

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

**PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN
REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES**

At Room 814/815, Parliament House, Sydney, on Thursday 8 September 2022.

The Committee met at 09:20.

PRESENT

Mr Lou Amato
(Chair)

Legislative Council

The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane
Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

Legislative Assembly

Mr Chris Gulaptis
Mr Roy Butler
Mr Nick Lulich

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Legislative Assembly

Mrs Shelley Hancock

* Please note:
[inaudible] is used when audio words cannot be deciphered

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.

I would like to acknowledge the families of those young children that passed away in the terrible tragedy in Wollondilly. The accident occurred only five minutes from where I live.

Unfortunately, today, Nathaniel Smith, the local Member for Wollondilly will not be here as he is attending to issues relating to the Buxton tragedy.

Today, is the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety's public hearing as part of its inquiry into speed limits and road safety in regional New South Wales.

I am Lou Amato, the Committee Chair. With me here today are my fellow Committee members: Roy Butler, Member for Barwon; The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane; the Hon. Rev Fred Nile; Chris Gulaptis, Member for Clarence and Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry, and Nick Lalich, Member for Cabramatta.

Shelley Hancock, Member for South Coast, and Parliamentary Secretary for the South Coast will join us via videoconference this afternoon.

We also have an apology from Mr Stephen Bromhead, the Member for Myall Lakes and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Transport and Roads.

This hearing is being broadcast to the public via the Parliament's website. Some of today's witnesses will appear in person and others will appear via videoconference. To assist in the preparation of the transcript, I would ask all members and witnesses to identify themselves when they begin speaking.

I thank everyone who is appearing before the Committee today. We will now begin with our first witnesses.

JEFF BUSH, Manager Strategic Assets, Technical Services, Upper Hunter Shire Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

CHRISTOPHER TOLA, Road Safety Officer, Upper Hunter Shire Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

NORMA TOWEEL, Team Leader Assets & Transport, Wollondilly Shire Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

ROBERT SCOTT, Director Infrastructure and Engineering Services, MidCoast Council, affirmed and examined

RICHARD WHEATLEY, Team Leader Transport, MidCoast Council, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much everyone. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions and we ask that you keep your opening statement to no more than—it does not really matter, if you make an opening statement.

Mr TOLA: We did not prepare an opening statement, but we are very happy to be here and happy to contribute to the enquiry.

The CHAIR: Okay thank you. Ms Toweel?

Ms TOWEEL: Morning, Norma from Wollondilly here. Mike Nelson, Manager Assets, Transport and Engineering is unable to attend this morning and sends his apologies.

The CHAIR: Thank you Norma.

Ms TOWEEL: Thank you for inviting me to appear this morning. Just on behalf of Wollondilly, our new stats for casualties within Wollondilly from the Centre of Road Safety have shown that 32 per cent of casualties have speeding as a contributing factor, compared to the New South Wales average of 17 per cent. So, speeding for us in Wollondilly is a very important criterion. We have over 870 kilometres of road, many of them rural in nature. Typically, they are narrow, winding roads, no shoulders with limited delineation. Our shire is growing and changing. We have a lot of development with our population set to grow and double in size in the next 10 to 20 years. So, speed limits are paramount to maintaining safety for our residents. Many of our current speed zones especially on our rural roads default to the 100 kilometres an hour limit and many are un-signposted. Many of these limits were put in place decades ago when vehicles were not as technologically advanced as they are today and not capable of driving the speeds that we can now drive comfortably in our vehicles.

Council would like to see a review of the process to be able to request speed zone reviews as our area

changes and the need to keep up to our villages that are spreading. Sometimes we have developments happening that we have 500 square metre blocks with residents who are in an 80 or 100 zone. The process to get the speed zone reviewed is long and arduous. We would also like to request a review of the default speed zoning in country areas of 100 kilometres per hour because for many of our roads, that kind of speed is just not applicable or appropriate. That's all I have today. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr WHEATLEY: Thank you for the opportunity to make some comments from our submission. The important aspects for us are two of them, which is consistency of speed limits. There seems too much of a variation as you enter into townships that the speed limit can change at varying locations and that can be confusing for motorists and also the evidence with that drops off if the motorists don't understand why the speed limits are being reduced, particularly the starting early, they are unlikely to adhere to it. So that is important to match the land use and we consider that a high priority.

We noticed on the highway now the Transport for NSW are putting up signs saying why they are dropping the speed from 110 to 100, showing at grade intersections or poor alignment. This might be an opportunity on more regional and local roads to do the same. So, they can understand why a speed has dropped if there is a reason. There may be a local school. It may be heavy vehicles access. They are the sort of things we should be looking at. So, it is so important that we do have a speed limit suiting the land use and therefore motorists can understand why it is there and adhere to it.

The other issue I have with consistency is work sites. We go through so many work sites where the work has finished for the day or on the weekend and the 40-kilometre speed limit is still there. The road pavement has not changed. There may be work on the road shoulder or beyond. I understand the lower speeds for the safety of the workers, but when they're not there—we are not saying that the speed should be increased back up to the original high speed but certainly increase it to at least 60. Give some relevance to motorists. You are reducing the safety to the workers if they do not believe the 40k is relevant. I know it is hard for construction people, they do not want to keep changing the speeds. If they want motorists to adhere to those lower speeds then having that change when the road pavement has not changed, I think that is very important and that is one area that we would like a bit more pressure. I mean to be realistic; I find it hard to get my own work crews to do it. It is easy for them not to change it.

The other issue which was also raised by Wollondilly is decision making on speed limit reviews. We are finding huge delays. We can wait years from a resident making a submission through the Safer Roads New South Wales website or writing to us and we are forwarding that to Transport for NSW. Years and years can go by. I mean seriously. We constantly contact our reps, and they just say it is in a waiting process. That frustrates them and, in our submission, we have put a request for some 40k speed zones, five of them through our council they're over 12 months and we have yet to get a formal reply back, even just to say look, a couple of them—we go ahead with them or work on further and that is frustrating for us. So, we would like to really see a timely increase in speed zone reviews.

I guess just to finish off, we think road education is important to understand the speed zones, the default speed zones in urban areas. I also agree to the previous comment, the rural default speed limit should be considered, particularly on unsealed roads. The 100 kilometres per hour is extremely high. There are options we could look at possibly making it 70 kilometres per hour. That halves the clear zones and then put the speed up higher when you have roads that are suitable or a better education program. I think that probably covers me. The rest is in our submission. Thank you.

The CHAIR: No, thank you. I might just ask one or two questions and then I will pass it on. You mentioned earlier when they are doing road repairs and so forth at the side of the road and we have all noticed the signs. The signs on jobs that stand idle, I am talking about for weeks, months and those speed zones are still there. Some of them are under council as well, aren't they?

Mr WHEATLEY: Yes, they are.

The CHAIR: Okay, so what does council do?

Mr WHEATLEY: It is very difficult. I raised it with the construction engineers, and they consider it difficult to be doing it. They do not want to do it because it is more work they have to do. The other issue and it is a sad fact, but they say that well, if we leave the 40 out, if they have an accident then they must have been speeding. That is a hard mental thing to change, even through the crews I work with. I cannot override them. They are in charge of those work crews. They are working off the traffic control at work sites. There are recommendations in it.

I think that document needs to be upgraded and put more pressure on the fact that if the road pavement is safe even at 60, it gives particularly those who regularly use the road, a feeling that at least okay, no workers are

there. The likelihood even at 60, not likely to have a crash. Then when they see the 40 they are aware that yes, there are workers here. They need to be more careful and more aware of the environment.

The CHAIR: Yes, but still does not answer the question; sometimes it is there for weeks.

Mr WHEATLEY: Yes absolutely.

The CHAIR: The job, there is nobody there for weeks at a time. No work has been done, so why are the speed limits still there?

Mr WHEATLEY: Every construction engineer or project manager would say well, they are bringing the work back to there, or we are moving back and forth. Look, it is hard. I wish I had an answer. I wish I could say, I can make them do it, but they do not. They will always have an answer to it. In some cases, it is relevant. They are having work crews and trucks going back and forth. Yes, I would like to see the traffic control at work sites be more dominant on that aspect of it.

Mr SCOTT: Just probably adding to your question there is that a lot of that reflects the concept that the work site is still in operation because the work has not been completed. So whatever element of work was trying to be repaired, that defect still exists, and the speed limit is applied consistently until that defect is rectified.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Sometimes it goes for a longer time.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, especially recently because we have had things like supply chain disruptions, sickness in workforces due to COVID and some of those have taken out workforces for up to two weeks in times. So there has been a resourcing and a material supply and a contractor availability issue that has exacerbated all of what people have observed in the last 12 to 24 months.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, I mean we can understand from your perspective, but in terms of the drivers and the frustration levels, there needs to be a balance there somewhere where safety is still key, but that level of frustration may lead to non-compliance with road rules. Therefore, they decided well, there was no one there anyway. There were no workers. So, we can [inaudible] regularly, so they just speed. So there has to be a solution. So, what's the solution to that?

Mr SCOTT: In part I think as my colleague was referring to it is a review of the standard manuals for implementation of traffic control to actually specifically address times when work is not happening or making sure that the level of speed reduction is proportionate to the amount of risk that exists for the road user. So that when there is not a lot of work happening, the speed zones could be higher because it is not a safety issue for workers. It reverts back to a risk for road users' issues. Whereas at the moment the manual for traffic control at work sites is really favouring workers, whether they work there or not.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Who puts the manual together?

Mr WHEATLEY: It is put together by the— would have been the RTA, RMS, Transport for NSW but now WorkCover has taken over that document. So, it would be a joint document between WorkCover and Transport for NSW but WorkCover in the last couple of years has taken it over fully.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: There have been submissions to them about this particular issue?

Mr WHEATLEY: I believe so.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Any responses?

Mr SCOTT: We have not seen any change.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You have not seen any change?

Mr SCOTT: No. Yes.

The CHAIR: Could I just remind all witnesses just to identify yourselves before answering questions. It just makes it easier for Hansard, so they know who is who.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Could I, while I have got the floor for just a moment ask Ms Toweel, with regards to the submission number 35, Wollondilly Shire Council, express also the frustrations about the various reviews that are being requested. You say that unfortunately all really those councils can do is to request reviews through the Centre for Road Safety. How often does that happen and how often do you get responses? Ms Toweel?

Ms TOWEEL: We would get requests from the community on a weekly basis requesting internal review of speed zones. Some of them applicable, some of them not. We would pass them on to Transport for NSW through the Safer Roads portal and request a review. It would have to be lodged and the same, we get very little response through that avenue. For the ones that we do get response on that they're investigating, it can take up to 12 months

to actually implement any changes out on the road network, but they are not [inaudible].

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I know government departments they have what they call liaison officers. Do councils have liaison officers between councils and say, transport and other departments? Do councils have such liaison officers?

Ms TOWEEL: Yes, we have a representative on our local traffic committee, but we go to and has requested that any of these speed zone reviews that we consider it valid to send them directly to them. We have done that recently in particular on Remembrance Drive where which we have been told speed zone reviews are on hold at the moment. So even when it is a valid request, our hands are tied. It seems like Transport's hands are tied also.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can you tell us how long? Is it some taken? Give us one example of a long period of time where they have not replied to your requests?

Ms TOWEEL: Some requests through the portal we do not get any reply. The ones where we go through direct to our representative on the traffic committee will reply and say it is being investigated. Then it can be months before we hear back the outcome.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you to all the witnesses who have appeared and also provided submissions. Just a question in regard to that review and how long it takes. We do have the Centre for Road Safety coming along to talk to us and I am curious to know from the council's perspective what would an acceptable timeframe be for a review. Obviously, you guys have batched a number of reviews of your 40 zones into your submission. I can see that. That is going to take a bit longer than one. What do you think would an acceptable timeframe be to get a response?

Mr SCOTT: Just in the absence of others, I would suggest something in the order of three months. We want at least a due diligence done in terms of properly consider the circumstances of some requests. Some are going to be a bit more straightforward than others. Some are going to take quite a bit of investigation. So, I have suggested three months would be more relevant to what we are talking about. Certainly not as in our experience, more than 12 months.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you. Does anybody else want to comment on that? Has anyone else got a different timeframe in mind or is three months reasonable from all of your perspectives?

Ms TOWEEL: Yes, I would agree with that. Three to four months would be an appropriate time to take. They are not straightforward. There needs to be an investigation and it cannot happen overnight, but three to four months would be an appropriate timeframe in my opinion.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Especially if the speed limit is being lowered. That would seem to be an easier decision to make than raising the speed limit, wouldn't it? The next question is just in regard to areas where there is no sign posted limit and the assumptions that people drive to the conditions up to a speed of 100 kilometres per hour. Given the varying differences in vehicles and road surfaces, I mean you could have 30 mm of rain and it totally changes the road surface, which means that it would not be safe to travel at 100 kilometres per hour in our part of the world which is 44 per cent of the state out west. We've got a lot of roads and if it is a well graded road, driving at 100 kilometres per hour in a vehicle with sufficient ground clearance and rolling stop is absolutely normal. So, I suppose that idea of education and educating people to drive to the conditions, I would be interested in whether or not lowering it as a hard limit, whether educating people about driving to the conditions should be a priority.

Mr WHEATLEY: I would say both. I recently—half a dozen years ago ran a seminar in our local place with the traffic engineers discussing some of these issues. The viewpoint generally was, if we could lower the speed limit, you reduce the—you give the people the interpretation of what they are wanting. That you want the lower speeds. I think you give the lower speeds and emphasise the fact you need to drive to the conditions. Certainly, our side of the Great Dividing Range, 100 kilometres per hour, there would not be many sections of roads that you could do that speed limit in. So that is why I personally focus on a 70. Then areas out west where you have got straight sections and there is probably nothing to hit for kilometres. There is nothing there. You've got good sight distance and yes, the 100 kilometres could be sign posted for that. I think it is a whole perception, and look, interesting for me is I get phone calls from people who are tree changers who move into these areas, and they suddenly ring up and say look, everyone is travelling fast, going too fast. You ring up and say well, it is the default rural speed limit of 100. They are flabbergasted. They cannot believe that that is the default speed limit.

