successful. The first is around—and it comes from our name, Youthsafe and our mission. Learning to drive is not just about the technical aspects or the manual aspects of driving a vehicle. There are a whole range of other issues, particularly safety issues, developing low-risk driving behaviours, hazard perception over a period of time et cetera, et cetera.

All too often, the push towards getting a young driver licenced can ignore this important aspect of building a low-risk driver behaviour capability and if you are going to build it, the time to build it is at the very beginning of a driver's life, not 10 years down the track. So that is number one. Number two, it needs to be within a community. It needs to be supported by the community. It needs to have an understanding of what the community's needs are and that is a variable feast. Number three, we need to ensure that the mentors recruited in these programs are going to bring what is required by those programs. So aspects of recruitment, retention and training are very much areas that we have focussed on and I reference again the latest prototype around online mentor training.

Finally, we would like to see a lot more collaboration and opportunities for collaboration amongst learner driver mentoring programs. There is over 50 of these programs throughout New South Wales, often in regional locations, sometimes in metropolitan locations. But what we have seen is that there is a lot of independent work that just is not shared. Best practice, experience, champion stories. People are just operating in a vacuum in many ways.

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

**Mr JOHNSON:** So they are the four important key elements and I am now happy to respond to any questions you might have.

**The CHAIR:** All right, thank you very much. We will move over to the questions and since Robyn Preston was not here earlier because of the blockades outside, we will let her go first.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you, Chair and thank you very much for participating today. I appreciate you coming in. My question is to Mr Johnson. In relation to the learner driver mentoring program and listening to what you had to say and reading your submission there, getting a vehicle that actually is able to be used for this type of program, how have you managed to achieve that and is that something that you see as a potential barrier if that is not available?

**Mr JOHNSON:** It is absolutely a potential barrier and a very real barrier in many cases. I should just make plain that we ourselves at Youthsafe do not run learner driver mentoring programs. We are moving towards that with the Afghan community in Sydney's west but that is still some distance away. So there are two main challenges. Attracting and keeping capable mentors, number one, and being able to obtain, I would say, a five star ANCAP [Australasian New Car Assessment Program] rated vehicle and maintain the costs around that over time. That—you know, I cannot pretend it is not a challenge but there are opportunities that learner driver mentoring programs can avail themselves on. There are a range of grant programs. For example, if we are looking at rural communities, regional communities, you could think of some of the registered clubs and the club grant program. I mean, at the end of the day, to purchase a five star ANCAP rated vehicle for this purpose, registration, so it is—and appropriate insurances, you could certainly do it for under \$30,000 but then there is the running costs et cetera, et cetera.

Look, there is no easy answer. Local businesses in communities—and I think that is why it is important



that these programs are within their community, responsive to their community and have networks within their community. There could be a car dealer. There could be a business that is more than happy to donate that, with appropriate signage of course, and you know, funny you should mention it, but we have ourselves just applied through a federal grant to obtain a vehicle so we can progress our plans with the Afghan community in Sydney's west. Look, no easy answer but I think that it is an opportunity to be creative and just engage every possible avenue.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Just a supplemental question, Chair. You said there are around 50 of these programs around New South Wales?

**Mr JOHNSON:** As well as can be estimated—well I think we would have the best handle on that, actually, in the state. In excess of 50, I would say. Yes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Is there a template as such or do they operate in isolation?

**Mr JOHNSON:** Well largely in isolation. I mean, I would argue in our development guide, that presents a template in a whole range of areas, operations, governance, recruiting. But of course that also has to be adaptable because these programs are not going to work if you are coming at them with wisdom from on high and passing it down to the community. But they do provide a whole lot of basic information that each community would need to adapt in view of how it is working, with whom it is working. I mean, the needs of a newly-arrived refugee group as opposed to maybe a community around low socioeconomic status or remote locations are going to be very different needs and your responsiveness needs to certainly—it has got to be a critical part of your planning and your service delivery.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

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

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much, both of you for your time. I am just seeking a very brief response from both of you on something that I am very passionate about. Both of you have spoken about the importance of any program or the people involved in a program being part of a community. I just wonder if you could expand on the rationale and why that is so important?

**Ms LOVRIC:** I will take that one first, if that is okay? Thank you for it, it is a great question and it is something I am also very passionate about. Our work is always very place-based and community-driven so those relationships in communities are absolutely critical to the success of the program. This is the reason why the short-term fly-in or drive-in, drive-out programs are not as successful because you need to weave in and build and maintain those relationships with communities. In the space I work with, with the Aboriginal driver space, that is involving bringing in a local community member as an employee. So not only does it actually build that relationship, it actually brings an employment opportunity into remote locations. Building that trust and having people that you know and can go to, where there is a sense of cultural safety, is critical to having people come on board and stay on board and feel taken through in and end-to-end process from the beginning, that is right through from getting your documents, your driver knowledge test, right to the end to getting your Ps.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Yes, look, I support that and I am not going to repeat all of those things. I think they are very, very important principles. One thing I would though refer to is the research that is around the Driving Change program where this particular aspect in terms of community engagement was very much a subject of their analysis and it identified why it was a key factor in the program's success. So I have not got an encyclopaedic memory of what those—that research revealed but I would refer that to the Committee if nobody has previously.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Johnson and—

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Just a quick question to Ms Lovric, with regards to identification. We heard earlier about some—many young people, particularly in regional New South Wales Indigenous background, having difficulties in providing identification to start with. What challenges have you had and what are solutions to this issue? Apart from clear community support to try and assist with identifications and so forth but what are other avenues available for those young people who have difficulty providing identifications?

**Ms LOVRIC:** Identity documents is an inquiry in itself if there has not already been one. We do now that young people, especially young Aboriginal people and indeed adults, do not have access to those identity documents. The cost is prohibitive. The documentation to get them is prohibitive. If we have literacy issues, then that is actually another challenge. I think through my time, I was previously worked at Legal Aid and probably tried to get funding to support free birth certificates in communities where we worked. That was very successful so people will actually engage in a process of getting a free birth certificate. If that actually is a vector towards a driving program, you can bet your bottom dollar people will sign up to a driving program.

So we just need to make those—we need to make the cost better. Births, Deaths and Marriages are doing

a sterling job of actually working with vulnerable communities and trying to access and facilitate free birth certificates. Indeed, in our driving program in Mount Druitt, they have already made available a number of free birth certificates to support people into that program. So we need to loosen that grip, that cost grip, the numeracy grip, and people need to be again supported through the program. So a way around that, again, is actually bringing those trusted mentors into a program that is sustained in a community and can help people access those identity documents.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** That is the beginning—

**Ms LOVRIC:** We also have the issue of retaining the documents, too. So there needs to be a way that people can retain those documents. People have them, they lose them. They cannot be laminated. There are a whole lot of rules around identity documents which prohibit their use and their re-use. So we need to actually loosen the grip on that as well.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Yes, I was going to ask you that—it becomes an issue when the young person applies or wanting to apply for a licence. Has there been ways of addressing this issue before it becomes a concern for the young person to—wanting to apply for a licence? Do we have statistics that show that there are many families who do not have the proper identifications within the Indigenous communities?

**Ms LOVRIC:** There are statistics. I can take that on notice. I do not have them on hand but Births, Deaths and Marriages certainly are very—absolutely abreast with the issue around access to certificates. People generally only need these documents at a point when they need something else. So it is not like people are sitting back saying I think oh, today, what will I do? I will go and get a birth certificate. It is usually, I need the birth certificate to do a course, to do a driving program, to open a bank account. So that—it is usually something else that triggers the need for the birth certificate.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Gulaptis, do you have any questions? You are on mute.

**Ms LOVRIC:** He is on mute.

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** I am just listening avidly and thank you for your advocacy for our young people and for the support that you provide them, especially in relation to driver training. We know how difficult it is to get around in the regions if you do not have a licence. If you do not have a car. So it is basically a fundamental aspect of living in regional New South Wales.

**Ms LOVRIC:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you and Honourable Reverend Fred Nile, do you have any questions?

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

**The CHAIR:** Yes? Please proceed.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** In your view, should simulated hours be included in the 120 hours required of learner drivers?

**Ms LOVRIC:** Can I jump in on that one just to begin with? I mean, this presumes that people have access to those simulators and I am not an expert on gamifying education but I understand that that may be something that is of some benefit to some people. I suppose the issue once again is access to, and should that actually relax people's access to those 120 hours, then that would be a good thing. I would suggest, however, that if you want to reduce those 120 hours or make it easier for people to get up, we need to make those Safer Driver courses more freely available to people who may need them. We should be making those free for vulnerable people. I understand there are some but we should make that more widely available and we should be working with communities to do that, to help identify who those people are who may benefit. It is not right that only people who can afford that course should actually benefit from that 20 hours forgiveness in that 120 hours.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Could I—we actually refer to simulators in our submission and we do so to express the need to have a cautionary approach to them. One-hundred-and-twenty hours at the moment are required on drive—on road driving. Even over—it takes about 30 to 40 hours just to get the manual capability to drive and that is just the baseline of learning to drive but then there is so much more that needs to be developed. You have got to be responsive to traffic, to weather, to road conditions, traffic conditions. You have got to develop what is called hazard perception. One-hundred-and-twenty hours, you still have not developed adequate hazard perception to be a capable driver. In fact, that probably speaks to the fact why in the first six to 12 months of a driver's life when they have a red Ps, the crash casualty rate just goes up 800 per cent.

So I guess the question is, will simulators—can they substitute for those 120 hours? Look, our response would be they should not. There is a huge difference between sitting in front of a simulator and, assuming access is possible, as the point has been made, and real live driving on the road with real live conditions. Whether it is



night, whether you have got a passenger with you. Whether there might be kangaroos crossing the road. There is a whole range of realities that a driver needs to develop the capability around. I would doubt a simulator could do that.

I want to just make one other important point. Simulators are used very extensively in aviation. My son has just got his commercial pilot's licence and what he has impressed upon me is that whilst simulators are used extensively in aviation, they are not used when you are getting your recreational licence, your private licence or your commercial licence because those licences are about laying down the foundations of the skill you need to be a pilot. Simulators are used much later down the path and that is about refining skills, presenting certain safety problems and eliciting your—the mitigations you might bring to situations. Or just a whole lot of compliance issues. I can see virtue in the red P phase, possibly of testing along those lines but in terms of laying down the basic foundations of driving capability, I think we have got to be really cautious. It ticks a box. It seems simple, notwithstanding the access problems which I think we would fall into a bit of a social justice hole there, I absolutely agree with that. But you know, the solution is seductive and glimmering but it will not deliver the outcomes we need.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I think our time has come up, if I'm right—yes? Okay, so thank you both 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 Committee staff. I know that I have got some questions that I will forward on to you. Unfortunately, we ran out of time so I will forward on those questions on notice.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Great.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you both.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**LEVI ANDERSON**, Research Associate, Road Safety Research Collaboration, University of the Sunshine Coast, affirmed and examined

**ALBERT BIRSS**, Managing Director/CEO, Road Safety Education Limited, affirmed and examined

**BROOKE O'DONNELL**, General Manager—Education and Communications, Road Safety Education Limited, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions? Now, would you like to start, perhaps, Mr Anderson? If you have got a short—

**Mr ANDERSON:** No I am good for the questions.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, you are all good? Okay. Ms O'Donnell or Mr Birss?

**Mr BIRSS:** We are happy to move straight to the questions, thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, now move questions from the members. Mr Moselmane.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Thank you so much. My question is, what role should schools play in educating prospective learner drivers?

**Mr ANDERSON:** I think the schools have quite a significant—especially in our rural and regional communities. They provide a common location where it is common for education to occur. It gathers the students and we have—there is quite a significant amount of research out there. It does not have to be a practical kind of educational experience, it can be more theoretical or it can involve things like hazard perception tests which do expose students and build those hazard perception skills which do assist them in driving.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** As far as you know, do—is there—are there school coordinating a teaching program to assist young learner drivers in their endeavours to obtain a licence?

**Mr ANDERSON:** There are a number of different programs sporadically across the country. I know of schools that have a purely theoretical kind of course that they run for their students to talk about things from basic car maintenance to road rules and things like that but there is also other schools that have also engaged outside organisations and put their students through practical driver training as well and then also offered them all—or assisted in them organising for lessons with a mentor.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Preston?



**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you and welcome, witnesses. It is good to have you here. My question is to Mr Anderson. Just in reading your submission, you talked about, based on Queensland's situation where they have 100 hours of learning and you felt that it might not be adequate. New South Wales is a little bit more than that, of course, but can you tell me a little bit more about that and elaborate on why you think that is the case?

**Mr ANDERSON:** Yes, so there are a number of research articles out there that have looked at the hours—like the need for an hour limit. I believe that the sweet spot was around 112. So Queensland have obviously rounded down to 100 and I believe New South Wales is 120, if I am not mistaken. But it is—again, having an hour requirement, it comes down to the adequacy of the mentoring. You know, just having a parent sitting next to you not doing any kind of coaching or teaching during the driving obviously is not going to be an educational experience for the young driver. So by increasing that time, what you are doing is, you are kind of taking the safe route and ensuring that the driver has more exposure to situations on the road rather than having a silent licenced driver sitting next to them.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I just want to follow up on the situation in regional areas and then having a young driver come down to the city and being able to negotiate around different conditions. How do you actually approach that in driver training, then?

**Mr ANDERSON:** Yes, so that was a significant thing that we noticed. We did some work with young drivers from some rural and remote communities within Queensland and specifically with our hazard perception tests, the drivers found it interesting. Difficult but interesting to try and identify hazards from a perception video that was filmed within the Brisbane city because obviously it is not a kind of driving situation that they are used to. While that has its obvious pros and cons, that perception training might not help them where they are from but it will help them if they move or find themselves driving in the city. Those kind of situations and the use of hazard perceptions for other, I guess driving scenarios, do benefit different communities.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

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

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Mr Chair and thank you folks for being here today. My question is just in regards to the process of licensing. The driver knowledge test, log book hours, that whole process of obtaining a licence. Do you believe that it should be a different process in regional New South Wales to metropolitan New South Wales? Thank you.