Look, it is a hard one. You're right about the road conditions. It can change radically. A truck goes by and throws some gravel over the road, it can be totally different. I live on over a kilometre of dirt road. Yes, there is a straight section I could do 100 probably. I'd never do it. I wouldn't go over 60 or 70. Even around corners that I go around regularly conservatively, some days I can feel my car starting to lose it. I think education is really important and I think by lowering the speed limit would be a way to go. The only comment was when I did that seminar a number of years ago, Tasmania was looking at the same thing. They were looking at reducing the default rural

speed limit. I think it was 80 on sealed and 70 on unsealed roads. Interestingly enough, huge backlash and they I believe did not go ahead with it because obviously people did not like the idea of the speed limits being reduced and not being able to choose it. I have not checked up recently.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Just a clarification; you acknowledge that there would be a difference between vast distances out west with long straight sections of roads.

Mr WHEATLEY: Absolutely and that is why at that seminar I put it forward as a suggestion that you make it 70 as the default rural speed limit. I mean most sealed roads have a speed limit on them already sign posted. It tends to be the unsealed roads. If you have had a 70—my suggestion, so anyone crucify me—if you made it 70 and had signs up that said drive to the conditions, and then Transport for NSW could review the roads out your way where there may not be many objects in the clear zones, there may be good sight distance. Then yes, you could probably again put those speeds up to 100. People might understand it. Straight out 100, as I said, it is a regular, people ring up and say—when you tell them 100 speed limit is 100, they just cannot believe it. It just does not seem relevant.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, I will give someone else a go. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Could I just take up from where Mr Butler was going? Has anyone ever considered—here you see you've got on the M2 and the M5, again variable speed limits? Imagine if we could put variable speed limits in the country areas. You can change the speed limit depending on weather conditions and road conditions and so forth.

Mr WHEATLEY: I would suggest that there would be a cost factor involved in that. It would probably become a target. I would see it become a target by the locals with their rifles. At the end of the day, we want to put the emphasis on the drivers and—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Keep the speed limits if they come in with the rifles.

Mr WHEATLEY: But yes, look I will finish now.

The CHAIR: I appreciate it. The Committee has heard that road infrastructure in regional areas needs to be improved. So what infrastructure improvements are required in your areas and how could they be addressed? I do not mind who takes it up first.

Ms TOWEEL: Road infrastructure as I said earlier roads are, we have many rural in nature with very limited shoulders, very limited delineation so infrastructure improvements to me would be widening of roads. We have some major connecting roads that are barely six metres wide in locations. Shoulder construction and delineation, safety barriers where required. At the moment we have funding through Safer Roads for our regional road network and we are doing a lot of work on those but our major connecting that are council controlled, we do not have the funding to be able to provide that sort of infrastructure.

The CHAIR: Okay and talking about your funding, your council they impose rate increases specifically to address improvement of roads. Can you tell me what happened to that?

Ms TOWEEL: Yes—so the—

The CHAIR: There was an increase to ratepayers over five years.

Ms TOWEEL: The funding—the rate increases went to maintain our existing assets and not necessarily to embellish and improve our existing road network. It was to maintain the assets that we have. So, to be able to construct sealed shoulders and widen roads that come at a further cost to council that the funding did not meet.

The CHAIR: Okay. So, it is obviously the potholes. So, the problem for Wollondilly is funding?

Ms TOWEEL: The problem for Wollondilly, yes is funding and maintaining the road network that we have got. We have a huge road network and a very small relative rate base. With very many rural properties outside of our towns and villages with 870 kilometres of road under our care.

The CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Mr SCOTT: I could probably add a bit to that. In the MidCoast we have 3600 kilometres of road. That is one person has 38 metres of road that we maintain for them on their behalf. The struggle has always been around maintaining the condition of it. So, what you are seeing from a road safety perspective is a function of two things. It is the underlying geometrical alignment of the roads, which was largely constructed back 100 years ago. So, the roads were built for different types of traffic than what they currently serve. In our areas, typography dictates the way the road aligns. We weave in and out and up and down through areas and that creates a lot of challenges but that has largely stayed the way it is, particularly in our rural areas.

From a road condition point of view, you also have the underlying fact that most councils are reporting deficits in their operating position, i.e. an insufficient level of income to support the level of infrastructure that they

currently have. That was certainly no hidden fact from the merger that created MidCoast Council in the first place. It is a challenge that we have got to deal with but the only element—the only opportunity that we have got to deal with that is by pulling the rates lever. From a road perspective, if we actually want to have a really good go at improving things into the future, we cannot just keep doing what we have been doing in the past. We need to have a full look at the funding model for roads to make sure we can actually adequately both maintain them but also improve their condition and safety.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Just a question, going back to that default speed limit and I know you're reluctant to nominate a speed but under your—in your circumstances, where you have those roads that are not straight and they duck and weave and they bend, what would a default speed be that you would consider to be safe and that the public, your community would accept?

Mr SCOTT: We've suggested in the submission a default speed limit of 70 kilometres an hour and then increases on those speed limit by exceptions and sign posting of areas that are suitable for that because there are parts of the road network and we certainly accept west of the Great Divide, there is a much larger part of the road network that would be suitable for higher speeds than that. Coupled with that is not just the speed limits, it is about changing the focus of some of the work that we are doing more around or instead of being so compliance driven, i.e. drive lower than the speed limit, which also just happens to be a default of 100, is about understanding better the conditions, the risk, the factors, so we can hopefully allow drivers to make better decisions when it comes to assessing the risks and driving to conditions themselves. Hopefully generating attitudinal or driver behaviour change more so than a compliance narrative on those people using the roads.

The CHAIR: Okay, just go back to the roads for a moment. When road repairs are done, even temporary road repairs, who oversees it? Who checks the job to make sure it was done to a suitable standard?

Mr SCOTT: Local roads is the local council. So, in our organisation, we have a structure of work supervisors, works engineers and managers of operation, both in north and south. So, within that hierarchy there is responsibility for overseeing the quality of the works that we do, either by our own labour resources or by contract resources.

The CHAIR: Ms Toweel?

Ms TOWEEL: Similar set up. Works engineers and managers supervise and oversee the quality of the work. I would like to note that Wollondilly and I know many other areas have been hit with many natural disasters over the last two to three years, which has affected our road network. We are chasing our tails to keep up with pothole patching. That might be perceived by the public to not be done to a quality standard, but we are filling them in to get rid of defects and safety issues on the road to then come back later and carry out permanent repairs.

The CHAIR: You'll see it, is it West Parade there at Thirlmere? Is that the new part they did, how the road goes up and down?

Ms TOWEEL: Yes, West Parade is on our capital works program starting before Christmas for a full reconstruction. That was severely hit with the recent storm event in February of this year, and we had water lying and saturated table drains and water table that has just obliterated West Parade.

The CHAIR: Yes look, I know the roads out there and I know how terrible they are because I drive them all the time.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can I ask this question; Mr Chair to the Upper Hunter Shire Council and of course the others can respond. Most of these issues raised in this submission are pretty much relevant to most of the submissions that we have received. In the submission for Upper Hunter Shire Council, they identify a number of needs. One, there is a need for additional road signage. There is a need for improvements to the road geometrical design. There is a need to construct physical barriers for road structure. There is a need to improve consistent pavement conditions. There is a need for increased behavioural education. Clearly, there is a number of needs that those councils require. Is there a priority that you would—can you put them in priority? Which one would be most important to address first and then second and third? Is there a priority for the council?

Mr BUSH: We do have priority. We see the lowering of the default speed limit is probably our number one priority. We have a 1100k's of gravel road and 700k's of sealed road. On our gravel road network, we have three different areas. We have the hilly area, which is over towards Gloucester, which is all loose gravel and intermittent steep embankments. If they slide off the road there, they have not got much of a chance whatsoever. We have even been requesting to end up with the black soil roads where 20 millimetre of rain and they cannot get onto them, or they slide off, so they are black clays and stuff like that. So, we see a lowering of the default speed limit is probably the number one priority.

Continued funding for road safety projects with driver education and behavioural changes. We think investing in that—we get a lot of people from Sydney or the big urban areas that have never been on a gravel road and do not understand how to drive those roads. It does not take much to lose a light vehicle. Basically, our vehicles

are only light vehicles, not the four-wheel drive trucks that we drive around in. Probably, then improvements to our—some kind of continued funding for our sign replacement programs and additional signage. We had trouble with implementing speed limits in our rural area. To lower, it does take 12 months to 18 months to get an answer yes or no. The difficulty is it is very hard to expect—I find it difficult to expect a person to sit on 80k's an hour for long distances. Then even though it may be sign posted 80, and then you have your policing issues. The resources to let people know that they are about. If you are doing over 80, you'll get caught. Otherwise, they just travel 100k's an hour anyway. So not being enforced. Even though you implement them, you have not got the ability to enforce them.

Then I see the next biggest change—our next biggest priority was improvements in road design. 1100k's of our gravel road network, we'd not be anywhere near even the 70k road design default speed limit. Probably half of our sealed network has not been designed to 100k limit. So, we really see the need for additional warning signage. You do not need approval—if there is an issue there whack up a warning sign; a big red sign or a reduce speed 10k's an hour or big storyboards that tell us what can happen. All that kind of stuff there. Every other council is in the same situation, and I think our submission was just a bit of a summary of the main issues that we are looking at.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: If anybody else would like to respond to that question?

Mr SCOTT: I would support the comments regarding road safety where one of the points I wanted to add to that was a lot of the grant funding opportunities that are out there to improve road safety actually rely on accidents having happened in the first place. I think there fundamentally needs to be a shift in focus to that because we should not have people being injured, or worst-case scenario dying on our roads before there is a call to action to do something about them. We actually have to make them safer to prevent those accidents in the first place.

The CHAIR: Just a question for all the councils; so, what changes to road infrastructure are needed in your communities to allow for the effective use of new and enhanced vehicle technologies?

Mr TOLA: I think in a lot of instances the technologies are outpacing the infrastructure that we have got. Lane delineation technologies don't work on a dirt road. We do not have a centre line, so a lot of the technologies in vehicles just will not work on our roads. So, we have to play catch up or the technology needs to take into consideration the different roads that are available within the system.

The CHAIR: No one else like to add anything?

Mr WHEATLEY: I would certainly agree that particularly with the lane technology and the increase of possibly driverless cars, we are going to have to widen roads, have lane lines and that because that is what they will be working off to give them the control, the car the control they have. So that sort of technology. Yes, so without that upgrading of roads to match the technology in the vehicles it is redundant that sort of technology.

The CHAIR: You've got to fix the potholes first?

Mr WHEATLEY: Absolutely.

Ms TOWEEL: I would just like to add I completely agree, technology is outstripping what we are able to do to upgrade our road network where many of our rural roads were never designed and do not comply to design standards now. Very rural, narrow roads in nature, undulating typography, difficult to keep up with technology. I would just like to reiterate that the education campaign to make drivers aware of driving to the conditions are paramount from coming out from the city, when they get off the freeway and they come into Wollondilly and it is a completely different road network and they are used to following speed signs as that is what the law is, that is what they do. Out here it is a very different scenario, and it seems to me that driving to the conditions; that message especially in the younger generations seems to have been missed.

The CHAIR: Yes, that is a good point. We do need to educate the younger generation more so. I totally agree. Any further—

Mr ROY BUTLER: Mr Chair, if I may, Roy Butler, Member for Barwon. So, what I have just heard Ms Toweel, and this is something I suppose I want to come back to, I have got one LGA for example that has got 2700 kilometres of dirt. It is the largest LGA in the state. The driving to the conditions and the idea that an education campaign that actually tells people about that because modern cars, as you know, often it is GPS based advice up on your dash about what the speed limit should be. So, if you are on a road that does not have a defined speed limit that says 100, you might just think that is okay. The idea that road could change overnight due to rainfall, I mean in my case, if a B-double goes down a road that is wet it can create a one-foot trench down the middle of the road. So, the idea of making that constant assessment and scanning for what is going on, on that road, and being able to go well, as you said when you go around corners, you can feel when the back end of a car is starting to slide, especially if you have got marble sized rocks all over the road.

So just that idea of education and that idea of driving to the conditions, I am just I guess I am coming back

to it because I am thinking about how variable not only the vehicles that we drive in terms of some are four-wheel drives that have good ground clearance and big rolling stock and others, little 13-inch wheels on a Mitsubishi Lancer. You obviously cannot drive those vehicles at the same speed on the same road. So that idea of driving to the conditions, I would really be interested to see I suppose where that fits in the hierarchy of the education and driving to the conditions because if we think about the complexity of changing speed limits on every single dirt road, that is going to take—if it takes you months now to get a review on speed limits, I just wonder how many years it is going to take to actually put a different speed limit on every dirt road as opposed to an education campaign on driving to the conditions and understanding what it is to drive on a dirt road for example.

Mr WHEATLEY: Our learner driver training, which I have been through with my children has very little discussion on rural roads, on unsealed roads. It is based on basically urban roads, and it is based on most of their practice is on that. Obviously, my children had the opportunity to drive on dirt roads because I happen to live in that area. The other issue I have, and it is noted in my report which is just—I don't know if there is any evidence to it, but I think cars today allow young drivers, new drivers a sense of security because they can travel faster, it is quieter. When I first—my first car was a Land Rover. My second one was an MG. No power steering and if you were going fast, you felt it and you knew it. Now, you can get a modern car, even 20 years old and you can be doing quite high speeds and you do not hear the engine, you do not feel it, you have ABS and all these other things that support you if you make a mistake. So, mistakes now happening by younger drivers, newer drivers might be happening at higher speeds and then when they do lose it, they're losing it at a much higher speed than perhaps my generation. Then of course, the results are much more horrendous. So yes, trying to get that across to young drivers and yes.

Mr SCOTT: Just on that note about those speeds you will see that on the dash it is 100k's. So that's that compliance culture that we were talking about that I was mentioning earlier and the benefits I definitely agree there is a lot to be gained from changing that and flipping it the other way to being a drive to conditions take responsibility for your own actions. There is that perception that if it is a 100 kilometre an hour speed limit, I can do 100 kilometres an hour. I should be able to do it. If I cannot do it then it is obviously the council, the local council's fault that I could not do it, not the B-double driver who went down the wet road and left the furrow in it. People have got to expect and it does not matter whether it is a condition on the road or whether it is a kangaroo that hops out from the side, you have got to expect the unexpected on the roads and not just assume that you can drive them at the speed limit and that is precisely our point is flipping that on its head and creating that expectation across the community that it is their responsibility as drivers to look after the other people on the road, themselves and everything else.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you. Anything from anyone else who are online?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Just going to say GPSs don't necessarily give you the speed limits.

Mr ROY BUTLER: It just tells you what the—based on location what the—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yeah, if there was no GPS, I've got one that has been in my car for the last 10 years. It does not really give you the actual speed limits. So, it can be even further confusion to many drivers.

The CHAIR: Just get a new one. Update it.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Well, yes.

Mr ROY BUTLER: That won't help though.

The CHAIR: No, at the default speed.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That's right.

The CHAIR: That is all it gives you, yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That is the issue with having GPSs that are old. So, it is confusing. I mean we are from the city; I am from the city, but we do every now and then go to regional New South Wales and drive on dirt roads and it is just hard to understand the speed limits and the manoeuvrability of the road. So, there is a lot of questions, there is no doubt, and the key question is of course safety. How do you address that and how do you manage? So, whether it is by education, whether it is by signage. Yes, I guess the best answer to that is the signage that says drive at the weather conditions or road conditions. I know that needs to be worked out.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: A lot of the issue is that a lot of these crashes are not people from the city in country areas. It is local people who are in a hurry because they have got to travel a great distance to go to work or to see somebody and so that is the education that we need is that you do not have to hurry because you will not get home if you hurry. That is, I think probably a more potent message that we need to signal.

Mr SCOTT: That is certainly that complacency people do the same road day in, day out. They get

complacent with it and one day something changes, and they come unstuck and that is what we certainly again in the complaints that we get. The people move into the area cannot believe how fast other people that live in the area drive on the road. So immediately jump to speed limits as a way of trying to counter that and—

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Justify it.

Mr SCOTT: —[inaudible] is on our traffic road network, the enforceability of speed limits is also an issue. Once people get a sense that there is never going to be a police officer around the next corner, it potentially does not really matter what speed limit you have on it. They will still drive it the same way that they drive it because they know that they are not going to get caught.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Just can we talk about enforcement? Is that all right, can we talk about enforcement?

The CHAIR: Yes, I just think the Upper Hunter wanted to answer as well.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Had their hand up yes.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr TOLA: Thank you. I would like to talk about fatigue and workplace practices later on but just a reminder about the situation for motorcyclists as well is exacerbated inherently because of the danger associated with motorcycle riders. Also in Upper Hunter, the caravaners that are coming through the area as well. There is a different sort of driving set with a caravan. So, the education around motorcycle riding and towing caravans and trailers is really important. Just the fatigue situation here with mining in the area and also, we have got a lot of horse studs in the Upper Hunter as well where people work all hours and then they are driving home commuting for one or two hours as well. So definitely important to look at the workplace practices and education around getting home safely. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Roy, you were going to add something?

Mr ROY BUTLER: Just a question to anyone in regard to enforcement. Obviously, the current highway patrol vehicles; the BMWs and the Chrysler SRTs, you do not normally see them on a dirt road. Two-inch tyres and dirt roads do not go well together. They do have a fleet of 200 Series LandCruisers which are decked out as highway patrol vehicles, and I am wondering if you have raised with your regional traffic tactician within New South Wales Police within your region to see if you can get taskings of those 200 Series out onto those dirt roads where you have accidents or have reports of speeding?

Mr WHEATLEY: We certainly work with our local traffic police and highway patrol when issues get raised. It tends to be residents raising them as a factor. I do not know if we have any of the LandCruisers you talk about in that area, but I do know some of the highway patrol if there is a regular driver travelling fast, I have known the local police to go and speak to that individual. They just do not have the resources to task a back road that has only got half a dozen vehicles travelling on it a day or a little bit more. So, they will sometimes go and speak to that individual because they will get the rego from another neighbour, and they will go and speak but it is hard for them to spend that time on that road with such low volumes where there are demands on the highway and other busier roads to spend their time.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Yes, look taskings are typically driven by accident data so the more accidents you have on a road the more enforcement you will see on that road but certainly there might be an opportunity to have a chat with your region traffic tactician within the region office for your area and see if there can be one of those vehicles deployed. It is worth asking the question.

Mr WHEATLEY: Absolutely and when we have traffic complaints, we will take a traffic count and those traffic counts also have the speed limits of the vehicles along them and we provide that data to the police so they can know when the highest speeds are happening and therefore, they can spend their time in that location but again it is all about resourcing.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you.

The CHAIR: I have got a couple of questions. They probably overlap in some ways, but one is how might improvements in road infrastructure impact on both speed limits and on driver behaviour? My other question is—you could take this probably answer both at the same time—and how do travel times affect the behaviour and safety of your residents on the roads?

Mr WHEATLEY: I have noted in my report that we can define particularly in urban roads where it is badly potholed and that, speeds are kept down because of that. Then we go and do a major road upgrade and we have a nice smooth tarmac and suddenly the speeds increase because drivers feel more comfortable, they feel like they are not going to damage their vehicle. There have been instances where people have complained, and we have had to get the police out there. We have had to do media campaigns because on a busy road it is only—people did not think it was 50 kilometres an hour and they were going fast. So that is one consequence. Travel times, I have

not heard that as a real big issue. They just want the roads to be better; better delineation and that.

The CHAIR: Was it your submission that also mentioned about overtaking lanes in country areas and it said part of what contributes to accidents is the fact that people I guess they get stressed, they get anxiety because they are stuck behind maybe someone towing a caravan or a slow vehicle and there is nowhere to overtake. So, what they will do is they will take a chance on somewhere where they probably should not overtake, and they do, and this is how accidents occur. So, if there were more overtaking opportunities, that would obviously reduce the risk and fatigue that is on the road.

Mr WHEATLEY: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: I would like the other councillors to also make a reply too please.

Mr BUSH: Yes, that was in our submission; the lack of overtaking opportunities. If you get stuck behind a small cattle truck or something coming into the sale yards, you might have to follow him for 20, 30k's on a sealed road. Very limited opportunities. So, you do take—well, I do not, but others they take the risk of actually going around. The truck will pull over to a certain extent, but the road is only 45 metres wide anyway, sealed section. So, there is that. Unfortunately, they take a risk and that is not good. So, there could be an opportunity for provisioning for say overtaking opportunities I guess and/or more truck pull over areas.

The CHAIR: Okay and you think—

Mr BUSH: Out on the rail line like the ARTC, they have loops on the rail line now and when something—the train will pull over or something like that. Trucks could pull over safely, let a small number of vehicles go past and then continue their journey.

The CHAIR: Yes, actually that is a good point there. What I have noticed in a lot of my travels, and I am sure others have as well, perhaps a little bit of [inaudible] of education out there to remind people of some courtesy. That perhaps they could pull over and allow some cars to go past but they just keep going and going and going. In some country areas yes, courtesy still exists I must say. Ms Toweel, do you have anything to add?

Ms TOWEEL: I agree, the opportunity for overtaking would certainly help in our area. We have the majority of our population who travel out of the shire for work. So, exasperation of travel times and lack of opportunities to overtake certainly increases the risks that people are willing to take to get to work quicker. There are limited opportunities to overtake on our rural network.

Mr SCOTT: I was just going to add to that comment a little bit. I can certainly appreciate your comment about overtaking. There is a road I drive to work every morning and I am very thankful if a truck pulls over as you get to the windy section to let me pass so I do not follow them at 40k's an hour through a very tight wind and quite a steep incline. So, it is very good. I think it is something where we have more formalised facilities that are intended around—and an education program around that so people know when they see one of these they can safely pull off, let people go around them, then they can pull back out and away they go would be fantastic.

I wanted to add to one of the comments earlier about crash data and one of the areas I think we do not actually have good visibility on is crash data on rural roads. In particular, a lot of them go unreported. The cars come off the road. The local residents do not report them for want of compliance or whatever issues. They probably know that they may have been exceeding the default speed limit in some extents. A lot of that information that we would rely upon for policing, for improvements, for all of the other systems that come around is actually missing because the residents are afraid or unwilling to report it in the first place. When we go out to communities and we have certainly done a lot of that post-bushfires, that is what we—we cop it very heavily around the condition and the safety of the roads because that is a lot of what adds to the resilience of these communities; if they feel like the main road back into town is safe and they can safely travel it then there is feeling of wellbeing within the community.

What we found manifested through the stress of the incidents that our community went through is that anger over the condition of the road and its alignment and the narrowness and the trees close to the edges and the steep embankments and all of those things that have always been there, that have always been risks. That has turned into community anger but when they were looking at it going; it is a real hazard and we are going but there is no safety record. There is no record of crashes. No one reports them. That was the feedback that they were giving to us. I think there is an element there of that. Just on the overtaking point, there again, a lot of our sealed road network in the rural areas does not have—does not meet the warrant for centre line marking. So, motorists are missing one of the most important signals to indicate whether it is safe to attempt an overtake and that is the broken centre line because there is no centre line. So, in some respects it is unsafe because people do not have that visual cue as to what is safe and what is not safe in that regard. Again, it comes back to improving our infrastructure.

The CHAIR: Okay.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: If I can ask MidCoast Council this question arising from your submission. I am interested to hear a bit of clarification or elaboration on this point where it is said that there would

be—and this is what they write, there would be a significant benefit if councils, if local councils had the approval to use their own mobile speed camera vehicles on the regional local road network. Can you elaborate on that one? I mean that is a point.

Mr SCOTT: This is about us being able to target those known areas in a way that is not resource intensive. So, police patrolling, those sorts of things, very resource intensive. Potential to use a mobile or a speed camera may enable us to target those back roads, the things that people know they are not going to get caught on. Where lo and behold one day they might get caught. It is to make change.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Has that already been proposed to various government departments?

Mr SCOTT: No, that was part of our submission there. At this stage it has not been something that has been widely talked about in any of the government departments. I do not know if the appetite from the government would be there to allow councils to do it. Certainly, we would not want it to be perceived as a revenue raising initiative by councils.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: It makes sense in the sense that the councils know best in terms of where the speed is happening and therefore have been allocating those vehicles in the right places.

The CHAIR: Okay. Well unfortunately that brings us to an end. Just getting started as far as I was concerned. 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 Committee staff. The hearing will now have a short break and we will return at 10.20.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

SAMANTHA CECCHINI, Road Safety Officer, Mid-Western Regional Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

MICHAEL JOHN KIDD, Deputy Mayor, Leeton Shire Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

TONY CICCIA, Councillor, Leeton Shire Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Would anyone like to do an opening statement?

Cr KIDD: We have prepared one sir. If Ms Cecchini would like to do hers first, she is most welcome.

Ms CECCHINI: More than happy to go first.

Cr KIDD: Samantha sorry.

Ms CECCHINI: Yes, so I just wanted to open by saying that I live in the regional town of Mudgee, which is in the Central West. I work as a road safety officer there, but I have spent most of my life in Brisbane. So, I have got a good understanding of the contrast between regional and metro driving behaviour. Our community in the Mid-Western region is a typical regional area.

Our road network is vast. It is close to 2500 kilometres and half of that is gravel. Our roads are not under surveillance, and they are vulnerable to exposure and damage with extreme weather. They have curves. They have crests. They have dips. Some were once horse and cart trails and pass through all sorts of terrain and landscapes. Our roadsides can be dense with vegetation and animal life, and we do our best to manage the network with the resources we have.

Like many regional areas, we have a culture of car dependence, mostly because of our lack of public transport and long commutes. We have a mix of drivers as well. We are a food and wine destination, so tourism is one of our main industries, but we are also a coal mining and farming district. So, the gamut of vehicle types on our roads is vast day and night. What I do want to say to the Committee before we start is that this is an honour to be involved in this forum and I welcome your questions and any insights that I can share. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Are there other statements?

Cr KIDD: Yes, I am happy to Mr Chair. I am Councillor Michael Kidd. I am standing in for our Mayor, Councillor Tony Reneker, who is away at the moment. I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to

comment on the inquiry on behalf of Leeton Shire Council.

We take the safety of our road network very seriously and have been campaigning for an inquiry for many years. We recognise that the effective speed limiting of roads helps to reduce the likelihood of an accident occurring and the consequences of serious road and pedestrian trauma in an event. When it comes to council led initiatives to set appropriate speed limits, we have been a collaborative forum in which to discuss these issues of our local area traffic committees. However, where the process has been led by Transport for NSW, there is a lack of genuine consultation and due process. The recent roll out of reduced speed zones around rail level crossings is evidence of this. The first time Leeton Council was told of changes happening throughout our area was when we received the work order to put the signs in place.

This is not good enough. Local councils are local experts. I stress that, local experts. We can provide context to specific locations through traffic counts that are not held by Transport for NSW, explanation of traffic behaviours and can provide information about accidents and near misses, that again are not recorded by the Centre for Road Safety. We are also the first point of contact for our communities. When these changes are rolled out to the regions, residents contact Council, not Transport for an explanation and to vent frustrations. Local councils can help get the message out about changes to traffic conditions but only if we are genuinely consulted. We support the setting of speed zones based on unique circumstances of the location. Factors such as road geometry approaching the zone, local traffic generators near the site and the driver awareness need to be looked at. Crash statistics should be used to back up these factors and a risk assessment undertaken for each individual site. Appropriate speed zoning at a state level could easily be achieved through a conversation and that is all we are asking. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Could I just remind witnesses just to identify yourselves before speaking to allow for the benefit of the Committee and Hansard. Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you Chair. I would just like to follow on from what Mr Michael Kidd was saying in his introductory comments. I also reiterate that point that is in the submission, Mr Kidd, you make a strong point that as Council, we find ourselves disappointed with Transport for NSW. The lack of genuine consultation. They are strong words and in due process fundamentally, we consider that councils should always be fully consulted, and I certainly agree. I was talking yesterday with former Mayor of Leeton, Paul Maytom, who also expressed frustration for lack of consultation by Transport for NSW. Can you maybe elaborate a bit more on this, Mr Kidd and express to us why Transport for NSW does not respond or does not consult local councils as in this case, your council?