**Mr ANDERSON:** That is a difficult question. Obviously you want to maintain fairness for all young drivers and having separate, I guess, requirements on their licence may not be viewed as fair or a procedurally just way to go about it. However, I do understand the significant impost of 100 hours of supervised driving within rural communities where there is not a great range of driver trainers available. There is not often many family members or anyone else that can assist with obtaining those 100 hours. Unfortunately, I do not have the answer to that one. While making it easier for rural licenced drivers to obtain their licence, we do not want to detract from the training required to make them safe drivers.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Okay, thank you. Would anyone else like to address that? No? Okay, thank you, Mr Chair.

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

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** No, I just—thank you, obviously, for appearing before the Committee. This is a fairly important issue for regional New South Wales and the point that Roy was making was, there is a difference between the regions and the city. Certainly in relation to availability of public transport in the metro areas. Do you see the—can you see the challenges that we face in regional New South Wales in trying to get a driver's licence? Because that means that kids can get an education and they can get a job. Do you see there is challenges there that we need to overcome and how do you think we can address those challenges best?

**Mr BIRSS:** Who was that directed to?

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Look, either/or, or all of you.

**The CHAIR:** It is open.

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** It does not really matter. We can see some challenges here but we do not have the answers and we are just hoping that we can find some resolutions to the problems that face our kids trying to get a driver's licence in the regions.

**Mr BIRSS:** Okay, I will respond to that initially and starting with your first question. At RYDA we provide road safety education for senior high school students throughout Australia and New Zealand. So obviously New South Wales. We go into the regions and go to the schools and urban areas by their hundreds. So tens of thousands of students a year. We actually go to the student school, we go to that environment and what we are

concerned about is creating safe drivers. So assisting them, because we understand well the need to obtain a licence. It can often be the difference between equality and not getting a job or not but we are concerned also about—that it be a safe experience. So I will just hand now to our Head of Education, just to explain what we do and do in that space and I think it will identify some of the questions you have raised and our approach to those. Brooke.

**Ms O'DONNELL:** Just picking up on the question earlier about how different it is when they come into the city from the country, part of what we do at RYDA is we get into that cognitive development area. So we get them thinking along the lines of being able to recognise their own mind state and how that changes in different situations. How to recognise it, how to take control of it and getting some strategies to deal in different situations. So that translates when they are in—they move into a different road environment. Understanding their own risk. Being able to speak up for themselves. Being able to stop and take pauses. So really, really important personal aspects of that so that when they do get into situations they are not comfortable with or that are new to them, they have got some strategies to be able to take a moment and address them.

We—you know, it has been said that you can—the mechanics of learning to drive can be done in a reasonably short amount of time. We have added all of those times, the different jurisdictions have added that time to licensing across time to give people, young people, more time to develop skills and part of that is that really deeper understanding and that hazard perception that I think Mr Anderson was talking about beforehand. Coming back to your question of what can we do about it, we would definitely like to see that cognitive development recognised in the experience that they are getting across that 120 hours so their time at a course like RYDA being recognised for log book hours would cut down some of the stress from parents trying to get that time up in the car but we know they are getting quality education that is really, really critical to them being safe drivers when they do get out onto the road.

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Yes, thank you and obviously there is a difference between driving on country roads as opposed to driving on metropolitan roads and they both have distinct different challenges. We know that driving on country roads, there is—speeds are faster. The standard of the road may not be quite up to the same standard that it is in the metro area and you have obstacles just come out of the way like wildlife or cattle. In the city, of course, you have got to overcome the challenges of mass number of motorists, not knowing where you are going, having to look at all the signage and having multiple lanes. It is difficult for an adult with driving experience going from one to the other and certainly from going to the country to the city, there are challenges. I know, every time I drive into the city, I sit up a little bit more upright in my seat and I am far more alert than when I am on a country road. Sometimes that is a problem because we know that a lot of accidents in the country happen on local roads where you are comfortable with where you are driving. So there is lessons there to be learnt by both kids from the city and those from the country in terms of driving in those different environments and it is important that they learn those lessons early so that we can avoid fatalities.

**Ms O'DONNELL:** Well absolutely and part of what we address at RYDA is understanding road condition and being able to assess that. Being able to assess and recognise early signs that you are switching off. It is that really—again, coming back to that critical thinking that goes beyond the basic learn to drive conversations and again, that is really important about what we do at RYDA, is we bring the program in. So often, kids from the country have to leave to get an excursion of that kind of calibre and then it becomes less relevant to them. Whereas, we come in. We use local experts that they will meet along the streets and we speak to their issues so it is very personal. So I think that is important, too. That the education that they are getting is based on their own environment and their own understandings and the roads that they drive.

**Mr BIRSS:** And starts, Brooke, with pre-workshop discovery. So it is personalised to their environment, to the issues they have at their school, to the issues they have in the broader area in which they are travelling. So we recognise the very point you make because we go to the schools and their environment. We do not have them come to us.

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Yes, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. The Honourable Reverend Fred Nile?

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Yes, you may have covered this already. What role should schools play in educating prospective learner drivers?

**Ms O'DONNELL:** I will just jump in and say I think schools is—it is really important that schools do play that role because that is when they are with their peers. That is kind of their last opportunity and their only opportunity where you can educate them on road safety issues with their peers. Going off and doing standalone driving lessons where they are not having those conversations about how they respond when there is more in the car or et cetera. So I think it really is critical that schools from kindy up include road safety and certainly road safety with a skew to starting to drive and bring your own experience. I think it is critical. Having said that, I do not think it is fair to expect teachers to carry the weight of that because they are not road safety experts. There are



some very intricate understandings of what works and what does not in road safety education. So the school environment, I think, is perfect but I do not think it is fair to put it all on teachers.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Just a follow up question for the University of Sunshine Coast. What is meant by a police-led school-based driver education program?

**Mr ANDERSON:** Yes, so that is a program that I am currently working on with the Queensland Police which is obviously police-led. So the police have designed and conceptualised the program. It focusses on delivering information about the Fatal Five to Grade 12 students as they are gaining their independence. So their probationary or their P-plate licences. So it has been designed with the principles of procedural justice and improving police legitimacy but also with a strong road safety context about what are the outcomes of speeding? What are the outcomes of impaired driving? What are the outcomes of fatigue-related crashes?

So police up here have taken a very strong role in getting into the schools and talking—and showing—I believe it was someone from RYDA just said about going into the schools and using local examples so that it hits home to these students that this is not a detached reality of that happens to someone else. How many times do we see it that someone is killed and then oh, I never thought it would happen to my family or my school. By using local examples, you really drum home to these students that these risks are real for them. They—we could be talking about a crash from a young driver that was sitting in the classroom where you are today, last year. So it is—it really drums home that driving is not just—it is not a right, it is a privilege and it needs to be taken seriously because it can be extremely dangerous. So the—it is an ongoing process developing that program with the police but it has seen some promising outcomes so far.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Just a follow up question. It is very good to have such enthusiastic support by the local police. Is that also backed up by the police organisation? By the headquarters of the police department in the state?

**Mr ANDERSON:** Yes, so there is quite a significant amount of support. At one program last year, the Police Commissioner came along and viewed the program as well as bringing along the Police Minister. So while we are developing the program, it is currently being only delivered in one region but we are looking to distribute a training package that individual road policing or highway patrol units can take, adapt to their region and then deliver in schools.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Very good. Thank you.

**Mr ANDERSON:** I spoke to someone from the New South Wales Police Highway Patrol regarding a program like that and I was quite upset to get a response that road safety education is not the responsibility of the law enforcement agency. So that was quite disheartening to hear.

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Mm-hm, that was not very helpful. No.

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

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Thank you, Chair. Question to anybody who would like to answer it. There has been some useful discussion around the simulators. I am interested to know whether you believe that the simulators are useful (1) and (2) whether simulated hours should be included in the 120 hours required for learner drivers?

**Mr BIRSS:** I can briefly deal with that and then I will hand to our head of education. We are in agreement with the New South Wales Government and indeed New Zealand that there is not sufficient evidence that warrants simulation as a product and a safe product for education or in lieu of anything else. So we do not propose to be experts in that place but in watching our students in very many different environments, we believe that that is not something that we would support. So that is our position regarding simulators. Essentially similar to what most governments have a view about that. Ours is no different. That advice also comes from our advisory council, as indeed does advice in relation to products and programs which Mr Anderson mentioned, that deal with the consequences of poor decisions. So fear-based or programs of that nature that were not also products or programs, the evidence shows is inclined to give the tools and structure necessary for students to make good decisions. So there, we would differ with the evidence before us but we have no view, other than the Government's view, which we support in relation to simulators. I do not know if you want to add something to that, Brooke?

**Ms O'DONNELL:** No, I think you have covered simulators, Terry.

**Mr BIRSS:** Thank you.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** So you do not believe that any hours undertaken on simulators should be included in the 120 hours required for driver learners? Learner drivers?

**Mr BIRSS:** No. No, we do not.

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

**Mr BIRSS:** But we defer to the governments on that but we do not have a different view.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Mr Anderson, any comment?

**Mr ANDERSON:** Yes, I would also agree that the use of simulators within driver training and driver education do play a role. They can be used as excellent tools to expose students to environments—the driving environments that are not in close proximity to them such as rural exposing them to metropolitan roads and situations. As well as developing skills such as hazard perception. So many simulators have the use of eye tracking technology where you can actually view the kind of things that students are looking at and what they should be looking at and comparing them. Which can be quite a useful tool for education. However, I do not think there is any kind of replacement for actual experience on the road, which I think is what the 120 hours is there for. Is to get students behind the wheel, experiencing situations on the road that they are going to experience once they are no longer supervised.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Right, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Preston.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** My question is to anyone who would like to respond, or all of you. Just in relation to a potential exchange program with regional learner drivers—youth learner drivers and metropolitan so that there is an opportunity to experience the open country road for those that are not in that environment and for regional learner drivers to come down to more congested, busy roads. I noticed Mr Gulaptis was talking about his attitude and his approach when he comes down to the big smoke. Is there an opportunity and is that in place where there is an exchange program where students can experience both? If anyone would like to answer? Terry, would you like to respond at all?

**Mr BIRSS:** I can say that I have not thought about that, actually. We go to—as I have indicated, we go out to the environment but you have raised an interesting matter there, that what exposure can you give a country boy or girl to the urban environment? Brooke, do you have a view on that?

**Ms O'DONNELL:** All—what I would say is that the GLS [Graduated Licensing Scheme] is designed and tells parents to use that time to give their child as much varied experience as possible. That is night-time driving, day time driving, built up driving, country driving. So I think the spirit of the GLS, that would certainly support what that is all about, is varied experience. So it—more of a personal opinion, to me it sounds like it would be a good idea.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you and Mr Anderson, did you want to comment?

**Mr ANDERSON:** Yes, like there is certainly merit behind taking learner drivers into different situations while they are still supervised. However, I think the idea of having a structured exchange program may not address some of the situational factors that do contribute to a lot of crashes. You know, so a lot of the situations where rural drivers would be coming into the city would be for education or work or social events where they may have peers in the car. So those other kind—or they might be tired from driving a long distance or it is those kind of factors that may be missed during this experience that will kind of give them a false preparedness to tackle those kind of things.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. That concludes our time, unfortunately. Well thank you all 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 Committee staff. I thank you all again for appearing today.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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

**MICHAEL LANE,** National Media Liaison Officer, National Motorists Association Australia, affirmed and examined

**DEAN RANCE,** Policy Advisor, Mobility & Planning, National Roads and Motorists' Association (NRMA), affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Now, would anyone like to start off with a short opening statement?



**Mr RANCE:** I have one to give.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr RANCE:** If that is all right, Chair?

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

**Mr LANE:** I have one, too.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, thank you, Mr Lane. We will get to you in just a moment.

**Mr RANCE:** Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee. The NRMA [National Roads and Motorists' Association] has long supported measures to improve the safety of inexperienced drivers to make our collective road network and its drivers safer. Following a deterioration in road safety outcomes for inexperienced drivers during the early to mid-2000s, the NRMA was a vocal contributor to debate and discussion and strongly supported the transition to a more stringent graduated licensing scheme which most recently saw material changes in 2007 and 2008. This involved a suite of measures which included increasing learner hour requirements, restricted speed limits, mandating a quota for highway and night driver training and a three-for-one recognition of learner hours with a driving instructor.

There has been a material improvement to provisional driver trauma rates over the medium to long-term, suggesting that the current policies have been effective. We acknowledge that regional drivers may face additional challenges in accessing driver training and also acknowledge that residents of regional areas are on average far more reliant on driving for social and economic inclusion compared to residents of urban areas. However, it is well-established that regional areas have about one-third of the New South Wales population but these areas contribute to about two-thirds of New South Wales road deaths. Most pertinent to this Committee is the trilemma between balancing the increased mobility needs of regional residents, ensuring that the training framework is not unnecessarily burdensome and results in overwhelmingly safe driver outcomes over the long-term. Thank you and I am happy to take any questions from the Committee.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Lane?

**Mr LANE:** Good, thank you very much and good afternoon, all. Having grown up in a farming community in the UK, I am familiar with the issues raised although our separation from centres was much less than in Australia. The issues of inadequate opportunities for training and testing as outlined in many submissions are supported. The requirements for driver training and testing are city-centric and do not cater for remote and regional conditions. Indeed, the restrictions on speed means it is impossible to teach rural drivers to normal standards on their roads and it is only later, when they are unsupervised, that they learn to drive at normal speeds—up to 110 K and overtake slower vehicles. Unfortunately, they sometimes learn by accident. There appears to be nothing in the curriculum that applies to some of the regional issues, such as stray animals, dirt roads, ice in winter or fog.

One submission claims that crash rates should be stated on a population basis. This is incorrect as it can be misleading as it does not account for exposure differences. Most European countries refer to crash rates per 100 million passengers, which includes the operators. The 100 million passenger kilometres travelled. New young drivers tend to go out and about more than older drivers and have a different exposure rate. Driving seems to be the only human endeavour in which advanced training is discouraged. Advanced driver training ranges from racecraft to roadcraft. Roadcraft was developed by the UK police driver training school. Roadcraft is a means of making a driver much safer without regulations. Comparisons between high exposure trained people and low exposure people are invalid. We are very concerned with the research in road safety. Poor research leads to poor safety measures. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Wood?

**Mr WOOD:** No, I do not wish to make an opening statement.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, thank you and welcome again, by the way. We have met before at a previous inquiry.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Familiar faces.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Mr Wood and Mr Lane both.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Familiar faces, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Reverend Honourable Fred Nile?

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** Just a general question. There has been a lot of talk about simulated driving lessons. Do you have any view on their value? Should simulated hours be included in the 120 hours required of a learner driver?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Mr Lane?

**Mr LANE:** Simulators can be very good but very good and also very expensive. It is not only the material things but the information that is supplied to the person sitting in the seat. I have seen some very good simulations but that was out of the Qantas pilot training centre and believe you me, they are very, very—I would say extremely expensive. They can be used as an addition to normal training and I could support the use of good ones, especially if they can simulate the effect of severe braking with anti-lock braking systems which can be quite a fright to people who have never experienced it. That is all, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Anyone else like to comment?

**Mr RANCE:** Yes, I—thank you. I think that the simulators, similar to—as others have suggested today, they potentially can have a role but I think from the NRMA perspective, we are quite agnostic about them. One thing that I might sort of suggest is that I know that there have been comparisons to other modes such as pilot training, for example. My general understanding is that, you know, you use those simulators more for emergency situations. So you know, you simulate an engine failure for example. But what type of situation might you replicate that over into a road environment sort of situation? So yes.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, yes, I believe there is—you can put situations in there.

**Mr RANCE:** Yes, of course.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I just had a follow up but if Brian would like to say something?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, can I add comment?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, by all means. Go ahead, Mr Wood.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes as far as we—or as far as Motorcycle Council is aware, there are not any motorcycle simulators that actually simulate a motorcycle in that they do not account for counter-steering. Most of the simulators are fairly basic and do not include that ability to be able to counter steer, which is essential in being able to control a motorcycle. So I guess we are not—we do not support simulators because they are not sophisticated enough to simulate actual riding conditions.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I just had a question in relation to that. There were witnesses in a previous day of the inquiry that talked about the importance of simulators and the amount of hours that could be attributed to the 120 hours for a learner driver. Is that something that you think should not be part of the training allowance, I suppose? Or consideration for those 120 hours? You see the simulators as an addition rather than part of that period? Michael. Thank you, Mr Lane.

**Mr LANE:** It could be, but I am rather cautious of the value of the simulators. Unless they are very, very good, then they give you—give the trainee driver a false impression. It could be used just to simulate things that they do not often see in their local environment but I would be very, very cautious about overdoing a reduction in hours. There is nothing like doing things in real life. It is like in a meeting, there is nothing like seeing the whites of people's eyes.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Okay, thank you.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Just a quick follow up on that, Mr Rance, I will ask whether—you said the NRMA is agnostic about this, the simulators, but would they consider having—including the number of hours of simulators? Whether—has it been considered? Has it been discussed? Or is it something that they would look at in future? Particularly in regional New South Wales where there is little access to—

**Mr RANCE:** Yes, I think potentially they can have a role. I think that maybe a better solution might be looking at expanding the three-for-one driver training with an instructor. So currently at the moment, if you have a one hour lesson with an instructor, that can contribute to three hours to your logbook. Up to 10 hours, so it would contribute 30 hours out of the 120. So potentially it might be sort of more effective in terms of that real life driving that maybe consideration to that program might be extended to say 20 hours of the program.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Right, okay. It has been suggested, I think, by some Members here.

**Mr RANCE:** Yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Mr Lane, given your experience, any other jurisdiction, not only in Australia but outside of Australia, that use simulators—driving simulators, for purposes of learning drivers?

**Mr LANE:** Not to my knowledge. Most of the other jurisdictions outside this country refer more to the essentials of having fully trained instructors doing the driving. French require 20 hours under instruction by a fully qualified person. They do not count unqualified supervision. The Germans require all their driving



instruction to be by fully qualified instructors. I do not know of anybody who is using simulators as an alternative and because of the potential—because of the possible lack of quality of the simulators, I would be very, very, wary about that. But I would agree with the NRMA that longer hours of professional training and a bigger discount for that or an extended discount would be an improvement.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Rotary New South Wales uses these simulators to help young people to drive. They swear by it that it is a—it gives 300 different conditions of—I think they said and they see great value in them. That is not your view?

**Mr LANE:** If they are good, and I am not familiar with them, but if they are very good, yes, you can. It is like the aircraft people, the pilot people, they use it for their check conditions but they are very expensive and very good but I have seen people coming—stepping outside those simulators and I must say, I do not think I have seen people so exhausted anywhere, anytime in my life. They get a real workover. You can do it with simulators but they really have to be very good. My experience in artificial means means that I am pretty wary unless they are really well developed. It is also a thing, of course, that people who have the simulators will always say they are perfect. It is for other people to make that judgment.

**Mr RANCE:** To use an example—like a real life example. You might say simulators might have a role for drivers to learn how to drive in the snow, for example, but yes you can jump in a simulator and you can simulate that but is there really any substitute for actually driving in the snow itself? And the answer is maybe and potentially not.

**Mr LANE:** No.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** No. Yes, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** I wonder what driverless cars are going to do?

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

**Mr LANE:** With experience of driving in snow in the UK, I would be very, very surprised if there was anything but a multimillion dollar simulator that could get anywhere close to it. You have actually got to feel the thing through your—almost like the seat of your pants but actually it is through your fingers on the steering. That is an extreme example.

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

**The CHAIR:** Obviously you moved here for the sunshine.

**Mr LANE:** Well that was one excuse. The real one was the UK economy, in 1966 it was diabolical.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Butler.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your time again folks, today. I just—this can be answered by anyone but I suppose I would particularly like to hear from Mr Wood. In other jurisdictions around the world, young people—and this—the focus of this is obviously on young people and their access to employment, education, social opportunities. All those sorts of things that it is currently challenging because of the lack of mobility. Other jurisdictions, they allow young people younger than the 16, nine month age that we have in New South Wales to ride low-powered motorcycles or mopeds to get around to access work and education. Do you think that there is any scope for that kind of change in New South Wales?

**Mr WOOD:** I would agree that there would be. There was a scheme running in Kempsey where they were providing rider training for those who were looking for employment or education. That scheme, they actually—they had provision to actually give some bikes away. Not to every applicant but—so there was an incentive to participate in that, in that you could possibly get yourself a new bike for nothing. Those schemes have worked quite well. They have been used overseas. I think it is in the UK they have used that as well. But I guess in Australia, we do not really have that sort of moped, the very low speed type vehicles that you get in Europe. Probably because of the distances that you need to travel but certainly Motorcycle Council, we would support schemes where you can get riders onto motorcycles as a cheap, easy form of transport. Particularly in regional areas where there is no viable public transport. But they certainly do need to have the rider training part of it to ensure that they have the knowledge and skill to be able to ride safely.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Mr Wood, and I take your point. I am not suggesting somebody ride a 50cc moped interstate, it was more the idea of just being able to access work and education but I appreciate what you have said. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Anyone else like to comment? Yes, Mr Lane.

**Mr LANE:** Yes and in the UK, at least when I was young, you could get a motorcycle licence at 16—well get L plates at 16. You were limited to 250cc engine and so that was a good start for people who had just left

school and needed to go to work somewhere. But other—I think every jurisdiction has got slightly different rules. The French have these tiny little cars which do about 50 K max, which I think they allow—or used to allow people to drive at 14 but that is an aside. But it does happen in other parts of the world.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Thank you, Mr Lane. Thank you, Chair.

**Mr RANCE:** I do not think I really have anything else to add beyond what has already been said. Sort of the low-powered motorcycles, it would be questionable whether they would be effective in the regional areas. But overall, I do not think there is the broad support in—or the broad appetite to further reduce the age at which you can get your first permit in New South Wales.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** Interesting we do have one jurisdiction in Australia, which is Norfolk Island, where low-powered motorcycles are available from 15. They are just an outlier, I guess.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Gulaptis?

**Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS:** Thank you, Chair, and listening to that, we probably need to think about the advent of electric bikes and scooters that seem to be prevalent in the metro area. They seem to zip along and I would say at not just a low speed but a fast speed because they are basically mixing with pedestrians and whilst they are supposed to be limited to 20 Ks per hour, I think some of them go a bit faster than that. So I mean, look, that is another discussion for another day. Really, from a motorcycle perspective—and thank you for representing the motorcyclists in New South Wales, can I just ask, is there—because motorcyclists of course are more vulnerable than someone who drives a car. Do you think that there is any scope to address that vulnerability through the driver training programs that we have, not just for the person who wants to get a motorcycle licence but obviously for the motorists so that there is mutual respect?

We know, as I said, that motorcyclists are far more vulnerable in a crash than people in a car and young people getting a motorcycle licence, being their first vehicle to drive, motorised vehicle to drive, are basically indestructible. As a parent, you of course worry about them and they need to—I mean, a lot of that would be addressed in their driver training but we still need to appreciate the fact that they are more vulnerable. They are more vulnerable on the road and they are at the mercy, not just of the road conditions and the elements but also of the vehicles that also use the road. So is there anything that we need to address specifically in our driver training programs to protect motorcyclists and to avoid those fatal crashes that happen too frequently?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, unfortunately a lot of motorcycle or multivehicle crashes, the fault lies with the driver rather than the rider. So yes, certainly in training, they need to be mindful that yes, they do share the road with other road users. Not just cars out there but there are trucks, motorcycles, cyclists and pedestrians. I am not sure quite at the moment but previously, in the hazard perception test that took drivers through their course, there were some scenarios there that did involve motorcycles. Because motorcycles can perhaps appear from locations where, if a driver is not aware of it or the possibility that a motorcycle could appear from behind a truck or even behind a car, yes, learner drivers and drivers in particular need to be aware that they do need to watch out for motorcyclists.

**Mr RANCE:** I think just yes, with regard to motorcyclists, 2021 has been an awful year for motorcyclist deaths. I cannot remember the exact number but I think it is about 40 so far this year, which is I think up nearly double compared to last year, although Mr Wood might be able to correct me on that. Also, specific to motorcyclists, there are some additional rules that apply to motorcyclists. For example—oh, provisional motorcyclists. So they are not allowed to, for example, filter in traffic, I believe.

**The CHAIR:** The lane filtering?

**Mr RANCE:** Yes, so to lane filter. So there are some rules that look to basically mitigate some of that risk to more inexperienced riders.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Any reasons why there has been such an increase, as you say?

**Mr RANCE:** What was that, sorry?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Any reasons why this year it has been a terrible year, you say?

**Mr RANCE:** I am not 100 per cent sure why this year has been so bad. It is something that has stood out and I believe that the Centre for Road Safety are looking at more closely.

**The CHAIR:** To follow it up—

**Mr RANCE:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** You will know the age groups. Is it more amongst the younger drivers or is it—



**Mr RANCE:** So to—not specifically on motorcyclists, but I did grab some of the BITRE data, which—who are the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics—and basically from the start of 2015, if you look at the 17 to 25 age bracket, just in New South Wales, there have been 445 total road deaths in New South Wales for that 17 to 25 age bracket and 269 of those are in regional areas.

**The CHAIR:** What was that period?

**Mr RANCE:** So 445 total.

**The CHAIR:** Over what period?

**Mr RANCE:** Since the beginning of 2015, up until last month.

**The CHAIR:** The last, say, six years.

**Mr RANCE:** So there is 269 deaths in regional areas out of 445, so about 61 per cent of regional deaths are young people. So far in 2021, that split is 26 in regional areas and 14 in Greater Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lane.

**Mr LANE:** Yes, one of the things I would say is if the police were doing the crash investigations to the same standard as the UK, where my nephew is a fully qualified crash examiner with the West Yorkshire Police, in fact is officer in charge of a large area, we would have a much more in-depth knowledge of what were the precipitating factors in crashes. Not just the simple thing, they were going too fast, but why they were or why they were not seen or matters like that. I might also point out that in the road training which is a much-improved standard, you will be required to look and examine through your mirrors, both internal and the two externals, so that you are never in a position where you do not know where anybody is behind you or alongside you. Similarly for motorcyclists, is to ride in the position where you can be seen in the mirrors of the vehicle. That will not prevent everything, but it will minimise the probabilities of an impact.

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

**Mr WOOD:** I might just perhaps comment about the road toll for motorcyclists. We do need to be mindful that the numbers do move around a bit because the number of motorcycle fatalities does tend to be—because the numbers have been around about 60 a year, so there only needs to be a bit of an increase to sort of see a change. There were some numbers earlier this year that were being circulated, but unfortunately they compared a particularly perhaps a good year against perhaps what was a bit above average, so it looked like there had been a 40 per cent increase. But it was really that regression to the mean, that we do need to look over a period of time, not just what might just be a short-term peak. Best to look over averages over a five-year period, rather than four quarterly type figures.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Rance, in your view, has the Keys2drive program been successful?

**Mr RANCE:** Yes, so just to give a little bit of background, the Keys2drive program is run by the NRMA and it is effectively a program which teaches the teacher. So a lot of the time, if somebody is learning how to drive, the supervisor has not necessarily had any driving training maybe since they learnt to drive themselves and they are kind of more of a supervisor rather than a teacher. So the Keys2drive program involves an NRMA driving instructor basically having a lesson with the supervisor of a particular driver and it goes for one hour. It just touches up on some of what types of things they can look out for when supervising and educating the younger driver. Last year we had the 750,000<sup>th</sup> Keys2drive lesson, so yes, I think based on the numbers and the uptake of the program, I would say that it has been overwhelmingly successful.