Cr KIDD: Yes, thank you Shaoquett. What I would say is that—and I would refer to a letter we received from the Honourable Paul Toole MP, and I will just check the date on that. That was just before Christmas; 17 December last year. Basically, saying that, in the fourth paragraph actually that it says:

I'm advised speed zone changes are not a formal agenda at local traffic committee meetings and committee members have no delegated authority to recommend a change.

Now councils can initiate speed zone orders and the ideal—because that has to be in consultation with the police and Transport for NSW. The ideal vehicle is at a traffic committee. We also note that on the first page of Minister Toole's letter and that is just because it is right of me and it is quite easy to access, he also says, Transport for NSW—we are talking about a particular intersection of McKellar Road in Leeton. Transport for NSW consulted Leeton Shire Council in 2018 at a local traffic committee meeting. Council staff then installed 60-kilometre speed zone signage on McKellar Road on behalf of Transport for NSW. That is probably true, but the actual discussion was not minuted in that particular traffic committee meeting from 2018. It was not minuted. It may well have been discussed as an information item during general business. So that came up as a very quick mention at best in a traffic committee meeting in 2018. The next we heard about it was in 2021 when we received a work order three years later. Now we do not consider that that is adequate consultation.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Three years later? No.

Cr KIDD: Yes, sorry a brief mention three years before and a very long council term in between. Certainly, we do not consider that to be adequate consultation. We also would love to be involved in communicating changes. Even if we cannot change them, we would love to be involved with communicating those changes to our community. We are best placed to do that. Rather than just, I suppose you could say cleaning up the mess afterwards. As a local councillor we cop a bit of flak when we are out and about on such matters. Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Mr Ciccina I think wants to respond as well?

Cr CICCIA: Just further to Councillor Kidd's comments, as well as the consultation, we feel we would like to see more of the criteria used to adopt these changes to be able to assist. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Mr Butler?

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you Chair. Ms Cecchini, I drive through your LGA regularly on my way to

Sydney. I am very familiar with large parts of your road network. My question is probably more to Leeton, just given the nature of the roads like the Sturt Highway and Newell Highway, travelling through your electorate. I am very glad to hear you are talking about your unique circumstances and using evidence to make decisions.

I suppose what I am curious about is the appetite of the shire and of your residents on certain sections of road where there is good line of sight, where the road surface is suitable, where the markings are good, and the shoulders are very clear. Is there an appetite if the evidence supports it to look at a higher speed limit in those parts of regional New South Wales?

Cr KIDD: Leeton shire, yes, we believe so. There has been a rapid increase in technology in cars and while there may be a lag of a time between when vehicles with all that technology are in the majority, with that increasing safety in vehicles, with improvements in roads, we do believe that retention of things such as 110k limits between say in the Newell Highway particularly either south or north of here. We do believe in that because we are concerned with fatigue. Now, the statistics in our shire show that fatigue is neck and neck with speeding as a factor in accidents. That is the first thing. We also find that we are getting more people on roads for various reasons. Even just because of the hospital situation in places like us. We are putting more people on the roads.

We do not want to have people on the roads for longer periods of time and bringing that fatigue into play. We are very concerned about that and because say, even travelling between say Leeton and Wagga, which is 100k's all the way, because of the extra and extended speed zones on the periphery of built-up areas, those trips are taking longer now than they did 30 or 40 years ago, even though there has been significant road works done. Now the road works obviously contribute to safety. There is no doubt about that, but those road works are wasted if the overall commute time is longer. We see more people from our end of the world travelling to say Wagga to access health services and recreation and shopping and all sorts of things than we ever have before. So yes, we do support where appropriate, where safe, those higher speed limits absolutely.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you. Are you familiar with the concept of the 85th percentile, the idea that a majority of people—

Cr KIDD: Sorry to interrupt.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Sorry.

The CHAIR: Mr Ciccica was talking just a moment ago, wasn't he?

Mr ROY BUTLER: I believe so, yes.

The CHAIR: Yes, it is a little bit hard to see properly as well. Yes okay.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: No worries, Chair. I think that was Michael Kidd talking.

Cr KIDD: Yes, Councillor Kidd talking. Councillor Ciccica just before that.

Cr CICCICA: Yes.

Mr ROY BUTLER: So, I will just go back to the idea that when we look at driver behaviour when we are on a section of road and I see this especially out in my part of the world on places like the Barrier Highway, people generally drive at a speed that they see as a safe speed on the road. I was wondering if you have any data about what speed people are travelling on the Newell and Sturt, regardless of what the posted limit is?

Cr KIDD: Yes, so we believe that—and we did write in our submission that people do find a natural speed and we believe that on the whole, they are driving responsibly and sensibly. There will be extremes and you cannot cater for all circumstances, no but most people will find that right speed for the conditions.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I have got a question for both of your councils; how might improvements in road infrastructure impact on both speed limits and on driver behaviour? I might start with you first Samantha.

Ms CECCHINI: Of course. Yes, sorry can you just repeat the question? It crackled a little bit in my ear.

The CHAIR: Okay, sorry. So how might improvements in road infrastructure impact on both speed limits and on driver behaviour?

Ms CECCHINI: Okay, so improvements in road infrastructure will just improve things generally. In my opening statement I tried to impress that we have got quite a variable road condition across our network. We are very vulnerable in our region to extreme weather. We can be minus seven degrees in winter and 44 degrees in summer. Then you add floods, you add black ice, all of those sorts of things, the road infrastructure is very hard to maintain. Certainly, we are very open to the improvements into guard rails and improving the delineation markings on the roads where we can. Obviously, the shoulder widths and all of those sorts of things, we are very aware they have great benefit to the road infrastructure and how people stay safe on the roads. The practicalities of installing

that sort of infrastructure across 2500 kilometres of road is an immense task.

So obviously when we are looking at infrastructure improvements, it is on a priority basis. The priority usually will be based off crash results or on traffic volumes. Maybe not necessarily where the risk is the greatest if you get my meaning. There is a lot of factors to consider, and I think when it comes to speed limits specifically, driving to the conditions is in our vernacular. From day to day, you will not know how significant the potholes will be. You will not know if you turn the corner and there is going to be a big group of cyclists in the travel lane. Of course, there is always the risk of animal strikes and all sorts of other unpredictable hazards that even with the perfect road infrastructure and the perfect road condition, we are still at risk.

I am reluctant to agree to higher speed limits, but I think—I am getting the sense that we are looking at case by case in terms of increasing speed limit and I think that is a wise approach because if we have a blanket everybody gets 110 on a highway, that probably will not work here because our highways are not straight. They curve, they bend, they twist, and we are a single lane highway the whole way. So different situations in different regional areas but certainly the road condition is the number one complaint and issue that would be brought to council for attention. We do not like potholes, we do not like washed-out gravel, all of those sorts of things which is completely understandable.

The CHAIR: Yes, no thank you Samantha.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Mr Chair, may I just ask a follow up question of Ms Cecchini?

The CHAIR: Yes certainly.

Ms CECCHINI: Yes, please.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Ms Cecchini, just to clarify, certainly case by case is what we are talking about and that is why I put the question to Leeton Shire, where the lack of visibility is far greater on much straighter roads and your shoulders clearer. Having driven your roads extensively for the last couple of decades, I realise that the limits there are probably appropriate. I think you are going to see a downward trend—you will see a downward trend in built up areas, down to the 40s and 30s and I think that is appropriate, especially in main streets with angled parking. I suppose given the size of my electorate and the distances people travel, I am considering roads like the Newell Highway, the Barrier Highway and the Mitchell Highway, especially through the lens of their suitability for a new implementation of speed. That has obviously got to be driven by evidence and data and not just give an opinion. Thank you.

Ms CECCHINI: Wonderful, thank you.

Cr KIDD: Thank you. Yes, look obviously not all roads, as I said before, are suitable to lowering speed limits. In our shire, we are basically traversed by in part main road 539, which runs north/south through our shire and is starting to take on B-doubles and the larger transport units and obviously east to west, which is the traditional way through the MIA, from Narrandera through to Griffith. Generally, most of that road is long straights as you say, some of them up to about 17k's long even though we are not a big shire. I would suspect that certainly our heavy truck traffic and the majority of our traffic is concentrated on those two axes. Then of course you have got the smaller supply roads and those smaller supply roads, yes are busy with obviously domestic traffic but because we are a closely settled irrigation area, you have also got a lot of trucks, farm implements and things like that. They are certainly suitable on those connector roads.

So, we would reject increased speed limits on some of those roads. Also, a lot of them are quite narrow and because they have got irrigation channels on the side, there is a limited amount of space and clearance with those. For many years Leeton Shire advocated for the roll out of rumble strips and that sort of technology. Also, when you introduce the steel boardings on the side of the road, that sort of thing closes in the road space and naturally reduces the speed of traffic you will find because you do not feel like you are in such a wide-open space. So that is that natural control I feel happens from time to time. Those advances like the rumble strips, the new centre markings we believe make things safer. We have certainly been rolling out to the best of our ability even on our controlled roads, widened road verges and things like that to increase safety. Probably at this stage I would be best if I handed over to Councillor Ciccia, who is co-Chair of our local traffic committee. He has got a couple of points if that's okay.

The CHAIR: Yes, that is fine.

Cr KIDD: Thank you.

Cr CICCIA: Yes, just in regard to the infrastructure, a couple of things that have been brought to our attention is road widening as we have had an increase of heavy vehicles and also turning lanes, which as Councillor Kidd pointed out, main road 539 leads all the way through to the Griffith shire and there is a number of roads intersect with that road and that would create safer behaviour particularly for the heavier vehicles on the roads. I think it also would allow for greater compliance with the rules of the road.

Cr KIDD: Yes.

Cr CICCIA: Thank you.

Ms CECCHINI: If I may add to that another piece of infrastructure that is really valuable on our single lane highways is overtaking zones. So, a really valuable piece of infrastructure that appeals to us is an increase in the number of those.

The CHAIR: Thanks a million. It is very important to have that extra lane. That would certainly relieve a lot of I guess anxiety on the road. A lot of times you are stuck behind vehicles, and you are doing 40 kilometres an hour. I totally agree. Samantha, in your submission you mention about motorcycle crashes, they are highly represented in your region.

Ms CECCHINI: They are, yes.

The CHAIR: Can you just talk a little bit more about that as well for me please. You mention here also about access to help when things go wrong is believed to be a contributing factor.

Ms CECCHINI: Yes, so we have a very popular motorcycle route in our area called Bylong Valley Way and it flows through our LGA and into a few neighbouring LGAs as well. It is originally based off a horse and cart trail. It winds through some really beautiful countryside, but it is a very challenging motorcycle ride. For those who are interested in motorcycling it is a bit of a mecca to ride this particular road. The downside though is that a lot of these motorcyclists perhaps overestimate their ability to ride a motorbike for a long distance. Fatigue becomes a real challenge and because of its isolated location, there is not a lot of rest stop areas. There is only one business along the way that they can actually stop and get fuel, get food, use the facilities and all those sorts of things.

The CHAIR: Sorry, so how long is the route?

Ms CECCHINI: I would have to get back to you on the actual length of the route, but it is a solid day's ride. It is a challenge and that is what half of its appeal but because of its low traffic volumes and its location, the maintenance of this road is not always ideal. The road condition is quite poor, particularly at the moment after the extreme wet weather. A lot of works that are done to repair that are washed away in the next heavy rainfall. It is a bit of an ongoing challenge. It is one that Transport of New South Wales is very aware of as well. Last year, they commissioned a motorcycle audit, specifically on each bend, each corner, assessing the guard rail, the verge condition, all of that detail has been studied and a plan is being finalised to make improvements but because of its isolation it is out of mobile phone reception.

If a motorcyclist does fall off his bike, if he slips, or loses control, really it is down to luck if they can make a call for help or if somebody witnesses that crash to be able to organise help for them. So that is a concern. I guess a common factor in regional and country areas where getting response from an emergency service is delayed because of the distance and perhaps lack of telecommunication. There is a lot of compounding factors that just have resulted in that particular motorcycle route being very heavily represented in the crash data.

The CHAIR: No, thank you for that. I appreciate it. I ride a bike, so once again might sound like a good way to go but it might be too long for me.

Ms CECCHINI: I will get back to you on the actual length. It is a beautiful location and if all goes well, it is a lovely experience. If you do encounter a hazard of any kind, that gets you off your bike, it is not always easy to get help.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr ROY BUTLER: It is only about 115k's Rylstone to Sandy Hollow but then you have got the ride from either Newcastle or Sydney to get to the end and beginning points.

The CHAIR: Reverend Nile, do you have any questions?

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: Just a quick question; do you have any meetings with the motorcycle organisation, with the club discussing some of these safety factors?

Ms CECCHINI: Yes, so when we did this motorcycle audit with Transport for NSW, there was a lot of consultation done with experienced motorcyclists in the region. They were part of that audit. Also, in my role as a road safety officer, we are very aware that motorcycles are something that we want to work on and improve safety for. So, this financial year we have got funding from Transport for NSW to work in that space. That will involve working with motorcycle clubs in the area.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: Good thank you.

Ms CECCHINI: Yes. Does that answer your question?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes.

Ms CECCHINI: Yes, great thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In your submission Ms Cecchini, you indicate that the maximum speed limit of 100 kilometres outside of townships. Has there been or are there roads that could possibly be more useful for 110 speed limits around that area? Has there been suggestions for certain roads?

Ms CECCHINI: No. When I was preparing the submission for this inquiry, I consulted quite widely with our roads department and our works officers and just other stakeholders in our community. Yes, none of them felt comfortable with anything higher than 100 kilometres.

Of course, there is going to be a percentage of drivers who will abuse that, and they will use that buffer for want of another term where they will go faster. There are not really very many sections at all on any of our roads that are straight enough or clear enough. Perhaps in the overtaking lanes you might be able to get comfortably to a speed of 110 but the rest of it is just in my opinion not suitable.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Cr KIDD: Could I ask a question Mr Chair or just make a comment Mr Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes certainly. That's—?

Cr KIDD: It is Councillor Kidd again.

The CHAIR: Yes, thank you.

Cr KIDD: Samantha's last little talk on the motorcycle trails, demonstrates exactly why we believe local consultation is important because councils identify roads like that as being a priority for a number of reasons, including tourism and the like. We can see, because we are on the ground, because we talk to our emergency services and whatever. We can see those issues and they are not issues that you are going to identify by road counters and other forms of traffic monitoring. Again, it gets back to where we are coming from on the consultation basis and the use of local knowledge, which we consider to be a great asset or could be a great asset to Transport for NSW if used. Thank you.

The CHAIR: No thank you. I ask another question but now this is for both councils. How might the update of new and enhanced vehicle technologies impact speed limits in your communities? I understand that obviously a lot of infrastructure needs to be done just to maintain it and keep up to standards. Now obviously technology is moving, and I understand regional areas they are just not there. Can you perhaps tell us how it would look and how it would impact your communities? Do you want me to repeat the question?

Ms CECCHINI: Yes, well I am happy to answer first. This question has come up before about trying to improve the general safety and I guess the age of the vehicle fleet that we would have in our shire. I guess the brutal reality is it comes down to cost. We have car yards in our LGA that sell new vehicles, but it is cost prohibitive to most people to be replacing their cars with the newest and greatest technology. It will be a long time and a long time being 10, 20 years before all of the old pre-1995 cars are replaced with something that has more safety features in it. If we wanted to get a good price for a new vehicle, we would be driving four hours to Sydney, which is not really on the top priority list for most residents that would live here. So, you would be just making do with the car that you have. When I first moved to Mudgee, I was actually told does not matter what sort of car you are driving, you will hit a kangaroo. It will write your car off. So just do not worry. Do not get the fancy anything's. Just get a car that gets you where you need to go.

I was quite surprised at that, because I thought well, I have got to get the safest car. I have to fit it out with bull bars, I have got to have spotlights on it. But I was told it is just going to get hit by a roo, so do not worry. That was my introduction to regional driving out here. Of course, I have formed my own view on that since but yes, because such a big portion of our road network is not conducive to the technology yet. Things like lane assist and all of those sorts of things, it is not uncommon particularly now with the road conditions what they are, to need to leave your lane to avoid a significant hazard. You very quickly become conditioned to ignore the warnings. Rumble strips I think are a very useful asset but the car technology themselves is just not very useful. You just learn to ignore it. In time I think we will get there but in the short future I cannot see there being a big uptake or much value in the vehicle technology yet, in this area.

The CHAIR: Thank you Samantha. Councillor Kidd?

Cr KIDD: Thank you. Tech advances, look I did touch on that before and yes, I believe that does make traversing our roads a safer option in the future. As Samantha said, there will be a lag and I believe that is probably around five to 10 years. There will always be people that turn some of the equipment off because they get annoyed by the beeps. So, I think it is probably still a few years away before the majority of cars on the road have that sort of tech. A lot of it though also depends on, particularly lane departure depends on markings on the road. So adequate

and well-maintained centre lane markings and side of the road markings certainly help with that.

Another one that we were discussing just recently was GPS issues. If you do use the technology in your vehicle, what you find is that often your vehicle is telling you that—you become reliant on that technology over time as we all do, and we all rely on our reversing cameras and the like. Now what happens with the GPS tracking is often out here we will be told that we are in a 100k zone when may be an 80k zone or an extension of a 60 zone out past the normal town boundaries, the visible town boundaries. This is where I was going to before. You see streetlights; you see buildings turning up. You see the golf club on the edge of town and so you start to slow down naturally. When you extend those things out, you tend to miss those signs because you have not got the new speed posted – you have not got the visual clues there and your GPS is also telling you that it is still a 100k zone.

I think there is a problem there and I think that perhaps we need to make sure that the speed zones change and that is communicated with the people that do provide the sat navigation information that is used in the cars. Of course, there will be a lag on that because you might put your car in once or twice a year for servicing and your maps are only updated in that time. We do believe that increased technology does allow—in the wide-open spaces, which is very different to what Samantha is dealing with and thank heavens we don't have black ice and some of those other joys that you get in the Central West. We believe that it does make our roads safer and that over time that encourage—well, it won't encourage but makes driving at a faster speed if a road is up to it an option, yes.

The CHAIR: No, thank you very much.

Cr KIDD: Councillor Ciccia would just like to add to that if he could, Mr Chairman?

The CHAIR: Yes, certainly.

Cr CICCIA: Mr Chair, while we support technology, I feel personally that it won't replace a good road design and appropriate speed zones in appropriate areas, and it also won't reduce fatigue which in our shire runs—mirrors the number of accidents caused by speed. As well as that, our shire has a combined total of approximately 920 kilometres of road; 460 of those roads are unsealed. I don't think that lane-assist will work on gravel or unmarked roads.

While technology has its place, you have to have the infrastructure in place to support it. Another concern is our area, it probably would be dependent on a good mobile technology and in our area here it's probably not to the standards of metropolitan areas. Thank you, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I understand. It's a large state and a large country for that matter and I would say not all—one size fits all. Every region is different, totally aware of that. Same with technology, it is I guess more suited for your large areas, your city areas than what it is for your smaller rural and regional areas.

Unfortunately, we have come to the conclusion so 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, they will be forwarded to you by Committee staff if you wouldn't mind taking on those. We will now break to 11:15. Thank you very much indeed.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

DARRIEA TURLEY, President Local Government New South Wales, affirmed and examined

SHAUN CHRISTOPHER McBRIDE, Chief Economist, Local Government New South Wales, affirmed and examined

JOSHUA DEVITT, Manager Roads and Transport Directorate, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia, New South Wales and ACT, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you. Anyone like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

Cr TURLEY: Thank you, Chair. On behalf of the councils of New South Wales and the Road and Transport Directorate, we thank you for the opportunity to address the Standing Committee on Road Safety. My name is Darriea Turley, President Local Government New South Wales, and I am joined by Joshua Devitt, the Manager of Roads and Transport Directorate of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia, New South Wales and ACT Division.

The Standing Committee of Road Safety Committee Inquiry into speed limits and road safety in regional New South Wales is an important matter for Local Government New South Wales and the Roads and Transport

Directorate members. Road safety is not only a matter for road users; it also impacts the wider community. Our submission into this inquiry highlights the important role played by local councils as road managers and the need for increased state and federal government funding to maintain and improve road infrastructure and road safety.

The submission also emphasises the need for road infrastructure to be upgraded so that it accommodates emerging vehicle technologies for the safety of all road users. Furthermore, councils need resources to help them develop and implement road safety plans that complement the New South Wales State Government 2026 Road Safety Action Plan. The submission calls for a review of the New South Wales speed zoning guidelines to consider road conditions and infrastructure, especially with speed limits under 50 kilometres per hour and over 100 kilometres per hour.

This review should also extend to the complexities and delays experienced by councils when contacting Transport for NSW on request to review local speed limits. Local Government New South Wales and the Road Transport Directorate agree that speeding is a major contributor to road accidents, trauma, and death. However, we do not accept that a universal or blanket reduction in speed zones in regional New South Wales is the solution.

There are many other contributing factors including road conditions, poor signage, and driver behaviour. Local Government New South Wales and the Road Transport Directorate maintain that case-by-case review of speed limits in consultation with councils is the appropriate response. We welcome the opportunity to provide further insight to the Staysafe Committee on our joint submission. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. No one else? No. I might start by asking a question. Now, the Committee has heard that the road infrastructure in regional areas needs to be improved. Can you outline road infrastructure issues in regional New South Wales and how improvements to this infrastructure could impact speed limits?

Cr TURLEY: Thank you, Chair. I think regardless of the floods that we've experienced recently, we've had the drought that has certainly impacted our road conditions and for all of that, when I visit councils across the area, they tell their own stories. I remember one council, very small council, said we are responsible for the length of roads from—and it's Nowra Council I believe—to Townsville. That's how much infrastructure we have to maintain and to service.

The technical side of that question I will refer to my colleagues, and I just wanted to share that we understand it's not just about the floods that we've seen, the drought has impacted and that for all that there is so much infrastructure that councils must maintain under a limited budget. Joshua—

Mr DEVITT: Yes, thank you. The Roads and Transport Directorate have undertaken research into infrastructure issues across local government in New South Wales. We do a biannual report into the asset funding gap if you like. I've got a copy of our most recent report here with me from 2020. That indicates there is approximately a \$350 million funding gap for local roads in New South Wales.

It is worth noting that since we first initiated that project in 2006 the funding gap has reduced. However, it is still fairly significant based on the figures that we have determined. We are doing another round of that project over the next 12 months and based on the flooding and the other natural disasters I fully expect that that figure will probably actually increase, so the gap will increase.

The CHAIR: Okay. No one else?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: If I may, Chair. Just following up on Councillor Turley's comments, introductory comments, where she has expressed need for an increased state and federal government funding. That is a given for all local governments that there is always a need for increased funding, but Mr Devitt just indicated about the \$350 million. Is that the same figure that you're talking about, the required increase or \$350 million, and is that—what is the proportion from state and the Commonwealth are you seeking?

Mr DEVITT: We do not have a breakdown necessarily of where those funds come from. That figure is really tracking the gap in terms of maintaining assets at their current condition. So, if we were to talk about advancement of that, it would be a higher figure than that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is that separate to—Mr Devitt is talking about asset improvements. Is that different to your comments about increased funding from the state and federal—Commonwealth government?

Cr TURLEY: I'll refer that to Shaun McBride if that's okay. Thank you.

Mr McBRIDE: Yes. Look, there is a broader issue of financing local government. Local government gets a very small share of national taxation revenue. It is less than three per cent, and as Darriea had mentioned, we have a massive road network and that is probably the major asset, but we have lots of other assets that need to be maintained and renewed. There is a fundamental question about the adequacy and the financial sustainability of local government in Australia, so one is that the financial assistance grants from the federal government have been

declining in real terms for over a decade.

At the same time, New South Wales councils and also now councils in Victoria are subject to rate-pegging which restricts our ability to raise additional revenue to meet those declines in financial assistance. At the same time, the State Government is not filling those revenue gaps. It is a large and complex picture, but it is not just about roads, it is about the whole financial sustainability of local government.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Do you remember statistics? When you say not filling the gaps, what are those gaps and what are the percentages?

Mr McBRIDE: Well, Joshua has mentioned the 350-odd backlog for roads. We have not got an up-to-date version, but we have—our cost shifting research up through until 2016 indicated a total deficit of around \$1 billion. These are infrastructure backlogs of \$1 billion for local government, so there are some statistics around. This problem is not unique to New South Wales. Other states have the same struggle; it is recognised nationally that the financial sustainability of local government is challenged and it—we continue to advocate nonstop for changes to the system to improve a better funding deal—to achieve better funding arrangements for local government.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Can I just—on that point, I know that the State Government made a significant announcement with \$500 million for fixing country roads, or local roads rather, and \$500 million for fixing local bridges. Has that been realised in terms of actually being implemented on the ground or is that still works underway?

Mr DEVITT: Happy to take that one. The works are predominantly still underway and certainly—I know there's a lot of councils that appreciate the funding that has come out of those programs. It's not without its issues as well. I think there's some struggles around in the current climate there's a lot of issues around supply chain issues and cost increases that are impacting these projects.

I know of one council that was awarded 90 bridges under the Fixing Country Bridges Funding Program, and they are aiming to deliver those within the next two years, but as you can appreciate, a small regional council trying to deliver 90 bridges is a fairly significant amount of work.

The other issue that arose out of that was that having so many bridges, I suppose projects in the market at the one time, led to issues in terms of getting contractors and things like that in as well.

The CHAIR: Mr Butler.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair. Roy Butler, Member for Barwon. Thank you for being here today and thank you for your detailed submission. We've already talked about today the downward trend we're seeing in speed limits in built-up areas and accept that is a good thing because especially in angle-park areas no one feels safe barrelling through there at 50 or 60k's an hour, so that's a good thing.

I have been particularly interested in Local Government New South Wales and your position also the speed limits on roads like the Newell Highway, the Barrier, and the Mitchell Highways which are large, I suppose, freight thoroughfares, but also distances that people travel out west. We are not talking about roads here that are windy or particularly hilly, we are talking about roads with a large viewing distance ahead.

We have got developing vehicle technology and obviously increased vehicle—increased driver training between the 120 hours for L-plates and graduated system of Ps. I guess I am wondering if you guys have a position in terms of augmented speed limits on those roads during daylight hours and dry conditions, especially where those visibility issues are not there where you can see kilometres up the road.

Cr TURLEY: Look, we have a place-based approach and a risk-based approach, and we believe that one size does not fit all. I think the Chair referred to that earlier, and certainly our position, and we think that's supported by Leeton Council's submission, is around that one size does not fit all. All the rules—as all those rules do fail some of those position.

I have travelled on a lot of those roads and understand the challenges of that. For members of the Committee, I come from Broken Hill and travelled in the remote areas, worked delivering health services out there, and understand that each road has to be judged accordingly and that councils should play a role in that. I will ask Shaun McBride to comment.

Mr McBRIDE: I would just reinforce those comments that Darriea has made.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Okay. Just to follow up, if the evidence and the data supported a higher speed limit on some of those roads under certain conditions, Local Government New South Wales, myself would not have any objection to it.

Cr TURLEY: We would like the local council to be consulted at that time as well. I think the local council also gives sort of advice of what they understand are the road conditions as well, which would probably be part of the research. But certainly, our role is always saying please consult with your local council, make sure that you are

contributing to the debate.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Absolutely. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Picked up my thoughts on that one. What is your view of the use of variable speed limits in rural and regional areas? We have got them here in the city, and I think they work quite well depending on certain traffic conditions, weather conditions, and so forth, and I understand the cost involved. If that could be implemented, what should be on it?

Cr TURLEY: Joshua, do you want to—

Mr DEVITT: Yes. Happy to speak to that. Look, I think we acknowledge that there is potential for variable speed limits to be implemented in regional areas. I suppose there is some concerns around the practicalities of that and how you actually roll out the technology to permit that and also how you would enforce the varying conditions as well.

Our submission is strongly based around the idea of driving to the conditions and having speed limits and road conditions that reflect the changing needs of roads as people are driving along them. I think yes, it is something we are open to, but I feel that it would need to be appropriate for the particular site conditions.