**The CHAIR:** Is there a cost involved?

**Mr RANCE:** I believe it is borne by the Federal Government.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Of the 750,000 hours, how many of those hours were in regional and rural New South Wales?

**Mr RANCE:** I am not 100 per cent sure of the split.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Can you take that on notice?

**Mr RANCE:** I am not quite sure if it is available.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is what I was going to ask, I was going to ask if it was available in the rural and regional areas.

**Mr RANCE:** I can take it on notice. I can do a little bit of research internally and I can report back to the Committee.

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

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I mean it if it so successful in the city, that could be very useful in regional New South Wales as well.

**Mr RANCE:** Of course, absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Lane.

**Mr LANE:** Yes, can I support that train the supervisor program very strongly. I must say in my observations of driving around, there's some awful drivers out there and sometimes they have got kids with L-plates with them and the supervisor certainly needs a lot more training than they have got. It must be awful for a child if the parent is a bad driver and they pick up their bad habits, it means they will not get through their driving test. So yes, I am a strong supporter of that, very, very strong supporter of that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Any other questions? If not, I do have one. Question?

**Reverend Hon. FRED NILE:** I just have one general one from my own experience years ago as a motorcycle rider. I was a student in Melbourne, so I used to drive all the time from Sydney to Melbourne, so I had a few accidents that were hard to prevent. I thought it would have been good to have had more preparation, such as a blowout in the front tyre, what do you do when that happens. Another one was at Picton, I think it was a very sharp right-hand turn when the road was wet and the bike just flips over because of the wet road and you find yourself sitting on the road and the bike going down the road in front of you. None of those things I was prepared for and I think driver training for motorcyclists should include all those possibilities.

**Mr WOOD:** But I would add that perhaps some of the technology has improved since perhaps you were riding. Certainly in my younger days, a very rapid flat tyre on the front wheel, so extremely difficult to control. But these days, most motorcycles, the tyres are tubeless, so a lot less vulnerable to punctures. Certainly the number of punctures I get these days is only a fraction of what it was when I first started riding. Also the technology on bikes or particularly the tyre technology, grip in wet weather, is far better than it used to be. So there has been quite a lot of improvements there. But yes, riders do need to be aware of those conditions. I do not recall that the rider training actually covers those sort of topics, but yes, certainly you do need to have experience in wet weather conditions, not just because of the road surface but also visibility as well. So certainly learner riders need to be aware of those particular conditions.

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

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

**The CHAIR:** I have got a question. What is your view on the New South Wales Government's previous restricted P1 provisional licence pilot? It allowed a person to get a restricted P1 provisional licence after holding a learner's licence for six months and completing 50 supervised driving hours. It is open to all of you.

**Mr RANCE:** This is just in the restricted P1 in the regional areas?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr RANCE:** Yes, I believe that I have not seen any specific data as to whether it has been perceived that that program has been a success. But perhaps pending a review of the safety outcomes of that, keeping in mind that because of the communities involved in that program, the sample size is going to be quite small. But I could imagine that it would be reasonable that there might be discussion to see whether that program can be rolled out into other communities, because allowing young people access to employment and education is obviously very, very important.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, well particularly in those—the more rural and regional, remote communities, yes.

**Mr RANCE:** Definitely.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lane and Mr Wood, any further comments? Mr Lane.

**Mr LANE:** Yes, I can comment that it is very likely of course that people in the rural communities would have had quite a lot of pre-licence age experience of driving farm vehicles. I started driving tractors when I was seven, which was legal then in the UK. So by the time it came to 17 and getting your learner's licence, the things of controlling your vehicle and keeping it accurate and in place and paying attention to what you were doing was well ingrained into me. That was probably worth half the driver training, so it is something that you could well and truly explore. You may think it would be a good idea to have a more comprehensive test for those who are coming to be tested earlier in their legal on-road driving experience, to expose any problems.

**The CHAIR:** So there might be a way for governments to look at that or take that into consideration.

**Mr LANE:** Indeed, they could do.

**The CHAIR:** As part towards their licensing system.

**Mr LANE:** Yes. I mean if you have had—

**The CHAIR:** That makes sense.

**Mr LANE:** —10 years' experience of driving, of operating machinery on the farm, which means you very often have to drive very accurately, even though it is slow, you have to drive very accurately and pay attention



to what you are doing and that is a very good learning curve for you. Even today it has helped me, there are lots of things that I learned to keep my mind control, even though it is quite a few decades ago, those things are still with me and that is a very good thing to have. There are other things you have to learn about driving on the road, but if you are very used to controlling machinery, that is fine. I mean I could reverse a trailer back within two inches, 50 mil, easily when I was 10, so I had all those skills there. I then had to learn road use skills, public road use and that was a very, very good background. So it is something very much worth considering, particularly for those people in remote areas who do not have the same facilities. I am sure there are plenty of places that do not have traffic lights or roundabouts for people to learn on. It is difficult, but it is something that could be considered and should be.

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

**Mr WOOD:** I would like to add that, yes, in rural areas probably a lot of riders have ridden motorcycles on the farm, so will already have those skills, but they do need to have some road craft, even though probably traffic in their areas is a lot less than it would be in the more urban areas, they still need that sort of road craft skill. The compulsory rider training, they have undeclared areas, which are basically areas that are more than 100 K from a rider training facility, so those riders do what they call a curb-side test, or a rider DART. But there is no information that I am aware of that gives them what it is that they need to do to complete that test.

**The CHAIR:** Have you got declared/undeclared areas?

**Mr WOOD:** Sorry, I missed that question.

**The CHAIR:** I said, have you got declared and undeclared areas in motorcycle riding?

**Mr WOOD:** Correct, yes, so the undeclared areas are those that are basically 100 kilometres from a rider training facility, but they still need support. They should still be having information about what that curb-side test encompasses and also be able to demonstrate that they do have some—not just the skill to control the motorcycle, but road craft that would keep them safe while on the road.

**The CHAIR:** Because in metro you have got to have—you have got to go through a rider course first.

**Mr WOOD:** Correct. Well you have to do the learner's and that is two half days that you do. Provided you pass that, you get your Ps, then, well to transition then from—the first course is before you get your Ls. When you transition from Ls to Ps, you do the course again and that course involves an on-road test as well as some skill tests on a range. Anyone in those undeclared areas do not get that training unless they elect themselves to actually go and do the course.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is what I was going to ask, that was my next question, so in rural and regional areas, that does not occur. So that only occurs in the metro areas?

**Mr WOOD:** Well, there are a number of facilities in regional areas, so a fair percentage of the State is covered by those regional training centres.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Any other further questions? No? Okay, so thank you all for appearing before the Committee today and 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 Committee staff. Thank you all again, Mr Lane, Mr Wood, as always, it is a pleasure. Thank you.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Now I understand you would like to provide the Committee with additional information following your previous appearance before the Committee on 30 November.

**Mr PATTERSON:** I was not going to do another introduction.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, so shall we just move straight to questions from the Members then?

**Mr PATTERSON:** Straight to questions.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Who would like to go with the first question? Ms Wendy Lindsay.

**Ms LINDSAY:** I will. Hi Mr Patterson. I just wanted to ask you, just in relation to funding for the simulator, you just mentioned that you had approached State Government for some funding, have you actually ever tried to apply for the Community Building Partnership grants to perhaps purchase a simulator for your programs?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I just do not recall the name of the particular grant that I did receive, because I have applied on a number of occasions for a grant. I have had correspondence from a number of Ministers, tell me why the Government does not want simulators. That has been spread now over three-and-a-half years since I first raised the subject.

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

**The CHAIR:** Are you saying that the Government is not interested in simulators?

**Mr PATTERSON:** Well Ministers have come back to say there is no evidence that simulators will lessen the accident rate, I will put it that way.

**The CHAIR:** Reduce the accident rates. Is there any evidence there that it can help learner drivers in obtaining their licences perhaps?

**Mr PATTERSON:** Well, my feeling is I would love to see simulators used in two areas. One is the young people before they receive their L plates. I would like to see them spend two or three hours or maybe more on a simulator to eliminate the possibilities of them picking up the bad habits from mum and dad or their siblings and just be taught correctly, right from the word go, before they have their L plates to get on the road. That is one area that I would like to see them used.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Mr Patterson, can I just ask again, just in relation to grants, have you ever applied though for a Community Building Partnership grant for a simulator for your programs? Because different organisations can apply for a variety of grants, dependent on what is important to their organisation and if this is something that your organisation is particularly passionate about, then there is the opportunity there to perhaps apply for that as part of your initiatives with your organisation. So I am just curious if you have ever perhaps applied for a simulator under the Community Building Partnership grant.

**Mr PATTERSON:** I have applied for grants for simulators, but just off the top of my head, I do not recall which area it came through. We did receive a grant for one simulator which we installed in Taree in the PCYC. My original request was for three simulators. I wanted to have Taree, Moree and Bourke; two of the regional areas that we have been discussing here today. I did actually receive the funds for those three simulators, but after I received the funds, I also received notification that the Government would like the money back because it was allocated to the Myall Lakes electorate and allocated to the Myall Lakes electorate and needed to be spent in the Myall Lakes and that is not where I wanted to spend all the money. So I did return it to the Deputy Premier at the time and I received another grant for one simulator which we put into Taree.

**Ms LINDSAY:** So do you have any associations with Rotary in Moree and Bourke?

**Mr PATTERSON:** Yes, I have been working with Moree and Bourke Rotary Clubs and the PCYC, they asked me to chase it for them.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Okay, because often if organisations jointly work together, that does create for a more successful application. So if PCYC and Rotary are both happy to join forces, for want of a better term, to apply, then that, I would imagine, would certainly strengthen your case for those simulators in those two areas.

**Mr PATTERSON:** We did. The Rotary Club of Moree forwarded a letter to the Minister for that area, to Adam, and there was one went to the Member for Barwon, at Bourke. Unfortunately we were knocked back.

**Ms LINDSAY:** So if you would not mind, just as a bit of a question on notice, if you could perhaps just forward through to us what grant program it was that you actually applied for so perhaps we could follow up on that as to where it fell through. So perhaps we can assist in the next round strengthening that application and assisting you to perhaps get a better outcome for the next round. But we need to know what grant that it was that you applied for, for that program.

**Mr PATTERSON:** All right, I will need to look to do that.

**Ms LINDSAY:** If you could come back to us on that, I think we are all pretty apt here at helping community organisations apply for grants. We do that a lot in our electoral offices and perhaps that is something that we could just perhaps work with you and your teams to see if we can help get a better outcome for you for the next round when it comes up.

**Mr PATTERSON:** There is other areas that I believe simulators would work extremely well and you have been touching on it with this inquiry, is the regional areas such as Bourke, Moree and the rest of regional New South Wales. We have got two organisations that are extremely well placed to be able to look after this through New South Wales. One of them is PCYC of course and the other one is the Birrang Aboriginal Corporation, which they cover in approximately 50 regional towns in New South Wales, they travel to these towns, operating their driver training. They have five accredited driving instructors and four more being trained at the moment. Now they are travelling around the regional areas of New South Wales, as I said, covers in excess of 50 regional towns. They are the most suitable organisation to look after this project and they are begging for a simulator.



**Ms LINDSAY:** Again, Mr Patterson, I think it would be great if, as joint forces working together to perhaps apply for some of those grants. I am quite sure that we could look to try and achieve some of those goals for you. Just on your simulator that you have in Taree, what kind of outcomes have you had since you have had that in place there? How many people have used it? Can you just give us a little bit of background on what has occurred with the simulator that you currently have?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I do not have the numbers of how many people have used it. I had a meeting with the manager of the Taree PCYC last week and he is very happy with the way the operation is going with it. They have had a tremendous amount of inquiry from in the area as well as inquiry from organisations that they might want to put their staff too on the simulator, to upgrade their driving.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Great, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Robyn Preston.

**Ms PRESTON:** Thank you. Mr Patterson, thank you very much for your contribution to this inquiry and also for your voluntary work that you do in the community with Rotary. I will not even ask how many voluntary hours you spend during the week on these sorts of programs, but I do appreciate it and acknowledge that. I wanted to turn your attention—

**Mr PATTERSON:** My wife would tell you.

**Ms PRESTON:** Yes, do you want to tell me?

**Mr PATTERSON:** No, I do not think she wants to tell you.

**Ms PRESTON:** No, let us leave that. On page 3 of the submission you talk about why driving simulators are important and what they can do. We heard in a previous day of hearings other Rotarians would support what you have put in this submission as well and yet today, from other witnesses, they felt that simulators were not of any value really and that there was nothing like the actual physical activity of driving in a car and feeling the road and the conditions personally. Can you give me a reason why we should not take that into account as much when you are so passionate about simulators and what they can do?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I think some of the problem or statements that have been made earlier today is that it is a while since those people have looked at simulators and just seeing exactly what can be done on simulators. It is up to 400 scenarios can be created on it, covering road surfaces from dirt, to bitumen, to whatever, different road conditions as far as rain, weather, storms. Hazard perceptions can be created at the time while the driver is actually driving; the instructor from behind can control it and create a situation that tests the reactions and the skill of the driver.

**The CHAIR:** Can you have a kangaroo or a wombat as a scenario?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I do not recall whether there is an actual kangaroo on there, but another vehicle can all of a sudden swerve to the wrong side of the road or something in those lines.

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

**Mr PATTERSON:** The system is upgraded, it has been upgraded so much over since the original one went into the PCYC in Taree, there is so much better software and hazard perception sections.

**Ms PRESTON:** Can I ask the cost of one of these simulators that you have been having to expend? Is it 38? I am just wondering the quality. Are there different levels of quality of these simulators as such? Some of them I thought were a bit more expensive.