The CHAIR: Okay, so if they are not going—was it fair to say how might the uptake of new and enhanced vehicle technologies impact speed limits in rural and regional areas?

Mr DEVITT: Yes. Look, I am happy to speak to that one as well. The emergence of connected and autonomous vehicles in various forms, and as we've outlined in our submission there are degrees automation from zero through to five.

The concerns that certainly I have around that are that the technology is still quite young and based on the data that Transport for NSW is publishing and some of the other data that is out there, I think realistically it is probably 20 years before where you're seeing widespread use of fully autonomous vehicle or almost autonomous vehicles. There are huge issues around getting the regional road network up to a standard that can accommodate those sorts of vehicles.

As is often talked about, the expectations on the current technology are that there would be a centre line, a marked centre line, marked edge lines along all the roads, so you would likely see that on your regional highways and things of that nature but not so much the regional road network. I think it is coming but there's a lot of work that would need to be done to bring the local road network up to a state to accommodate those vehicles which would also relate to the funding issues that we've discussed previously.

The CHAIR: Look, I get that. I see a lot of the conversations that occur with vehicle technology or even EV vehicles, for instance, and it is fine the discussion when you base it on the city but once you get outside the city out in rural and regional areas that technology and that implementation of infrastructure is not there, and that obviously impacts the communities out in those regions.

Mr DEVITT: Absolutely, and we certainly acknowledge the potential for social disadvantage that may come as a result of having expectations that these vehicles are rolled out state-wide, but the reality is that local communities will suffer because of that because the infrastructure won't be—

The CHAIR: It is not there. Yes, it is not there. Reverend Nile, did you have a question?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes, for Mr McBride. In submission 67 it states New South Wales councils are responsible for around 90 per cent of the road network with an estimated value of \$65 billion. How much of this funding comes from developer contributions and did Minister Stokes's reforms to developer contributions in New South Wales prevent you from maintaining, upgrading road networks?

Mr McBRIDE: I cannot give you a figure on what percentage of the road network has been financed by development contributions, but certainly most new roads are financed largely by development contributions. The provision of those roads is financed by development contributions, and they are critical to councils.

Of course, the roads are then handed over to council and council is responsible for the cost of ongoing maintenance, repair, and ultimately renewal. Yes, development contributions are critical to local government and roads is probably the largest item that the contributions contribute to, closely followed by things like drainage and so on. So, a very important thing.

Now, the development contributions debate as far as the proposed changes has not been finalised as yet. There are still things that are pending a decision. They were to have been finalised earlier this year; they were taken off the oven last year for a while. We are still awaiting the final decision on what the new system will be. We have insisted and we've had the previous Minister's assurance that no councils will be worse off under the changes but we are yet to see what the final changes will be. So yes, that is the current situation, but yes, they are critical, and we fought very hard during the process of formulating those changes to ensure councils would be no worse off.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair. We have heard from a number of councils today in regards to the default speed limit, especially on unsealed regional roads, and just interested in hearing your position on whether you think a hard limit is appropriate and part of that discussion, just in case you missed it, was there is probably a difference on the eastern side of the Great Divide and the western side of the Great Divide on whether a hard limit is a good idea or what that should look like, or whether a message about driving to the conditions and driver education is more appropriate. That is, I suppose acknowledging that an unsealed road can change overnight with rainfall or a B-double going down it and tearing it up, so interested to hear your position on whether you think hard limits or driver education and drive to the conditions would be a better approach.

Cr TURLEY: I'm going to throw that to Joshua first and then I will add comment to that.

Mr DEVITT: Yes, sure. No, thank you. Certainly, in regard to a uniform speed limit reduction or anything of that nature we would not support it. Our approach is more that each road needs to be assessed on its merits and speed limits are determined in accordance with local conditions. I certainly take your point that it is more than just speeds that lead to safer conditions. We subscribe to the safe systems approach which is safe speeds, safe roads, safe vehicles, and safe people. So, there is those four elements that need to work in conjunction to ensure that we have safer roads overall.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you.

Cr TURLEY: We believe driving to road infrastructure conditions is a priority and that for some of those areas, and as we are on the other side of the Great Dividing Range, that those conditions need to be understood. It is not just about speed, it is about the road conditions, or that understanding. So, driver education is also an important element to this and that for some of those areas you are very familiar with and the concept, as we said right through this and I think the Chair said at the beginning, one size does not fit all and for that we would support that looking at the infrastructure of those roads.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Mr Moselmane.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you. In one of your recommendations, it is recommended that the New South Wales Government provide increased funding for state roads in New South Wales blackspot program. That is an issue that goes right across all councils.

I even remember being on local government, that's an issue many, many years ago and it is still the same today. What is holding—what can Local Government New South Wales do to get the State Government to put money where it is needed in those blackspot programs? What is it that you need to do? You keep calling out for it but—

Cr TURLEY: Yes, and one of the first steps is ensuring that our voice is heard at every opportunity, like today, and that our continual lobbying, it is no doubt that there is a lot of work done that Local Government New South Wales is going behind a microphone and making sure that the issues are addressed and that we are articulating the debate and prosecuting the debate about attracting those funding for councils.

We have seen a big shift this year when we look at the funding that has been announced for the roads that are being impacted in the Northern Rivers, much-needed funding around these areas, but if we look across the whole road network, Local Government New South Wales has a lot of work to do, but more importantly, if we ask as politicians that you help our voice be heard, that you will make sure that—if we want to know that all our members drive on these roads, we want to make sure they are safe and that we will continue to come to Parliament to prosecute the case. I will ask Shaun to make comment to that.

Mr McBRIDE: Well, I don't think I have really got much to add to that. Our advocacy continues unabated. We are not discouraged. Look, occasionally there have been successes in road funding and we are happy, like with the Fixing Country Roads Program and so on, and Fixing Country Bridges Programs, they are all programs that have been welcomed by local government.

We are also grateful for the upsurge in road and road funding, which was a temporary state of affairs that occurred following the bushfire crisis and the COVID epidemic when there was a lot of stimulus money around, which was during that period, and councils were grateful for that funding. Now, that type of funding has now—that was one-off, it is now drying up so we will be back to the same position we were prior to the pre-crises period.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Does Local Government New South Wales have statistics as to what is required to address the blackspots program? Is it \$20 million, is it \$100 million? Is it a figure that you can actually ask the State Government, that is what we need to fix this issue?

Cr TURLEY: Joshua, do you have any figures?

Mr DEVITT: Look, not beyond the figures that I have already quoted.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: It changed after the last flood.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, but this is across New South Wales, whether those blackspots identified by many of those councils that obviously have figures attached to the identification of those blackspots. I am sure you could collate that information so that the State Government knows, okay you need \$100 million to address the blackspots program.

Mr McBRIDE: Yes. Shaun McBride. We do not currently have that data, but it is something we could look into.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, that would make your case stronger when you are a bit more specific as to what you are looking at.

The CHAIR: This might be the last question, I think, time permitting. What changes can be made so that local councils have greater involvement in the policy, infrastructure, and legislative changes required to accommodate new vehicle technologies, including connected and automated vehicles? I know we touched on the topic earlier.

Cr TURLEY: I will ask Joshua to comment on the technology and automated vehicles.

Mr DEVITT: Yes. I think we have touched on this a little bit already and certainly—

The CHAIR: Yes, we did.

Mr DEVITT: In terms of upgrading of infrastructure to support the vehicles. I suppose the main point is that local government is included in the conversation and that we are consulted on the role of technology and what is required from our—from the local community perspective in terms of what it would take to roll out these vehicles.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions? No? In that case then, I would like to thank each and every one for appearing today. I do not believe there's any questions on notice. No.

Cr TURLEY: Thank you for the opportunity.

The CHAIR: You are welcome. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. There were no questions taken on notice. Thank you all again for appearing.

Cr TURLEY: Thank you.

Mr DEVITT: Thank you.

The CHAIR: We're going to have a very short break and we'll return at 11:50. You've got five minutes.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

PROFESSOR TERESA SENSERRICK, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland, affirmed and examined

DR SHERRIE-ANNE KAYE, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland affirmed and examined

PAUL DAVIES, General Manager of Programs, Austroads, affirmed and examined

MICHAEL NIEUWESTEEG, Road Safety and Design Program Manager, Austroads, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you. Anyone like to start off with an opening statement?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Yes please.

The CHAIR: Sorry, before we start, when you answer a question if you just let us know your names just for the benefit of the Committee and Hansard.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Sure. I am speaking on behalf of Austroads, which is a member organisation comprising transport agencies across Australia and New Zealand. Collectively, our members are responsible for managing around 1 million kilometres of roads. Austroads was established to promote uniformity and consistency in the management of the road system.

The road safety and design program that I am responsible for is focused supporting our members' safety agenda. We do this by providing best practice guidance on road design and safety and supporting efforts to harmonise practice across borders. Globally, nationally, and here in New South Wales we have had governments declare visions of elimination of death and serious injury and in New South Wales the halving of deaths over a decade.

That is in—it echoes the comments of the Australian transport and infrastructure ministers when they endorsed a new National Road Safety Strategy. It is both good ethics and good economic management, noting the immense cost financially of road trauma, but more important than that is the preventable pain and suffering borne by members of our community, with hundreds killed each year in New South Wales and thousands seriously injured. I thank you for giving this public health crisis serious consideration.

In our submission, we talked about the central role of speed and that is the focus of your inquiry. Here in New South Wales, I just wanted to note that the rate of death is about double that of the best-performing countries in the world and the biggest difference between those countries and New South Wales is the way speed is managed. We simply cannot meet our targets unless we address the mismatch that exists currently between the road and the vehicle technology and the speed, we are expecting those vehicles to operate on.

There are several things that New South Wales can do immediately to have some quick impacts, and we have touched on those in our submission. My main comment here is that success is achievable but requires our commitment to strengthening the entire system. We cannot pick winners. It really needs a systematic approach and we have seen great success in Australia with things like rail safety and workplace health safety using that approach. We know it works. We have seen that in the transport system in Oslo as a good example, where they have almost eliminated death within their city.

While the tools we use here in New South Wales and Australia might be different to those in the best-performing countries, we have our own local version but ultimately the underlying approach will be very similar. We cannot achieve our targets unless we align speed limits with road design and vehicle technology, and we have to support drivers through education and enforcement.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Could I also remind everyone to give us a copy of your statement as well? Professor, or Dr Sherrie, anyone else got anything—opening statement?

Professor SENSERRICK: We consider our submission to be quite similar to Austroads and we're happy for Austroads to make the opening statement. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much and we will begin with some questions. Mr Butler.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair. Just context, Barwon is 44 per cent of the state right out west and we've got extensive networks of dirt roads and also some major arterial highways like the Barrier Highway, the Mitchell Highway, and the Newell Highway. You referenced—Mr Nieuwesteeg—is that correct?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Yes.

Mr ROY BUTLER: You referenced the better performing countries, and I was just wondering in terms of the speed limit in those better-performing countries, where does that sit?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: On a road like you are talking it would be those—so roads that are unmarked, often just unsealed, typically be 60k's an hour. For the better-quality regional roads, it would be 80 kilometres an hour. They will go up to 100 or 120 where they are providing a strong system of barriers and grade separation, avoiding intersections and so on. You can achieve higher speeds, but you have got to invest more in your road infrastructure.

Mr ROY BUTLER: So, if we focus on roads like the Barrier Highway which runs from Nyngan out to Broken Hill and then beyond, the Mitchell Highway or the Newell Highway. The Newell has had extensive work done on it in terms of overtaking lanes and barriers and rumble strips and those sorts of things. Is that road comparable to some of those roads with a higher speed limit overseas?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: I am not terribly familiar with the road, but the underlying premise is you have got to avoid oncoming traffic from interacting with each other and so a barrier in the middle of the road kind of guarantees that from—almost guarantees that that will not happen. That is really important if you want to operate beyond 80k's an hour. Really, in the Scandinavian countries they are saying 80 kilometres an hour they are willing to tolerate, noting that vehicle technology is improving, and the more modern vehicles are able to apply some braking at the last minute and get the speeds down to around 70, which is a speed that the vehicle is more able to cope with.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Like collision avoidance systems, lane-keep assistance, ABS?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Yes. They will all contribute. I suppose that goes back to the opening statement I

made around you have got to do things systematically. You cannot rely on one part of the system.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Right. I think I can pre-empt the answer that you are going to give me to this question. In terms of data on fatality or increased injury at say 110 versus 120, for example, I am guessing your answer is going to be well, it depends on the infrastructure. I guess—I read your information about kinetic energy, and I absolutely understand what you are talking about, the 44 per cent increase between 50 kilometres an hour and 60 kilometres is marked, that is big.

In terms of every crash is different, how much speed people can wash before the impact, all that sort of thing, is there any data on increased fatality or injury at that high limit of 120 versus 110? And I suppose I am thinking about examples in Australia like in other states where we might see speed limits for 130 on similar roads.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Specifically for Australia, 110 versus 120 you are not going to find the data on that because we have not—I do not believe we've done exactly that, but we have referenced a study from—I referenced it in the—yes, a study from 2019 which really looked at a lot of different studies. It is compiled a whole lot of studies, so it is a meta-analysis of existing studies. The relationship is really, really clear. When you increase speeds, you increase trauma and decrease speeds, decrease trauma. You will get some variation based on maybe local conditions but when you put them all in, they all match that—it is a lawlike thing, it all comes back to physics. It's not linear, no.

Mr ROY BUTLER: It gets worse the faster you go.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: It gets worse, yes. That is that kinetic energy escalating to speed. Energy does not increase linearly.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Fair enough. Obviously, and I will give up in a second, Chair, representing an area of New South Wales that has vast distances to travel that run from Nyngan to Broken Hill, for example, you are talking five, six hours to get out there. It is a long time on the road and there are stretches of that road where you can see for kilometres ahead and there is very little foliage, especially through drought there is even less.

I suppose what I am interested in knowing is if the speed limit can be safely augmented on those stretches of road with a view to decreasing travel time but also allowing people to get around what are increasingly—I think we are out to 46 metres now for a triple combination—allow people to get around those vehicles without—with being able to exceed the 110 because obviously the truck travels at a true 100 with its calibrated speedo whereas the vehicle will typically underread, so 110 might be 104 in ground speed, so allowing them to get around without fear of penalty. They are the sorts of things that I am focused on. Have you got any opinion on that?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: You can provide that, but you have got to be willing to spend the money otherwise the cost is borne by those who do not make it, who fail—something goes wrong on their journey. That is how it operates now. There is a big cost, but it is borne by a small proportion of the population. If you want to invest in that higher speed you've got to provide the infrastructure to go with it.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Okay.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: So yes, it can be done.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Can be done. Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: Yes, Reverend Nile.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you. Just following up some of the reports. Speed behaviour remains a major contributing factor to road fatalities and injuries in Australia and it has been estimated that speeding behaviour contributes to about 41 per cent of road fatalities and 24 per cent of serious injuries in New South Wales each year. Is speeding alone a major factor or are there other contributors such as the design of the roads? In Europe they have far higher speed limits than in Australia and far less fatalities. Should we be ploughing more funding into the design and maintenance of roads? It's a general question.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Yes. It is quite broad, and I might invite our—I do not know if it was directed specifically for Austroads but we can probably hear from our friends in Queensland as well. I would just say that there is a good argument to spend more on the roads and that will result in less trauma. Speeding behaviour is an issue, and we can do much better in our enforcement. Enforcement needs to be randomised, unpredictable, and there needs to be a very—people need to have a good sense that there is a good chance of being caught here, and there are new technologies that are available and being explored. It is a really important focus area for our members and something that our Road Safety Taskforce is quite focused on. I notice Professor Senserrick who has got her hand up. I might leave it there.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIR: Is it professor or—

Professor SENSERRICK: Thank you. I just wanted to add to that because there—we commonly hear about European statistics but if you look at them, they are often reported by population level, and when you actually look at the rates per vehicles, per the number of vehicles, they are not so great. Australia still performs very well. There is a misperception that there is less risk in Europe for some areas where they also use other forms of transport a lot more than we do in Australia. We have a very high reliance on private passenger vehicles. I just thought it was worth noting that, thanks.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: I will also add one little anecdote. We did some analysis in Victoria on the Hume Highway, and the Hume Highway outperforms the un-speed-limited autobahns in Germany that are often seen, or perceived to be very safe, but they are operating at speeds that—you lose that benefit of the safety level, and the Hume Highway performs better.

The CHAIR: Interesting.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes. If I may ask this question in a different way. In your view, does the use of variable speed limits increase safety? The argument is that it is—it allows people to understand a road dependent on the conditions and so forth, but does it really increase safety concerns?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: I think it depends on what you're doing with the speed limit. So, if you're varying it to a safer amount or if you are—let's say you set it lower—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What is a safer amount, yes.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Yes, and then when the conditions are right you set it higher because you can safely accommodate that, well, that is a good use of the variance. I think that is what our road designers are trying to do. They are trying to say well, let's reflect when the risk is higher and let's lower the speed or vice versa. So, look, it all depends how they're used.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That applies the same in the regional roads, are you referring to city roads as—

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: I think when we talk variable speed limits, we tend to imagine those ones where you've got an electric sign that lets people know. There are other situations where we say after dusk, you might have two speed limits on the same sign, and they are not used that much here in Australia, but they reflect different levels of risk at different times, which is appropriate. There is certainly an opportunity there that we could explore.

The CHAIR: You are just saying in wet-weather conditions and so forth so even if your car maybe—perhaps because of the cost involved in having say variable speed limits like we have here in the city, you could have the same thing, if you like, dusk a certain speed, or wet-weather conditions you reduce your speed and you have the two signs to accommodate the conditions.

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Yes, I've seen that in New Zealand.

The CHAIR: Yes, okay. What is in New Zealand?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: In mountainous areas where you often get a fog or wet conditions, so it does exist.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Professor Senserrick, were you going to—any comments on that one?

Professor SENSERRICK: I was actually thinking about the earlier comment around the 130-kilometre roads and that the sense that it might save time and fatigue for having those—being able to travel faster on those roads. And so, I was thinking there is—I have seen that you have had other submissions that refute that, that it is not showing up in studies but not necessarily explaining—I am from a psychology background—that there is also cognitive fatigue, and the faster that you are travelling, the faster that you are having to cognitively process information. So, doing that for an extended period of time is also another type of fatigue that can make you distracted and inattentive. So, if you have those very long highway stretches, even though you are going faster and you think you will get there quicker, you might not be quite as alert or performing as well on that journey as you think you may.

The CHAIR: Okay. So, how does new vehicle technology apply to that?

Professor SENSERRICK: It is not my specialty, so I'll ask Sherrie to respond to that one, thanks.

Dr KAYE: In terms of vehicle technology there is some research that is positive about it. The only thing is at the moment in Australia our current vehicle fleet is 10.1 years and as noted in Austroads's report, it will be

about 20 years for the vehicle technology to have good effect. I am talking in terms of vehicle technology, advanced driver assistance systems as opposed to automated vehicles which we do not know when they are going to be around; it could be a long time. So, there is encouraging results that vehicle technology will help but we cannot just rely on vehicle technology, we have got to incorporate the whole safer road system approach.

The CHAIR: Thank you indeed. Mr Butler?

Mr ROY BUTLER: No, I am right at the moment. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Mr Moselmane?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I am good thanks, Chair.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Yes, and I am fine.

The CHAIR: Okay, thank you. In what ways can vehicle technology be integrated with road infrastructure to make roads safer? Maybe we have touched on it a little bit more but if we could have you possibly elaborate a bit more?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: I would point out the—point to the ISA technology, Intelligent Speed Assist. Given your focus on speed is a—it is an obvious advantage of the vehicle to be able to know the speed that it is operating in, and you will see again a big difference here in Australia compared with—for example, I hired a very cheap car in Italy and that car was telling me the speed limit and when I was exceeding it, which was a great help, but that is not happening here in Australia.

The vehicles have the technology, but we have got to build the speed maps and maintain them, and we are not quite there yet. There is a real opportunity there that we could capture pretty quickly, and I think you heard from previous submissions, but for the cars to be able to read the road, you get more advantage out of those new technologies around lane-keep assist. So, yes, the opportunities, we can prepare for them, and we can catch up to some extent to some of the other countries around. Yes, that is—I think I will leave it at that.

The CHAIR: We are such a large place, aren't we? We're a large country and a large state in saying all that. So, if there were to—wouldn't it be cheaper obviously if when they're building new roads to implement that today, that new technology, or even if they're upgrading roads, they could put that in place, at least slowly over time it would be implemented?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Yes. That is when you do it and through your maintenance programs. You have got to articulate what you want for your road, and our guidance tries to provide that sort of direction to road managers. You can achieve a lot using existing programs, but you have got to plan it. You have got to be very intentional about it.

Professor SENSERRICK: If I could—

The CHAIR: Yes.

Professor SENSERRICK: Apologies, I cannot see the others in the room. There are some low-cost infrastructure treatments that are very effective without needing a mass of materials and they are mostly relying on painted lines. So, even just having painted lines on the edges of the roads when they are not—when you do not have the perfect sealed sides will be useful for vehicles to detect the edges, but also, they're useful for drivers. And having painted wide centre lines, for example, that has been done on the Bruce Highway in Queensland, has been dramatically effective in preventing head-on crashes, just painting two wide lines down the median as well as the side lines.

I think there are ways that you can visually train the driver. If you are painting around a sharp bend in a way that makes it look very narrow, the drivers will naturally slow down. So, while doing all the advanced technologies will take some time, and advanced treatments, if you are building those new roads even as simple as making sure they look narrower and to speeds that are acceptable. Because we know whatever speed you set there is a certain proportion of the population that is going to exceed those speeds, so dropping a speed by 10k does not mean that all the traffic will naturally reduce by that amount, but it will keep it at a lower threshold.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Professor. And obviously, you have just answered the question—the next question I was going to ask, and that is very good. That is very good.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: One question.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have a question too.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I will just ask a quick question from the submission.

The CHAIR: And then we'll go to—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Professor Senserrick, in your submission you say—I am

interested in reading this comment that low-level speeding behaviour remains largely acceptable in Australian society. Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Professor SENSERRICK: If you are asking me, it is a bad thing. We know a lot of the crashes and the trauma that does occur can be only—well, I say only—within that 10k over the speed limit. There seems to be a sense that that is an acceptable threshold. Whereas a lot of the crashes and road trauma happen in that threshold. So, understanding that it is that complex—we cannot break the laws of physics. Those extra layers of speed mean the difference in being able to respond in time. I think hand in hand with generally, we are not good at leaving a safe enough distance from the cars in front.

So, the faster that you are travelling, the less chance you have to be able to respond and react in time and those closer distances that we travel are intertwined with why speeds are—really are—addressing one of the points earlier, they are one of the most—the highest contributing factor to crashes. And yes, other factors come in play but if you are travelling slow enough that you can stop and respond, the crash can be avoided. So, it is quite an essential relationship.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that. Thank you. Just before I go to Reverend Nile, Professor Kaye, did you want to add anything further to that?

Mr DAVIES: The professor actually very eloquently made the point that I was going to make.

The CHAIR: She certainly did. She certainly did.

Mr DAVIES: So, I will leave it there.

The CHAIR: Okay. All right, thank you. Honourable Fred Nile.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes, just a follow-up question. There is a strong relationship as we know between speed and road safety. No other road safety risk factor has a more powerful impact on crashes or injuries than speed. Based on police-reported crashes of all fatalities, the crash rate for 16 to 19-year-olds is nearly four times the rate for drivers 20 years and older. Should we be looking at more mandatory driver training and follow-up assessment of drivers of this age group?

Professor SENSERRICK: I am happy to take that question. It is the specialty area that I have worked in for many years, and unfortunately, we do not have a magic bullet in terms of a driver training course that works, mostly because we can train people and have them display correct behaviours, but it really depends on what they then go and do that matters. There are types of training that we embed as young people get their licence when they are most willing to accept that they are a learner and need to be taught new things, and that is where we really target really understanding those things such as following distances and speed. So yes, that is currently available in our approaches to driver training, to—for training for driver licensing.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Any more questions? We have got time for another question yet. Mr Butler.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Just in terms of variable speed limits, we spoke about this earlier, I am happy for anyone to respond. On heading north from Sydney, just north of Brooklyn there is a variable limit there of 90 when it's raining and 100 when it is dry, and then on the Bells Line of Road varies between—I think it goes down to 60 and up to 100 in places, but in the 100 zone it is 90 when it's raining and 100 when it's dry. That coupled with—I don't know if you know but on the M1 you've also got the chevrons and the recommendation to keep two chevrons apart. Those sorts of things, do you see any data, any change in crash data, fatality, trauma data as a result of those variable speed limits and the chevrons? Has there been a trend or a change?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: I am not aware of any research or evaluation of those, sorry.

Mr ROY BUTLER: We spent the public money, but we didn't actually work out if we were doing anything with it?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Don't know.

Professor SENSERRICK: Have seen those chevrons trialled in Victoria, so the fact that they then rolled out into New South Wales would suggest to me that there were good results because we are good at sharing our learning across—around the country through bodies like Austroads where all the states and territories get together.

Mr ROY BUTLER: For the record, I think it is a great idea. We were always taught in the Army three seconds. I think the common teaching is two seconds, but we were always taught three seconds and increase with speed. I just wondered if there was any data that said that that was working and something that should be rolled out more broadly.

Professor SENSERRICK: I think any measure to increase the public understanding that your following distance needs to change depending on what speed zone you're in, that you cannot travel at the same as a 60—

Mr ROY BUTLER: Temporarily lost the professor.

The CHAIR: Sorry, Professor, we have had a slight technical problem.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Let's hope that doesn't happen with our advanced technical cars.

Mr ROY BUTLER: While we are waiting for Professor Senserrick to come back, do Austroads have any position on the chevrons and the variable speed limits?

Mr NIEUWESTEEG: Look, it is possible that we have looked at that before. I can take it on notice.

Mr ROY BUTLER: That would be great. Thank you. You're back, Professor.

Professor SENSERRICK: I apologise. I wasn't sure what end I dropped out for a moment.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Had you completed your response?

Professor SENSERRICK: Yes, thank you.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. 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. I believe you just took a question on notice—will be forwarded to you by the Committee staff. We will now break, and we'll return back at 12:25.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

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

GRAHAM PRYOR, National Liaison Officer, National Motorists Association, sworn and examined

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

Mr LANE: Thank you. I may do very quickly, information that was not on our thing. My nephew is a fully qualified crash examiner with the West Yorkshire Police in the UK. He is fully qualified traffic officer and is in charge of a large section of that large area. In the UK, there is a national standard and that shows that about 13 per cent of fatal crashes involve exceeding the speed limit.

Now, the anecdotal evidence from my nephew—and I repeat, anecdotal evidence from it other than published—is that about two-thirds of those the speeding is caused by factors such as intoxication, stolen vehicles and joyriders and a number of other things, including suicide. So, that is a very different picture we have here and that is one of the reasons why on our last page we have the criteria—

The CHAIR: That has been mentioned before, suicide.

Mr LANE: Suicide is a significant serious problem, I understand, but that is anecdotal evidence, firstly as a scientist I deal between real and anecdotal.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Perhaps we will be able to start some questioning. I might just ask a couple of questions quickly then I will pass it over to my colleagues. I was just interested to read in your submission there, can you expand on why the speed limit restrictions on learner and provisional drivers should be removed?

Mr LANE: Yes, it is because you have the situation where you're teaching your learner driver at the limited speeds that they've got, which currently is 90k, and then they go out—they spend some time on the road and then when they get their full licence, all of a sudden, they can do the full speeds. There is nobody teaching them. There is no way legally you can teach them to drive at that higher speed, 100k on ordinary roads, 100k on the freeway. For this reason, I think they make a lot of errors.

So, the problem we have with them at 90k on say freeways is that trucks and everything have to go around them, and the temptation for the people that is to travel at the normal speed of the road. It is—bear in mind, it is—you are wasting an opportunity to teach the kids properly and if you do that, they have to learn by themselves.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What do you mean by—

Mr LANE: Too often by accident.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What do you mean by teaching them properly?