**Mr PATTERSON:** Well, the company that I use, for the one in Taree, they make actually two different units. One is the basic unit and when I say basic unit, it is set on a minimum framework and they use that mainly to transport it from one area to another to operate in different conditions in different areas. The one that I use in Taree has a full chassis mounted, it is built purely and simply to be permanently placed in an area. The other one, as I first mentioned, is a basic framework which is transported on a purpose-built trailer. This is where places like PCYC and Birrang can use it to travel around the regional areas, because they are a purpose-built trailer. They are going to take the car there to give in-car driving instruction and they will have the simulator there to operate that type of training where they have two trainers. One could be doing the simulator on some people and the other could be using the permanently mounted one. Both units, my understanding of the costing, but Government would—I would assume would do a lot better with the negotiations, would be somewhere around the \$20,000. The full chassis one is just over \$20,000 and the other one with the purpose-built trailer, comes in pretty close to the same amount of money.

**The CHAIR:** No further questions? No?

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Just a quick one, Mr Patterson. We heard from previous witnesses here today that there has not been any studies or usefulness of simulators overseas. Do you know of a report or articles or any evidence that it has been used to assist learner drivers?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I have not read this particular one myself or seen it, but I was informed the other day there is an updated report from Holland, from Amsterdam, on simulators, where apparently government was not impressed with their previous report. I am led to believe they would be more impressed with this one.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Perhaps if you can supply us with that report?

**Mr PATTERSON:** I will endeavour to do so.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. No further questions? No. Mr Patterson, thank you 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. Thank you again for appearing.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**DARRYL BUCHANAN**, Associate Chief Executive, The Association of Independent Schools of NSW, affirmed and examined.

**JOHN SOUTHON**, Principal, Trundle Central School, sworn and examined.

**The CHAIR:** We are having a slight difficulty with one of our witnesses, but we will proceed in the meantime. Here in person we have Mr Darryl Buchanan, Associate Chief Executive, The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales.

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

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Yes, I would like to make opening remarks, thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee to talk about the innovative and effective work of our road safety education team and a school we have had the pleasure of working with. Firstly, I would like to outline for the Committee the diverse nature of the independent school sector in New South Wales. When we say independent schools, many people instinctively think of high-fee schools that are very well resourced. Schools of this nature are an important part of the sector and AIS New South Wales works closely with them. However, they make up about 10 per cent of the independent schools in New South Wales and that proportion continues to shift. In fact, the independent sector has more special schools and special assistance schools than it does high-fee, well-resourced schools. This includes schools such as Giant Steps Sydney, which helps educate children and families experiencing autism; NextSense, which educates children with various types and levels of disability; and schools like Macleay Vocational College, Dunlea Centre and the Youth Off The Streets, which educate young people on the margins of society.

Independent school sector in New South Wales has nearly 500 schools and campuses and educates more than 214,000 students, which is about one in six New South Wales students. Many are schools that provide a religious or values-based education such as Islamic, Jewish and various Christian denomination schools. Others are not faith based and are founded upon a particular educational philosophy, such as Steiner or Montessori schools. Two thirds of independent schools in New South Wales are in communities of low to average socioeconomic status and in addition to having low fees, many independent schools are small with about 40 per cent educating fewer than 200 students. Almost 30 independent schools and campuses are in regional New South Wales. One of those is Western Riverina Community School. This is a special assistance school where there are approximately 40 per cent of students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and less than 10 per cent had previously been successful in gaining their learner's permit.

AIS New South Wales is the representative body for independent schools in this state. We do not own or operate schools. We provide a wide range of support services to independent schools through New South Wales, as has been the case with Western Riverina Community School and I am very happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Buchanan. We might have the other witness on the phone in a moment. Mr Buchanan, while we are waiting for the next witness, I will ask you a question. What support should be provided for people with lower proficiency in literacy and numeracy to allow them to complete their driver theory test?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Some of the strategies that we found successful was the capacity for them to be able to hear and hear it verbally rather than read the driver's test, the learner driver's test. Possibly the capacity to have



a reader there. We also did some work with schools supporting them around their literacy and numeracy. So part of our support to Western Riverina Community School involved us working with the staff, helping them with literacy and numeracy teaching skills.

**The CHAIR:** Okay and some of the Indigenous communities, the same would apply?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Yes and I think with the Indigenous communities, particularly helping ensure that there is support, cultural support and community support for them.

**The CHAIR:** Do you think there should be an alternative to the driver knowledge test for people who face literacy and numeracy challenges?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Perhaps rather than an alternative to the test, rather support so that the test can be accessed by them.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, easier.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Just a follow up on that, this is the first time someone has said about the teaching, rather than a literacy, numeracy, it is a verbal. How does it work? How are learner drivers taught or what is the process for verbal?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** My understanding is that they are either able to have the test questions read to them, would be a reasonable approach, to avoid the reading interpretation challenge. So not being assisted to answer it necessarily, but to be able to either hear the question or have it read to them.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Has it happened often?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** I would have to take that on notice.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Take it on notice? Okay.

**Ms PRESTON:** Just on your comments there and going forward, in the real world there is signage and directions. Those that are illiterate, how do they manage to negotiate and navigate those sorts of challenges? Even if a licence was to be a verbal questionnaire, they would still have to comply with understanding signage and road rules that they see on display. How would they deal with that?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Yes, I think there is probably two elements there. One element is the capacity to interpret signage and particularly a lot of those are visual signs as well. The learner driver test often involves sentences and quite a bit of reading and literacy, a high level of literacy is required for that, probably higher than interpreting road signs.

**The CHAIR:** John, can you hear us now?

**Mr SOUTHON:** Yes, I can hear you perfectly, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** That is it.

**Mr SOUTHON:** Love technology in the country. That might be the next thing that we need to tackle.

**The CHAIR:** What I will do, I will welcome you as one of the next witnesses, so Mr John Southon is a Principal of Trundle Central School and is appearing via videoconference. Mr Southon, would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

**Mr SOUTHON:** I certainly would.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr SOUTHON:** I believe geographic inequality is enhanced by the current learner permit system. The current system seems to assume that every young person has access to a competent, reliable, licensed driver and has the financial capacity to learn to drive, lives in a location where professional lessons are available and has access to a car. This is not true for at least 30 per cent of the young people in my school. The failure to learn to drive in isolated rural settings has long-term effects more pronounced in highly marginalised groups such as Indigenous teenagers. One-hundred-and-twenty hours are unachievable, forcing many of my students to give inflated false entries in their log books.

The cost of driving lessons is far beyond the capacity of many of my families. This is especially considering the number of hours required. In our town, we have limited public transport and attending courses in other towns is problematic. The outcome of the current system for young people is no licence, no independence financially or socially limited employment opportunities in isolated country towns. My school last year spent at least \$30,000 of donated or raised money paying for driving lessons and paying for students to have extra tuition for the learner permit system. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I will just ask one question of both of you just before I hand over to my colleagues. What role should schools play in providing training for students wanting to learn to drive? Don't mind who starts first.

**Mr SOUTHON:** If I can start, I would say that it is one of the most important things in my setting to teach students to drive. But also, we put programs in about safe use of cars, we partner with Apex and Lions to do simulated driver lessons, simulators come to our school. What I believe is that if you do not drive, it just further enhances the inequity and lack of opportunity in some of these country towns. So I believe it is imperative that schools integrate it in the curriculum and we certainly use our—one of our interest electives which are run every Thursday and Friday for 16-year-olds, is we go through the process of learning how to go through the computer test and road safety.

**The CHAIR:** You start from 16, so usually by Year 10?

**Mr SOUTHON:** We start officially in Year 10, but we also have it available on our computers and we also have it available for our SLSOs, our support staff, for our kids with disabilities and kids with low literacy, which we have many.

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

**Mr BUCHANAN:** I would probably make a distinction between road safety education and driver education. It is our position that road safety education is a really important part of the curriculum. It is currently in the PDHP curriculum, which is for all students up to Year 10. Only those students who do PDHP in Year 11 and 12 or those students whose schools have a student wellbeing program that incorporates road safety education do it in Year 11 and 12, so that is probably a gap. Driver education is a little bit distinct from that, which is probably now where you are talking about the actual skills of getting towards a driver's licence.

**The CHAIR:** That is correct.

**Mr BUCHANAN:** That is something where our view would be that it probably does not—we are not pushing for a position of it in the curriculum or schools taking on the responsibility of it, but we recognise that for some schools it is a really, really important thing. Like the school that we worked with, and as John Southon just described for his school, it is important, so we would support the flexibility for schools where they perceive it as a need for their school and their school community to be able to be supported well to do that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Robyn Preston.

**Ms PRESTON:** Thank you, Chair. Gentlemen thank you for joining us this afternoon. My question is to both of you; it is twofold. The first part of the question is, what is an approximate cost for driver training that an individual would have to incur, given that they have to have an instructor that is qualified at times.

**Mr BUCHANAN:** My understanding—sorry.

**Ms PRESTON:** John? Mr Southon?

**Mr SOUTHON:** We are paying \$85 an hour for one student and we currently pay a \$200 travel fee for the person to come out 70 Ks from Parkes and Forbes. With that, we try to book multiple lessons and have the person for a whole day. So it is quite expensive. It certainly takes away the ability for many of my families to do that if the school was not subsidising it through our fundraising.

**Ms PRESTON:** So not subsidising, I am just trying to get a figure that it might cost for one person to be trained and become proficient and have 120 hours. What would you say the individual cost per person would be?

**Mr SOUTHON:** I would say, conservatively, it would be \$2500 to \$3000.

**Ms PRESTON:** And is that something that you concur with too, Mr Buchanan?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** I would be. There is some reductions on the 120 hours if you are getting qualified driving instruction, but yes, at around about \$70 an hour is about the normal price, times 120, less some of the discounts and rebates and hour credits for doing the safer driver course. Yes, you are probably looking at \$3000.

**Ms PRESTON:** So given that might be the case and we agree on roughly that figure, and given the socioeconomic issues that would be presented to many regional groups and ethnicities, I would like your thoughts on the possibility of a HECS debt that may be looked at being repaid by the learner driver if they are able to then get a licence, a vehicle, a job going forward. Is that something that could be a route to or a road that would offer that independence and ability to get that licence?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** I think the challenge with something like that is it probably is a particular burden for those young people who can least afford it. So young people who are having to go down that path because they do not have the family support structure that can provide that driving instruction without having to pay for it, they are the group that we are trying to make it easier for them to get a learner permit and a driver's licence and for them to carry the burden of a HECS-type debt seems to be an inequitable approach.

**Ms PRESTON:** So perhaps a subsidy or support in practical support?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Yes, I think practical support is important. I think where we have identified some success or potential is where there might be community access to a vehicle and a driver supervisor for them to access to at least get a certain way down the track. And then perhaps through a subsidised means or other



mechanism, to access some of those things like the Safer Driver course at a fee that is affordable or free because that is a five-hour course that gives them 20 hours of credit to their 120 hours.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Maybe a local council fleet vehicle.

**Ms PRESTON:** Mr Southon, your comments?

**Mr SOUTHON:** I would certainly agree with that more than a HECS debt, because a HECS debt really penalises the people on the low end of the socioeconomic scale to a greater degree. In an isolated rural setting, I certainly believe something like a driver that could come out with a car and actually provide that system, because I am looking at 30 per cent of my school population does not have a car which is actually able to provide the driving lessons, because it has to be up to a standard. So I think that would be the way to go. Also, as far as some community transport, to be able to get the young people of these isolated places into bigger regional centres where they have the courses would be a great help. Also, if we could bring the courses to the children, rather than trying to move the children to the courses would be a great help for us, such as having a qualified driver instructor subsidised to come out to a place like Trundle or Tottenham or Tullamore where we do not have that public transport system,

**Ms PRESTON:** Thank you, that is good feedback. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Butler.

**Mr BUTLER:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Question for each of you. Mr Buchanan, you would have schools that you work with that are in that 10 per cent very well-resourced schools that can provide far more assistance to learner drivers and you also have schools that are at the other end of the scale that do not have that. I really want to focus on the inequity here in terms of geographic inequity, but also the socioeconomic inequity. Can you describe the difference in what might happen in one of those well-resourced schools versus what happens in less well-resourced schools?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** I think in each school the road safety education component is paramount, it is there in the curriculum and is covered as a part of the normal curriculum. Probably in the more well-resourced areas of the State, it would be probably understood that those students are probably in family environments where they have got a support mechanism where parents, family members and so forth can take on either the bulk of the supervising of the driving themselves or in some cases pay for some paid qualified driving lessons. In the less well-resourced areas or where students are from difficult family environments, those sorts of support structures are not in place for them and so that is where the nub of the issue is. They have not necessarily got family with access to a car who can provide that service for them and they may not have the financial means to be able to afford paid driving lessons.

**Mr BUTLER:** Would it be fair to say, Mr Buchanan, that that entrenches disadvantage?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** I think what it does is it makes it certainly more difficult for the disadvantaged young people. It makes it harder for them to get their licence and that increases the risk of them driving unlicensed and therefore incurring penalties which become ongoing and make further limitations. So yes, I think there are some disadvantages faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds that are in a greater amount.

**Mr BUTLER:** Thank you, Mr Buchanan.

**Mr SOUTHON:** If I can answer that question as well. In my 30-year teaching career I have always been in disadvantaged schools, rural schools, and I would go a step further to say that disadvantage is entrenched in rural areas and the fact that you can't—in a wealthy school, getting your licence is a natural rite of passage, which most children will do or if they are in a situation in an urban area where they do not have to drive because they have got public transport, they might choose not to. But in our lower socioeconomic communities, I think that learning to drive for many students is becoming an absolute burden and it is entrenching disadvantage because a percentage of my students can go into town and get jobs at KFC and McDonald's and Woolworths and Coles, but the students from the lower socioeconomic families cannot. So that not only stops them from getting the work skills, it stops their social development, it reduces their chance of making those important linkages that move on to employment. So I would say that the current system and the current inequities is entrenching disadvantage in rural areas.

**Mr BUTLER:** Thank you both, that is very helpful. Thank you, Mr Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Gulaptis, do you have any questions?

**Mr GULAPTIS:** I think they have been answered. I was going to direct one to you, John. You were suggesting that it is difficult in the regions and that you had a suggestion about using community transport to take kids to bigger centres where they could get or have that opportunity for a driving lesson and driving instruction. Look, you would know better than anybody else what we need to improve that situation in regional New South Wales and we need to hear more from you about what those options are. So providing a car, look I get it and obviously if these are cost effective and efficient programs, then that is certainly something that we should look

at implementing. So do you have any other ideas about how we can improve the opportunities for kids in regional New South Wales to get their driver's licence?

**Mr SOUTHON:** I certainly do and I think I would like to address the inequities, the gender inequities as well. We seem to have more young men have the opportunity to get a licence because the rural sector looks after them to a degree; local farmer wants them to work on their property, they will provide them with a car and they will provide them with the hours and the financial capacity to do it. But our girls are missing out and what I am seeing is a percentage of my girls getting involved in what I would describe as toxic relationships because they are stuck, they cannot get employment, they cannot move ahead socially. I think what we need to do is to have people come into schools and start to help people get the L test completed. I think we need more access to community transport. I think we need to look at the cost, we need to have some subsidisation based on your FOEI index, which mine puts me in the top 20 per cent of the State, which is the schools that I am talking about, is the families that I am talking about.

So if we could look at even schools having a percentage of their flexible budget which they can use to help children get these licences, get these permits, I think that would be—as I said earlier, I personally have raised \$30,000 through Lions Clubs, chicken raffles, all that type of stuff to try to get our students even to have five or six consecutive driving lessons, which puts them at least on the pathway to get their licence. I think what we need to do is stop looking at things from a whole-of-state context and start looking at it from a geographical context. Look at where the inequities lie and start to look at how we can fund those young people to get this ticket that allows them to then go on and get a job. I have, at least, every child that I have taught to drive has got a job, every child that I personally drove around the block and subsidised their driving lessons, has got a job. So that has to be the outcome of school, it has to be the outcome because we broke the poverty cycle, we broke the gender inequity cycle and all we need to do is look at postcodes rather than looking at a law which is blanket from Sydney right across New South Wales.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Question for both of you and particularly with you, John, since you have raised \$30,000 with Lions Club. Are you both aware that there is actually community road safety grants available from \$5000 up to \$30,000, aware that you could possibly apply for some of that?

**Mr SOUTHON:** Well, I am certainly aware of them because I virtually apply for every grant that comes out of State.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Okay, because there is one that closes on the 15<sup>th</sup> and John, do you have a P&C at your school?

**Mr SOUTHON:** Yes, we have a P&C, yes.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Okay, because they would obviously be not-for-profit, so would be able to apply. But since you are working with Lions Club, it is something perhaps that they could do some sort of project jointly with you as well to try and perhaps apply for some of that funding to go towards some of your initiatives in relation to your students.

**Mr SOUTHON:** Absolutely.

**Ms LINDSAY:** We will send you the links, just in case you do not have it. But the other thing I wanted to ask you John in particular is we have the mobile Service NSW buses that go out into the regions and I am not sure if you are aware, but they are actually in Trundle today, just by pure coincidence, on Forbes Street. Were you aware that was there today?

**Mr SOUTHON:** Yes, I am aware that is there. It is an absolute excellent service in relation to sitting the test, but it certainly does not get the 120 hours. It has been an absolute godsend for us, not only for our young people, but on the other end of the spectrum for our older people who cannot get into town. We only have a community bus one day a week that goes into Forbes for two-and-a-half hours, so you can understand if you do not drive in Trundle, and that is not unique to Trundle, that is many, many small communities in the Central West, you do not get these services. The other thing we have is we have a high percentage of our families which are drug and alcohol dependent and that really limits many of my students from actually even getting driving lessons because mum and dad cannot take them because they are not fit to drive. I tell people about that and they think that I am lying to them. That is just the shame of these communities.

**Ms LINDSAY:** John, can I just ask you, just going back to the Service NSW bus, given that they move around obviously and they might not be in Trundle for a particularly long time, would it be of benefit that when the bus is going out to some of these regional communities, that they are in the Forbes Street of the town, like the main street of the town for a day or two or whatever they are programmed, but then they come to you specifically to the high school in the locality for a day as well, just to service your students and perhaps their parents?

**Mr SOUTHON:** Well that would be excellent really because what we could do is we could advertise it more internally and we could, I would say, I am going to use the word coerce, but strongly encourage the parents that I want to come, to come.



**Ms LINDSAY:** Well I think that is always part of it. It is getting the message out there that this is actually coming and I find with parents and being involved with P&C for many years that you need to tell people 20 times before it registers that something is occurring in the school or in the town and having that school connection, sometimes they will be more inclined to come to you at the school than they will be to perhaps head into town to the main street; it is a bit of a safer environment that they are familiar with.

**Mr SOUTHON:** Oh, absolutely.

**Ms LINDSAY:** We might just feed that back to Service NSW then, that perhaps with their scheduling for next year, I mean the floods have impacted their current schedule at the moment, but that could be something they could look to incorporate with some of the regions that may service some of those basic needs. Because another thing that has been raised quite a bit, and please speak to it, is getting the 100 points of identification to actually then undertake the licence. So if that is something that would be of benefit for that part of getting the licence too, it is something we could look to incorporate. We have the resources, it is just using them to their best ability.

**Mr SOUTHON:** Absolutely. I think that is a wonderful idea. You mentioned the 100 points and many of our Indigenous kids do not actually have birth certificates, so that creates a problem with getting that 100 points.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Would you like to also speak to that?

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Yes, I would thanks. The 100 points of identification was a big part of the project that we did with Western Riverina Community School and we had a lot of support from the Advocate for Children and Young People helping us navigate the Government processes to be able to do that. And that meant that a number of those students were able to do it, so we were able to work with Births, Deaths and Marriages and Service NSW and I think one or two in the first cohort had not had their births registered, so they got those registered and were taken. So that navigation of the bureaucratic processes was really, really helpful. The grant that you mentioned, are they available for schools? Because our understanding was that they are not available for schools to apply directly.

**Ms LINDSAY:** They might not be available for schools and look, I am not sure about the criteria, however that is why I asked if there was a P&C or working with Lions Club, another organisation working with the school can sometimes apply on your behalf. So that is something I think for the regional communities to perhaps look at, because it is something you could work together with. I find too, the more organisations involved in a project, it often helps the grant be more successful.

**Mr BUCHANAN:** Yes and I would say we have found that very much so. We had a lot of support from the Government agencies in that particular project.

**Ms LINDSAY:** We will send you the links so you can get them out to your schools. Unfortunately this one closes on the 15<sup>th</sup>, however if you look at the criteria, it might just be helpful for the next round.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Unfortunately we have run out of time, but thank you both for appearing before the Committee today. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. Any questions on notice taken today will be forwarded to you by Committee staff. Thank you both again.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**CARLA HOORWEG**, Chief Executive Officer—Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP Safety), affirmed and examined.

**MICHAEL TIMMS**, Treasurer and Committee Member—Australasian College of Road Safety, sworn and examined.

**The CHAIR:** While we are waiting for technical difficulties to be rectified, we might start off by welcoming Mr Michael Timms, Treasurer and Committee Member, the Australasian College of Road Safety.

Welcome to you, Mr Timms. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

**Mr TIMMS:** The Australasian College of Road Safety is focused on saving lives and preventing serious injuries on our roads. The New South Wales chapter appreciates the opportunity to appear today. The chapter identified several concerns about learner driving in country New South Wales. They include: finding and paying for suitable driving instruction, not just for the learner, but also for the supervising driver; ongoing issues relating to financial hardship and disadvantage; a lack of state-wide motorcycle learner rider courses; and also flow-on effects to other areas of road safety, such as the prevalence of older vehicles that perform poorly in the event of

a crash. New South Wales records 4.4 road deaths per 100,000 people according to a 2019 Government report, but in New South Wales, that rate is double at 8.8. The fundamental question is, do we want to teach learners how to pass a 35-minute driving test or equip them with road safety skills that will last a lifetime. This inquiry is an opportunity to change the lives of learners by recommending the upcoming New South Wales Road Safety Plan 2026 contains ambitious and accountable targets relating to this issue.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Carla, would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

**Ms HOORWEG:** Thank you, yes. So in terms of opening remarks, really the key message from ANCAP Safety is that newer cars are safer. Our most recent data shows that older vehicles are overrepresented when it comes to fatalities, with 64 per cent of fatalities occurring in vehicles aged 10 years or older, while only 45 per cent of vehicles in the fleet are aged 10 years or over. So ANCAP supports the identification of policy initiatives to encourage those drivers that are most at risk into newer, safer cars. And I am sure that you have been presented with many statistics already about the overrepresentation of younger drivers, particularly in regional and remote areas and the fatality rates there, so I will not repeat those, but I will note that in our submission we have outlined work that ANCAP previously did for the ACT Government to assist them with helping younger drivers to identify safer first cars.

I would also like to draw the Committee's attention to a program that we did not mention in our submission that has come to light since that time, which is called unsafe2safe, which is being run or trialled in Victoria at the moment. We believe this initiative will be one worth watching very closely. It is very specific and very targeted and I am happy to provide a brief overview later in the hearing if that is of interest to the Committee. I was not sure whether that was one that you were aware of yet. So that is the conclusion of my opening remarks.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you both. I acknowledge I do come from an automotive background and obviously vehicle technology has come a long way since the Model T Ford. So what we might do, if you would like to ask the first question.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Thank you so much. My question relates to the simulators. For the last two days of hearing that we have had on this issue, simulators have been one of the major discussion but they vary from support to lack of interest in simulators. What are your views about simulators and if you support simulators, can the number of hours—should we include the number of hours to go towards the 120-hour driving, learner drivers, to enable children or kids to do their driver's tests?

**Mr TIMMS:** So we did look at simulators and I know the College of Road Safety publishes a journal every couple of months and 2019 they published a report which looked at simulators. It was called a scoping survey where globally the researchers looked at simulators, driver education and also disadvantaged groups. They looked particularly at disadvantage. So they did find that Indigenous programs are more focused on obtaining a driver's licence rather than improving road safety, which gets back to the point that I made at the start: are we trying to pass a test or are we trying to embed road safety. Because, let us face it, obtaining a learner's permit is not the introduction to road safety, as has been testified by previous witnesses. Everybody is a pedestrian at some stage, we ride skateboards or some people ride skateboards, we ride pushbikes, so we are road users from a very early age and the learner driver part is only one checkpoint.

It is a difficult subject to talk about because there are simulators and there are simulators. So obviously Captain de Crespigny, Qantas Flight 32, saved the lives of all on board his aircraft, trained very heavily in simulators and that training component and ongoing training is very important. But then you have very basic PC-type simulators as well. I put some photos in our submission of the simulator program that they have in Tennessee, Tennessee Highway Patrol run, when I was over there, met with them. Not to say that this is the best way to do it, but just to show that that is a way possibly of industrialising it, getting a semitrailer and taking it on the road, taking it actually to the schools. So certainly there are places for them, but I would be hesitant to say, yes, if you do an hour in a simulator, you should get a couple of hours off your log book. I am not necessarily saying that is a bad idea, certainly needs to be considered.

**Ms HOORWEG:** From ANCAP's perspective, we are focused on encouraging new technologies to be fitted in new vehicles, so this is probably an area that is best addressed by others, because our focus is on encouraging manufacturers to fit lifesaving technologies to vehicles with a view to those vehicles then being passed down through the fleet as used or second-hand cars, so that is where our focus is.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that's what I gathered, yours is in more regards to technology and again, I understand and I certainly welcome technology, as I said a little bit earlier, it has certainly come a long way over the years. But at this point it still makes it difficult for those of the lower socioeconomic backgrounds to purchase or have access to these vehicles with the latest technology. That is where we are sort of at that, how do we incorporate the road safety while also providing a driver's licence and education and job and employment opportunities for these youngsters out there. But it is, as time goes on, these cars do get passed on.

**Mr TIMMS:** That is right. We have government fleets, private companies that are buying newer



vehicles which means if they are buying five-star vehicles, their older five-star vehicles are becoming part of the used car fleet, gradually getting there. I think Carla would probably know more than I would about the high rate of older vehicles; two, three and lower-star vehicles in regional areas which continues to cause a problem, because it is not just learning your licence, you are probably learning on an older vehicle that does not have those safety features. Unfortunately I can also say as a former highway patrol officer, I cannot recall stopping too many unlicensed or disqualified drivers driving five-star motor vehicles.

**The CHAIR:** That is right. There's a lot more that don't—

**Ms HOORWEG:** Yes, so I think that might be an opportune moment just to briefly explain this program that is being trialled in Victoria. So it is quite targeted—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I was going to ask you about that.

**Ms HOORWEG:** Yes, so it is called unsafe and then numeral two, safe, so unsafe2safe. So it is targeting 18 to 25-year-olds who reside in regional Victoria who have a Victorian driver's licence and are the registered owner of a vehicle aged 16 years or older that has a low safety rating. And the program that was announced was for up to 1000 eligible people, young Victorians, to receive a \$5000 subsidy to purchase a newer, safer vehicle from a participating car dealer, on the proviso that the old car must be traded in and will be scrapped. The program is starting with a trial, which I believe is around 50 people, five-zero, and that will be in Bendigo and Ballarat. That is as far as it has gotten at this point, so it hasn't—it is in the building out the trial phase at the moment, so there are not any results to speak of yet. But from our perspective, that is something that we think is quite an interesting scheme. I know there have been other schemes that may spring to mind, but this is very targeted and very specific and so it is well worth, I think, keeping track of.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, look it certainly makes sense for those that have already got perhaps a job, they have already got their licence and for them in order to buy a more updated vehicle with better technology, that certainly makes sense. But we are still trying to look at how we are going to deal with those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds who do not even have a licence or a car or anything at this stage. We are trying to get these people, to get them in a position where they can get and go on to what you are talking about now. And that is the difficulty that we are having, is that bracket. Wendy Lindsay.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Mr Timms, given your experience in being involved with highway patrol, we had a witness earlier today that I think in Victoria they are involved in part of the road safety program with some of the regional learner drivers where they do a couple of hours with highway patrol police in the regions. How effective do you think that would be for New South Wales?

**Mr TIMMS:** There are, throughout the State, various programs that incorporate highway patrol or even local police coming out and giving lessons and giving, well not so much lessons, but giving lectures and I think that is something that is good because you can relate, I think they can relate more to the students. Because they do, they see, the police see the mistakes that the students make and try to be a bit of a guiding hand as it were. I think there is certainly a lot of support; New South Wales Police has an extensive school liaison program already and I think it would not be too hard to ask some questions and see what sort of capacity that they would have to deliver.

Because we are talking about safe systems now. It used to be the three Es, used to just talk about education and enforcement and engineering, but it is all about safe systems now and getting that nexus between the person, the mentor as well, making sure the mentor has the skills. Because it is not just the student, we have to make sure that the mentor, the person supervising them, has the knowledge and skills to undertake it. Obviously the lack of public transport options and then we have talked about safer vehicles. But rural areas, where we have two thirds of our fatalities, unlit roads, undivided roads, wildlife, kinetic energy once you hit a tree, that is what determines the severity of outcomes. It is even more significant in regional areas.

When I first joined the highway patrol, if there was a crash in a rural area, somebody would have to be flagged down and they would have to send them into town and raise the alarm. But at least with mobile phone coverage, that has sped up a bit in some areas and you can get the resources and the helicopters that come in now. That has been a tremendous lifesaver for regional areas. But then the rehabilitation; someone in a small town, how is someone in Trundle going to cope with rehabilitating someone who has had serious injuries? How are they going to get that person to a larger centre? Parkes Hospital might not be big enough; they might have to go to Orange Base every couple of weeks for treatment. That is further examples of how regional people struggle.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Mr Timms, can I also ask, so just with the school liaison program and I am just going to talk from lived experience here with another program that the police do on cyber safety for children in schools and I remember seeing the poster at the school and saying, well when do the parents get a lesson? Because I felt like if the parents are more educated, that helps them educate their children. And then the police actually did come out and did a session for the parents, but only because I kind of advocated for it at the time. Do you think that is something that perhaps could be looked at, the mentoring part of it, as part of the school liaison program, that to focus on the parents before the kids actually get their licence as to how parents could best assist? Is that in place

already or is it something that could be added to the school liaison program?

**Mr TIMMS:** It is a great example and you are 100 per cent correct. People have had a lifetime of teaching themselves bad habits and it is only—unfortunately we talk about them teaching bad habits to the next generation as well. Once people go and get proper driver training lessons, they can then be at odds with their parents and that makes for some very interesting conversations once they say, well the driving instructor said that you are doing it wrong mum or dad. But I think there is a parallel example that they had, and I wrote about it in our report, the road safety officer at Blacktown in Mount Druitt, with the assistance of the Mount Druitt highway patrol, they ran a program based on child seats and they found that there was high rates of child restraint non-compliance, i.e. a lot of motorists being stopped for children not in child restraints, child restraints incorrectly fitted, defective child restraints.

When they drilled down, it was not necessarily through any ill intent on the part of the motorist necessarily, but it was just because they simply did not know and a lot of them were Pacific Island groups, Indigenous groups and other groups and that program, I understand was expanded out into the Dubbo area. But let us look at those parents. Like today those parents are receiving instruction for child restraints, so in another 15, 16 years, those same parents are going to be teaching those kids how to drive, so this process of teaching parents the right thing to do, it is an ongoing process.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Just in regards to sequencing, because I feel like you have got the school community that we had earlier from Trundle, where they have incorporated this into their school curriculum, we have the Service NSW buses out there, if we had then a simulator there at the same time, they could get their licence with the Service NSW bus, do a couple of hours in a simulator and then at some point the police, highway patrol, school liaison team get involved somehow. I feel like all of these things are in place, they are just not sequenced very well and what is your suggestion to that?

**Mr TIMMS:** I think that has certainly been the reading that I have had and the takeaway that I had from listening to the first day of evidence, that there is some wonderful programs being carried out throughout the State in small areas, but how do we operationalise that state wide, how do we do what Mr Southon said from Trundle about looking at particular areas, because it is not a one size fits all.

**The CHAIR:** That is the difficulty.

**Mr TIMMS:** Programs aimed at Indigenous students may not work for the refugee population. There is a significant refugee population in regional New South Wales. There are other people that find themselves disadvantaged through they may have lost their job and they may be temporarily and this is a new situation to them. So getting these things, getting all the ducks in a row, I think is probably what you are suggesting. That would take some coordination but I do not think it is impossible.

**Ms LINDSAY:** I am not sure if you are aware, do you have anything to do with Resilience New South Wales? Do you think it is something perhaps that they could, under their umbrella, look to?

**Mr TIMMS:** Yes, look probably I could not really answer that. I am not totally familiar with their charter.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Gulaptis, do you have a question?

**Mr GULAPTIS:** No thanks, Chair. I think it has pretty well been covered by all the other questions that the panel has asked or the Committee has asked and in addition to some of the responses that have been given by the witnesses. So look thank you very much for a very comprehensive response to the inquiry.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. More questions? Ms Lindsay, no more questions?

**Ms LINDSAY:** No, that is it, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** All right, well thank you both 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. Thank you both again.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**BERNARD CARLON.** Chief—Centres for Road Safety and Maritime Safety—Safety, Environment and Regulation, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined.

**ANDREA PARKER:** Executive Director Regulatory Operations—Safety, Environment and Regulation, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined.



**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Do you have an opening statement?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, we do we have an opening statement. I would like to start by acknowledging the Committee's invitation to appear today as witness in my capacity as the Chief of the Centres for Road Safety and Maritime Safety, along with Andrea Parker, the Executive Director of Regulatory Operations within the Safety, Environment and Regulation division of Transport for NSW. So the system approach underpins road safety framework adopted in New South Wales and so system principles are based on safe road design, safe vehicles, safe travel speeds, as well as safe road user behaviour. Even though we have reduced young driver involvement in fatal crashes by half since the graduated licensing scheme was introduced, young drivers continue to be overrepresented in road crashes. Data for 2020 shows that 69 drivers involved in fatal crashes in New South Wales were aged under 26, that is 22 per cent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes in New South Wales and this age group accounted for only 14 per cent of New South Wales licence holders. Of these 69 drivers, 39 drivers, that is 56 per cent, were regional and rural residents.

In terms of serious injuries, data for 2020 shows that 1057 drivers involved in serious injury crashes in New South Wales were aged under 26 and that is 22 per cent of all drivers involved in serious injury crashes in New South Wales. Of these 1057 drivers, 445 drivers, that is 42 per cent, were regional and rural residents. Learning to drive is not just about having the motor skills to manoeuvre and operate a vehicle, it also requires judgment and experience in assessing risk and safe behaviours. Importantly, learner drivers who are being supervised by another driver have a very low crash risk. However, New South Wales crash data indicates that young drivers in their first 12 months of unsupervised driving are the group most likely to be involved in a casualty crash.

Since the graduated licensing scheme was introduced in June 2000, driver fatalities aged 25 and under have reduced by 58 per cent. This is over 1.5 times the reduction of driver fatalities for drivers aged 26 and older, which is reduced by only 36 per cent over the same period of times. If young drivers were still being killed at the same rate prior to the scheme being introduced, around 50 additional young drivers would have been killed on New South Wales roads in 2020. This is why novice drivers in New South Wales progress through a comprehensive evidence-based graduated licensing scheme which had being nationally agreed. The graduated licensing scheme is designed to maximise the development of safe driving skills of novice drivers via staged training and practice over an extended period of time to manage risk-taking and inexperience of young drivers.

Under the graduated licensing scheme, restrictions are gradually lifted to allow experience to be gained in lower-risk situations. In turn, drivers experience more complex conditions over time as restrictions are gradually lifted to allow driving experience under more challenging conditions before obtaining an unrestricted licence. As part of a New South Wales scheme, young learner drivers 16 to 25 years are required to complete 120 hours of supervised driving prior to attempting an on-road driving test. If the young learner also completes up to 10 professional driving lessons and a Safer Driver course, this is recognised with up to 40 bonus hours towards that 120-hour requirement. This component is key to ensuring that novice drivers gain critical on-road experience before driving solo.

In 2020 there were 346,936 learner licences held, 73,139, that is 21 per cent, were in rural and regional areas. In the same time, 151,038 novice drivers held P1 licenses, 40,600 or 27 per cent in rural and regional areas. You will be interested to know that learners in rural and regional areas progress to their P1 quicker than learners in metropolitan areas. So 23 per cent of learner licence holders have progressed to P1 after 12 months in rural and regional areas and only 12 per cent of learner licence holders have progressed to P1 after 12 months in metropolitan areas. Transport for NSW recognises that achieving a driver licence opens doors, not just transport from place to place, but a pathway to education, health, employment opportunities, especially in areas where driving is the main form of transport.

Obtaining on-road experience can be a significant challenge, particularly for disadvantaged young drivers in regional and rural New South Wales. The Driver Licence Access Program, DLAP, is the New South Wales Government's principal program to increase access to licensing, safe and legal driving and improve social outcomes by expanding support and mentoring programs for disadvantaged people. In '19/'20 financial year, \$3 million in funding was provided to 18 service providers throughout the State, who helped disadvantaged novice drivers achieve 946 learner driving licenses and 922 P1 licenses. I note that last week the Committee heard about the important work being delivered in the Eurobodalla Shire Council, who operate the Y drive program, which is funded by Transport for NSW as a DLAP provider through the Community Road Safety Fund. Recent enhancements have seen the program expanded, greater consistency realised in the services it provides and the New South Wales Government is committing \$20 million from the Community Road Safety Fund over five years, which is a doubling of the program funding from the previous five years. This was the commitment in the New South Wales Government's Road Safety Plan 2021.

New South Wales Government also continues to strongly support the evidence-based Safer Driver course. The course is designed to specifically address safe driving behaviours and reinforce low-risk driving strategies. In the last four financial years, 54,409 students in rural and regional areas participated in the course. The Safer Driver

course Disadvantaged Young Driver Initiative offers 1000 subsidised Safer Driver course places per year to young learner drivers from disadvantaged backgrounds where they do not pay any fee to participate. Under the local government road safety program, Transport for NSW works in partnership with local councils to co-fund road safety officer positions and contribute funding to local government road safety program projects targeting road user safety issues at a local level. Transport currently co-funds 78 road safety officers in 92 local government areas, some of whom provided their local expertise and experience to the Committee last week. In the financial years between 2018 and 2022, \$28.1 million has been committed by the New South Wales Government to this program.

Transport for NSW is also developing an online learner licensing education and testing program, which will enhance the learner licensing journey by providing a combined online education and testing portal in a more interactive, engaging and accessible way. The program will bring New South Wales into line with other Australian jurisdictions that already provide an online education and testing portal for prospective learner drivers including Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania. We appreciate the opportunity to attend today and speak to you about how Transport for NSW can continue to support rural and regional learner drivers. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Carlon. Ms Parker, have you got nothing further to add?

**Ms PARKER:** Nothing to add, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Look I might just start with a couple of questions. How much would a learner driver be paying for services under the Driver Licensing Access Program and how are services tailored to local areas and is support available to help meet the cost of services?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, I can answer that question. We have 18 service providers that are providing disadvantaged members of the community access to achieving their learner driver licence or the conversion to their P licence or also to regain their licence if they have lost their licence. This is a free service, fully funded. As you have heard in evidence over the period of the inquiry, New South Wales and other jurisdictions, prior to 2015 had quite fragmented pilot programs funded by different agencies or local government or private sector philanthropy and in response to the Auditor-General's report, we actually established the Driver Licence Access Program to provide a consistent, quality, more accessible program right across the whole of New South Wales by establishing a contract to actually pay for the support services for disadvantaged young people in achieving their driver's licence.

So that Driver Licence Access Program, as I just said in the opening statement, will now have double the amount of funding for the next five years and it has achieved tremendous results in providing local disadvantaged young people access to a driver's licence, designed in a way that is actually flexible, so many of the references to the programs that have been raised, Birrang and other service providers conduct across the State, are actually under that Driver Licence Access Program contract and we fully fund those services.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. In your view, what skills or lessons should be provided via a simulator and what skills or lessons should be provided by real-life driving experience?

**Mr CARLON:** In terms of simulators, and we have heard a lot of different views about the use of simulators, I think our perspective on this is that we do need to adapt to new forms of digital education and engagement and training. This area is changing very rapidly. We have now transformed the road user handbook and it is now available digitally rather than a printed handbook that people would use. And as I have said, we are moving towards introducing the driver licence or learner driver licence actually to be done online.

In terms of simulators, in 2017 the Staysafe committee recommended that we review the effectiveness of simulators and in our submission you will see that we have referred to that review of the international research evidence. And whilst—whether it be driving simulators or virtual reality or augmented reality systems, or video digital systems for learning and training, the effectiveness of those systems and particularly the simulator systems are really still being evaluated worldwide. In terms of the on-road experience, the research is very clear that a minimum amount of time spent in learning from those experiences that you have when you are controlling a motor vehicle in a road environment in a real way, in terms of the cognitive learning ability of people to then retain that learning and learn from the hazards that people actually experience on the road, that the driver licence scheme that we currently have in place is considered best practice.

I do think that it is really important that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. All of these new digital training and experiential forms of learning have a role to play in educating, whether it be young drivers or we see a lot of the use in the heavy vehicle sector, in a whole range of other sectors as well around driver training. So I think they have their role, which is really critical augmentation in the education space, but they—the research indicates that they do not replace the on-road learning experience that in particular younger drivers need to experience.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Mr Bernard [sic], no one is suggesting that the simulators



replace physical real-life learner driving on the road, but the Rotarians would swear by it, that it works extremely well with young people. They provide those simulators, they say, provides about 400 scenarios. Would you, as Transport for NSW, consider for example having five hours or maybe 10 hours of learning on simulator be deducted from the 120 hours of learning before someone goes to the driving test? Would that be something that you would consider as Transport for NSW?

**Mr CARLON:** Look I think that based on the research, available research, there is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgment regarding the potential inclusion of simulators as replacing on-road driving experience at this point. So essentially that is what we have put in the Government submission to the Committee, having done the review of the available research on simulators worldwide, so the published research. I think we need to continue to adapt the system and develop new ways of learning, absolutely, I mean the Safer Driver course is an innovation in that regard. But we also want to maintain an evidence base that actually continues to improve that performance that we have seen in halving the involvement of young drivers in fatal crashes since we introduced the graduated licensing scheme.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** What has been the European experience? Can you point out to an example somewhere in Europe or the US anywhere that simulators have been used toward learner driver time, Bernard?

**Mr CARLON:** So the research actually is around the effectiveness or efficacy of the skills developed in that environment, so I am not aware specifically of where it is used in our context, as a discount against driving experience which is required. The European experience in terms of stipulating supervised hours, the dominant approach is actually to introduce the option of learners to undertake a number of kilometres that they must drive. When you take that kilometres and the average speed that somebody would be driving over that period of time, the 5000 to 7000 hours actually does translate roughly to the range of 83 to 117 hours of driving. So the kilometres and hours in our system in Australia, which is an agreed best practice system across all of the jurisdictions is pretty comparable to the best practice jurisdictions in Europe currently. That said, they are using, in some of those jurisdictions, the kilometres travelled rather than the hours behind the wheel as their calculation.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Chair, just one more question, but a different topic. Given the difficulties of obtaining ID amongst Indigenous communities, in particularly rural and regional New South Wales, should concessions be made for young drivers in rural and regional areas in relation to the mandatory 100 points of ID requirements?

**Mr CARLON:** Look, I think it is really an important point and Andrea Parker may want to add to this in terms of the roles of New South Wales here as well and other government agencies, but in the Driver Licence Access Program, one of the key services provided to young drivers who are disadvantaged is actually support for them in getting their documentation as well. So the program actually, under the contract that we fund, an organisation like Birrang and others that you have heard from, actually who provide that service, we pay for that service in order to assist younger drivers, particularly in Aboriginal communities. So that is part of the driver licence access program service that is provided for disadvantaged drivers.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Does it go to any points, when you are assisting them, does it go to a reduction in those points? I mean some would not be able to get all their IDs together to get the 100 points and obviously that is going to present significant difficulties for them to move from A to B. What assistance do you provide apart from what you just told us?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, so the assistance is actually getting their birth certificate or getting those ID requirements from the government agencies, so actually working with the young person to actually enable them to have the access to their identity documents. Because of course, once they have got access to their identity documents, it supports them in not just getting their driver licence but in so many aspects of their life in terms of opening a bank account or those other aspects of your life where the documentation is really important. I will just see if Ms Parker wants to add anything to that.

**Ms PARKER:** I recognise that it is an issue, not just for young people who may or may not be able to locate birth certificates, but also for those who do not have a fixed address. So I am aware that there are programs in order to assist individuals to be able to obtain a New South Wales photo card, for example, in advance of being able to enter into the licensing scheme, so there are such programs. But that is all I can add on that topic, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Butler.

**Mr BUTLER:** Thank you Chair and Ms Parker and Mr Carlon, lovely to see you again and thank you very much for your time and for your submission. It is just a question about the RP1 licence. In your submission you say, whilst the RP1 licence is still an option—and I think that that was actually news to me when I read it in your submission, because I think most of us had thought that it was a trial that had ended—you do talk about the low take-up and I just wonder if the low take-up might be a function of a lack of awareness that it is available as an option. I have got three children who have just gone through Ls and Ps and licensing, and my son, for example,

who would have been eligible to get an RP1 licence, could have driven himself the 150 kilometres to HSC exams, had we known that was an option. Do you think it is a lack of awareness that it is available or do you think it is a lack of popularity of the licence itself?

**Mr CARLON:** I think it was a really interesting initiative, it was a pilot to assist young learner drivers in low socioeconomic that were regional and remote sort of circumstances, west of the Newell, to obtain their provisional licence in order to access employment, education or healthcare. The pilot targeted learner drivers who found it difficult to achieve their required 120 hours of supervised driving experience. We actually marketed it to every eligible young person who was taking their Ps at that particular time over that year, the pilot learner drivers who had completed 50 log book hours but then applied for their RP1 licence.

The take-up rate was very low, but there have been 23 people who participated in that licence since its introduction in 2013 and we have one person who is an active RP1 licence holder. I think more importantly, we did a comprehensive evaluation survey at the time and it was very clear, a very strongly-held view by the young people who were involved and the stakeholders and parents who were involved that gave feedback, believed that the 50 hours of supervised driving was not a sufficient amount of experience to be allowed to drive without a supervising driver. And my recollection of the feedback as well from the younger drivers was they actually felt that the restriction of it only being for either work or education or healthcare, that it was not worth it; that they would be willing to do the additional hours in order to have a full licence that enabled them to also go to sport and social events and those sorts of things as well. So yes, it was not as popular with younger drivers and certainly the feedback from stakeholders and parents was that they did not feel that the younger driver was actually a safe driver once they completed just the 50 hours.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Mr Carlon, may I ask, just on that point as far as communicating out to people about some of the programs, and my question is in relation to the Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers, how have you been communicating that that is available to different people?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, so this is a program that has primarily been conducted through local government road safety officers at the local level. They run workshops on a regular basis and they communicate those programs at a local level. So principally it is through that mechanism. But we are also digitising that program as well and making it available online. So in the near future, that program for supervising drivers will actually be available online and many of the—much of the information as well is getting integrated into things like the available apps that have been authorised for the use by learner drivers as well in recording their 120 hours with additional sort of features about tips for supervising drivers at the same time as tips for the learner driver as to the stage that they are up to as they progress through their 120 hours of driving with reminders about the timing or night driving experience and those other experiences. So primarily promoted and delivered in the past through local government, but we are now moving to an online platform for that program as well.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Just on the local government aspect and perhaps looking at other ways to communicate that, because not everyone signs up for local government announcements, is to perhaps target the schools and P&C groups because I just feel that is where the students are and generally, I am going to generalise here, that age group, to perhaps get the messaging out that these initiatives are available. Because it is certainly not something that I was aware of and I have got two girls, one has got her Ps now and one will be doing it next year, or getting her Ls and I was not aware of those programs for the parents. So I just think we are missing the target market for where we need to get that messaging to, especially if it is an app-driven thing, parents might be a little bit more inclined to do that while they are having a cup of tea, have breakfast, than perhaps going to a group. But if they do not know about it, then they are not aware.

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, so look that is why we are moving towards more digital delivery of that so it is more convenient for people as well. There are 132 workshops which were delivered in the last financial year with 3468 participants across New South Wales and I do know that those local government road safety officers do tend to promote them fairly well locally, but recognise that they are not always convenient for people to turn up to those sorts of events in busy lifestyles that people have every day and that is one of the reasons why, yes, I think it is really important that we move towards that digital delivery of those resources as well.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Also I just have one other question, Chair, if that is okay. Just in relation to the Westmead Hospital Trauma Service event that is held, obviously it was not held throughout COVID, just a curious question, does it ever go out to the regions or do regional students ever get—regional schools, ever get to access that event?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, look that is something that has really been a really massive development of the program over the last five years. They have actually been broadcasting to regional schools live during the delivery of that bstreetsmart event, as well as providing the resources online to be able to be used in regional locations as well. So again, I think wherever we are doing that sort of level of education which is great to be delivered and we do know that many schools from outside the Sydney basin actually do come and attend that event, but it was really important, I think, for it to be broadcast as well, as well as the resources then being available online. So that is something that has been integrated into that bstreetsmart program over recent years.



**Ms LINDSAY:** Sorry, just on that, with some of the regional schools that do come in for it, is there any way that we could communicate perhaps when that is occurring and those messages get sent out to perhaps encourage, if they are coming into the city to be a part of that or to attend it, if there is any way we could perhaps schedule in some of the 20-hour programs to assist with the accumulation of the hours, like the safe driving course? Is there any way that we could perhaps include that? It might be just a way, while they are here in the city where there is more resources available, to add to their 120 hours and perhaps undertake some of those programs while they are here in the city attending that event?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, look I think we can explore those sorts of opportunities, absolutely, keeping in mind that we do—the Safer Drivers course, is readily available. I mean there are issues about very remote locations but again, we tend to be as flexible as possible in making those programs available even in very remote circumstances. But yes, I think that level of promotion and engagement for when we have major events of that nature. Although that program, in particular, the Safer Drivers, is an in-class interactive combined with a hazard perception drive where two students actually drive with an instructor, an instructor does a drive. That tends to be that learning experience from driving and being supervised at the same time and mentored, happens in your local area and so it is generally programmed in a way that gives those learner drivers experience with a supervising driver in that context around noting hazards in their—in the location where they most likely would be driving, which is in their local community.

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

**The CHAIR:** Mr Gulaptis, have you got any questions?

**Mr GULAPTIS:** No thanks, Chair. I think every question has been answered, certainly the questions that I had in my mind and can I just thank you, Bernard and Andrea, for appearing before the inquiry.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Chris.

**The HON. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** If I may, just out of curiosity this question, has new technology such as the autonomous emergency braking and lane support systems made as a requirement for learner driver and will that be incorporated into the 120 hours that learner drivers need to acquire before they sit for the test?

**Mr CARLON:** So the actual vehicle technologies within a particular vehicle, noting that there is a small proportion of the total fleet that actually do have those sorts of technologies already, although that is rapidly growing, in particular on the back of ANCAP actually having that, since 2018 to get a five-star rating, you must have those advanced driver assist technologies to get a five-star rating in a new vehicle. By far the majority of vehicles clearly that people are driving in, and in regional and rural areas, even less so in terms of the number of five-star rated vehicles in the regions. So whilst there is education resources around those sorts of technologies and built into people understanding and getting the experience of driving a vehicle which they may drive when their supervisor has a vehicle with those technologies in it, whilst they are being supervised, there is no specific requirements under the driver licence pathway to specifically have either access to or practice with any particular technology other than the restrictions we currently have around automatic vehicles versus manuals.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Chair, I just have one more question. Can I just ask, how are the Community Road Safety grants, how do you get that message that those grants are available out to the different community groups?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, we have an extensive program of promotion of those grants that goes out. We have more than a million Facebook users and we promote them on our Road Safety Facebook site. Clearly we have a whole range of stakeholder groups. Those grants are specifically for non-profit community organisations in delivering road safety education programs. But we do promote them through all of our stakeholders, including the school networks, although schools specifically are not eligible, but many of the community groups that work with them are and there have been programs, driver education programs, that have been done in concert with schools, which have been funded in the past.

**Ms LINDSAY:** Okay and do you do an email blast as well as Facebook?

**Mr CARLON:** Yes, we use email as well as Facebook and we put it out through local members and we do a significant amount of promotion of those grants. They are always oversubscribed to a ratio I think of around three to one, so there is also even, I think, sitting back thinking about the new Road Safety Plan. We also have public notices that we put out in print advertising to bring it to people's attention as well.

**The CHAIR:** What changes can be expected in the review of the hazard perception test?

**Mr CARLON:** So after the 2017 inquiry, there were a number of changes that were—that Staysafe identified and certainly moving the hazard perception test from the P1 period back to the Ls period has been done and so those learner drivers will now have to pass that hazard perception test. Really critically important because as you have heard from many witnesses, that first 12 months of independent driving is the least safe period of anybody's driving experience where the majority, more casualty crashes happen for those people in that first 12 months. So I think focusing on that, the learner driver experience prior to becoming an independent driver is really,

really critically important.

Whilst that is being done, we are continuing to review the hazard perception test itself and again, thinking about what are the digital assets that would make it more effective for more people in being able to educate people about the risks as they go from their learner's to their Ps.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you and of the interstate programs noted in your submission, Bernard, which program would be most suitable for rural and regional New South Wales and why do you think so?

**Mr CARLON:** I did want to comment on the fact that we do actually have, it was mentioned earlier in the evidence from ANCAP, that Carla made reference to the program happening in Victoria, the trial of making safer vehicles available. In fact in New South Wales we have initiated almost at the same time a similar trial which is being coordinated by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority and ourselves, called Empowr Mobility where we will be providing better access in regional circumstances to disadvantaged drivers to five-star, three, four-year old fleet vehicles, as they come through the fleet, to give them better access to those vehicles as a trial.

So we will not necessarily just have to watch the Victorian experience here, we will be having our own in New South Wales, which I think is a really important part, an often-neglected part of the safe system approach to having younger people protected as they go into independent driving. They tend to get the least safe vehicle rather than the safest vehicle and so I think that is a really important part of the future or protecting younger drivers and having them safer on the roads.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it makes it difficult, they have to obviously get a licence to be able to get to a job to be able to afford a safer vehicle. Is there any more questions from Members? No, everyone is good? Well Bernard and Andrea, I would like to thank you so much for your expertise in your fields and all the great work you do. That brings us to a conclusion. You will be provided with a copy of today's transcript of proceedings for corrections and any questions on notice taken today will be forwarded to you by the Committee staff. Thank you both so much again for attending today's hearing.

That concludes our public hearing for the inquiry into support for rural and regional learner drivers. I thank all the witnesses who appeared before the Committee. I would also like to thank Committee Members, the staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services and Committee staff for their participation and assistance. Thank you all.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 16:01.**