Mr LANE: Teaching them properly to observe the higher speed, to note what happens at the higher speed when you are on a road with corners and bends and bumps so that they understand what life is like.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: And how do you propose we do that?

Mr LANE: Well, if you were using any sort of speed then you can teach them at the higher standard. In the UK, for example, there's no limit there. Children can be, or rather learners can be taught on an ordinary divided road at 70 miles an hour, 110k, 112k, but they never used to be allowed to be taken onto motorways. The rule has been changed now so that they can go on a motorway if they are accompanied by a licensed professional instructor. So, that is an improvement there.

The CHAIR: In your submission you also recommend not using variable speed limits on regional roads other than in school zones. Can you perhaps elaborate a bit more?

Mr LANE: Because of the expense. The previous people were talking about one of these on the M1 north of Brooklyn, but that is a restricted area. If you were going to do that throughout the country, you will have an enormous amount of expense. I wanted to see if that expense might be better paid on making—removing some of the potholes and the other depressions that we have got. I can see the use of it but those—it is a very big expense for probably a very little return. If we taught people to drive properly, you have got a lesser problem.

The CHAIR: And obviously upgrade the infrastructure.

Mr LANE: Yes.

The CHAIR: Okay. Mr Butler, any questions?

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you gentlemen for your submission and for appearing here today. I am very interested, I suppose representing regional—a very big part of regional New South Wales with large distances to cover, those like the Barrier Highway, the Mitchell Highway and the Newell Highway. In your experience in travelling internationally, are those roads comparable with roads around the world that sustain a higher limit?

Mr LANE: There are differences all around the world. One of the things that you have in roads here is you have got a much wider runoff area. Most roads have got the vegetation fairly well back from the road so if anybody makes a mistake they go—they have got time hopefully to correct it.

But we also do have the problem of kangaroos and wallabies taking leap across. That was—I've had personal experience of that. There is no way of missing them; they come out and you just—no matter what speed you are doing, you are not going to miss them, that is the way they jump. Some roads are rather bumpy and ill-prepared, edges are a bit rough, but the way you counter that is having an edge painted line which helps keep your attention onto where the bit is. The truckies call it the fog line because they can see it in the fog.

The CHAIR: What ones are they—the fluorescent sort of yellow colour?

Mr ROY BUTLER: White and sometimes yellow.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LANE: Personally, I prefer white unless you're in snow country. It's easier to see with my eyes. Certainly, my experience around the world is that white is easier to see than yellow.

The CHAIR: Sorry, proceed.

Mr LANE: No, that's all right. There is—there's a lot of instances where you do see things like adverse camber on a corner, that sort of problem, but in general our roads—there is balancing factors. You get much closer vegetation in Europe; you do not get kangaroos, but you do get wild boar in some parts of Europe. They are pretty hefty if anybody hits them.

Mr ROY BUTLER: A bit like hitting a wombat; I think it takes out your suspension pretty quickly.

Mr LANE: Well, they are about the size of a wombat too.

Mr ROY BUTLER: So, looking at—let's focus particularly on the Barrier Highway which is a very long stretch of road running from Nyngan out to Broken Hill and beyond. There are distances of kilometres of visibility, the vegetation is quite sparse. It is not heavily treed normally along the sides, there are sections.

The other thing I suppose is I think that you said, Mr Lane, that wildlife strike tends to be an issue, mostly at dusk and dawn and evening as opposed to daylight hours, dry conditions, which is I suppose my interest in this inquiry is seeing—in teasing out what the evidence says about sustaining a higher limit on those roads during daylight hours, dry conditions for A-class vehicles, which also means that they get around the 46-metre triple

combinations a bit quicker as well without risking their licence. I suppose I am interested if you've got any opinion on those daylight hours, dry conditions, and A-class vehicles on those roads?

Mr LANE: Yes. Again, a lot of this is a matter of proper driver training, that you know that if in the night you cannot see as far, although some headlights, they are pretty good. Some of them are very good. Certainly, the higher speed gets you—allows you to go around those B-doubles and road trains, even a semi, in a very quick time. Certainly, way back in the early '60s when I was being taught, it was if you were overtaking you go and you put your foot down and get around as quickly as possible back to your own side of the road.

If you are restricted to the nominal speed limits here, you can be on the wrong side of the road for a kilometre. That means you have got to have a sight line of two kilometres and not many people's eyes are that good or the positions are very good. So, consequently, the restrictions on speed on that type of road is actually, in my view, creating a danger unnecessarily. That is why we advocate for the higher speed limits there, particularly when you are overtaking. Some of the countries in Europe, as I mentioned, allow an extra speed. Spain, I think allows 10 kilometres an hour. But then the enforcement in Spain is very limited anyway. Which is even worse, or better, whichever way you'd like to look at it.

Mr PRYOR: I'll tell you a little example to the question you are asking, is what happened with the speed limits in the Northern Territory. At one stage it was derestricted outside built-up areas and then a new government came in and they thought right, I am going to have to introduce a speed limit and we will make it 130 kilometres an hour in most cases and what happened was fatalities went up. Now, that is contrary to what all of you would have believed before you hear about this, and it had been told by those so-called safety experts, but in the Northern Territory the number of fatalities in 2006 was 44.

Having introduced the maximum speed limit of 130 kilometres an hour. Fatalities went up to 57 in 2007, which is a 29.6 per cent increase. In the second year, which is 2008, the fatalities went up to 75, and that is an increase of fatalities of 70.5 per cent. So, remember, we are not measuring revenue or anything like that, we are measuring human lives being lost because that government believed that lowering the speed limits was the only way of improving road safety. What happened then was at the end of the three years change of government, that speed limit was removed and put back to normal, and guess what, fatalities went back to normal.

The CHAIR: So, you're talking about when you went back to it, you are talking about the Cannonball Run up in the Northern Territory?

Mr PRYOR: No, I am talking about the speed limits for ordinary people like you and me driving on the road in the Northern Territory. Originally, once you were outside the built-up area it was derestricted, similar as it was in New South Wales many years ago.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: And the reason that you say—

The CHAIR: If you gradually—you follow up—it's safe, you stay at a safe space, and then if the police pulled over you have to prove that you were driving in a manner safely. Yes, common sense.

Mr PRYOR: Yes. There was a lovely set of stats to prove what your line of argument is, that in areas like you are describing where there's no cross streets, wide-open spaces, clear vision, the speed limit can be much higher than say 100 or 110.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: The reasons you are saying that New South Wales are not lifting their speed limit because of ideological—because of ideology, in the ideological position with the governments? Is that right? This is what you were saying in your submission.

Mr PRYOR: Well, that is one way of putting it. More broadly, what has happened is in New South Wales you have bifurcated the definition of speeding. Speeding to most people means exceeding the speed limit. No, on the New South Wales Government website it says, "exceeding the speed limit or driving too fast for the conditions".

The CHAIR: The conditions.

Mr PRYOR: Now, having bifurcated the definition, that then allowed people to manipulate statistics. So, instead of just being say 5 per cent of fatalities for exceeding the speed limit, other things were introduced such as "road conditions". Let's say black ice on the road, spilt diesel fuel, gravel on the road, slippery conditions, that box of fatalities was added in with exceeding the speed limit.

Another box of fatalities that was added in was the "looked but did not see". So, somebody driving a car says I looked, but I did not see the car on my right. So, that category was included with speeding or driving too fast for the conditions. A total of four extra boxes of statistics were added with exceeding the speed limit to create the magic total of between 41 and 46 per cent depending on the particular year. What I and people like me are saying is you've created a myth.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: But no matter which party is in government, they are still

supporting the maximum speed of 110. Is that right? So, is it really ideological or is it responding to public demand?

Mr PRYOR: Let's not get bogged down with ideological, let's—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: [inaudible] but some of the words are missing, that is all.

Mr PRYOR: I've gone through how that false statistic of over 40 per cent of fatalities being caused by speeding or is a contributing factor. Now, with that background you will find that explains a lot of the answers that we give. Another example of Australian university research was Monash University Accident Research Centre, and they did research into ISA, which means Intelligent Speed Adaption. Under that system, the satellites in the sky control the speed of every vehicle on the road—every vehicle, not just those complying with the speed limit. That meant that nobody could exceed the speed limit.

Their research showed the maximum reduction would be eight per cent in fatalities. So, that is the truth. The truth is a maximum of eight per cent of fatalities are caused by exceeding the speed limit and my question is what are we doing about the 92 per cent of other causes, because for as long as we focus on speeding, and that is the only road rule we focus on because we can measure it easily, for example, as long as we do that, we are not paying any attention to the 92 per cent of the real causes of most of the fatalities.

The CHAIR: Yes. Amazing how statistics—

Mr LANE: If I could add just something to that. That eight per cent is consistent with what my nephew tells me about the actual caused by speed not caused by other events so my nephew, like me—he's a qualified scientist as well. The issue on speed unsuitable for the conditions was having a local area where a road was resurfaced but about 18 months later people started sliding off when it was wet. The usual complaints were people exceeding speed limits, et cetera, when factually it was not correct. I went on the—at the time I was sitting on the local traffic committee down there in the wet in my car with the tyres I had got, experience I had got, and I could feel the car just wobbling a little.

The CHAIR: Was that a pothole that was repaired?

Mr LANE: No, there was no potholes. It is just that the road surface had got polished and when it was wet it was like driving on ice. So, people were not driving too fast for the conditions that they could see. It was just that the road surface had degenerated. Unfortunately, at that time once I found out there was no standard for grip on the road surface. Are we looking at the full causes of crashes instead of just pointing the finger at something? We should be doing it properly. This is one of the things that as a scientist I find very, very difficult is to comprehend how road safety people can come up with some of the definitions that they have there. If I had done that as a school project, I would have been severely punished. That's bad, it is really bad.

The CHAIR: It is a good point that you make, the conditions, do you change actual materials, everything else they use in the roads, they change continuously throughout the whole country, to be quite fair.

Mr LANE: In this case a particular section of road was resurfaced with a material that involved a lot of slag from the steelworks and that was about six or seven years ago, and there is no problem since.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr LANE: But that illustrates one of the issues that I think we understand that the assessment of road—of accident causes is leading us in the wrong direction. The 110 maximum speed limit in New South Wales I think is a part of legislation, which we suggest should be removed.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Before I pass you over to Reverend Nile, I know in Europe there—I think it was in Italy, some of the highways there—and mind you, I think it's six lanes and so forth—but they actually had three speed limits. It had an 80-kilometre speed limit, I think it was a 100-kilometre speed limit and 130-kilometre an hour speed limit.

Mr LANE: It's only 130 in most case but trucks are limited.

Mr ROY BUTLER: This had three different speed limits.

Mr LANE: In most cases you have parts of the autostradas there.

The CHAIR: [inaudible] autostrada, that is [inaudible].

Mr LANE: Because in particular conditions that may be particularly difficult, close to a city, for example. Those sorts of issues, but yes, that is not particularly variable speed, it is just a different—

The CHAIR: Yes, it was a different speed, yes, for different vehicles I guess and—

Mr LANE: And different vehicles.

The CHAIR: In those lanes and to do that speed. I thought it was interesting, I had not seen it anywhere

else.

Mr LANE: No, I have not seen it anywhere else, not on the autobahns nor the autoroutes in France, and I forget what the Spanish call them.

The CHAIR: It was only one part of it. It was only part of Italy that I remember seeing it.

Mr LANE: Yes. It would be a road with some particular conditions.

The CHAIR: Yes, I don't know what it was. I always meant to ask the question, but yes, it is interesting. I'll have to look it up.

Mr LANE: Yes, I have actually ridden as a passenger in a taxi there on the autostrada in Italy where I thought the driver was doing very nicely, it was a very smooth ride, no problems whatsoever, and I looked over at his speedometer. He was doing between 160 or 170k.

The CHAIR: They were. They will do about 160 kilometres an hour.

Mr LANE: Yes, and it was perfectly safe. The driver was excellent. She was about 50 also, quite a young person, as we say, but was very, very good indeed. My experience with other drivers who complain that speed is the cause of everything, frankly, they've been terrifying to me. They have been some of the most dangerous drivers I've ever come across.

Mr PRYOR: A very important rule on the roads you are talking about is that trucks and buses are not allowed to go into the fast lane.

The CHAIR: Yes. That's one thing I have noticed here a lot, that you get the trucks all of a sudden going over and it banks up the traffic and it causes a lot of, I guess, stress on the roads.

Mr PRYOR: A speed differential as well, because you are going along at 100 and suddenly you have got a truck in front of you that's doing 60, that is where you get the concertina effect and so many nose-to-tail crashes.

Mr LANE: Non-discipline is very seriously enforced; it is a very big issue. I think the penalty for obstructing traffic on the autobahns is up to three months' imprisonment and cancellation of a licence.

The CHAIR: Is that [inaudible]?

Mr LANE: Well, it is one or the other 150 hours or something. That makes it a lot safer. In my experience on the autobahns, the high-speed unrestricted, it was that they are actually very safe to drive on if you understand what you're doing.

The CHAIR: Absolutely. I'll pass you over to the Honourable Fred Nile.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes. It's just a general question. It has been suggested by some of the organisations that there should be an allowance made for short-term higher speeds for overtaking purposes. How high should the overtaking limit be and is this a policy that has been adopted by other countries?

Mr LANE: I did mention that Spain has got that policy, officially. Unofficially, most people in Europe turn a certain blind eye to when you're overtaking because it is safer for you to do it quicker. Speed will become—the absolute natural speed for overtaking position will depend absolutely on the conditions of the road itself and once you're overtaking.

If you are overtaking a B-double or a road train on the highway and rural roads, then 130, 140, 150 is very quick, and my car is very quick. It gets up to high speeds fairly quickly, and it makes semi-trailers very short, a very useful thing to do. It also has some very good brakes and tyres. I had a previous car, and it was more than five years old, had to be tested for its stopping power for the renewal of registration, I was getting 98 per cent stop. This car is getting about 75/80.

The CHAIR: But I have to ask the question: what sort of car?

Mr LANE: BMWs.

The CHAIR: BMWs.

Mr LANE: And I was travelling in that car with Bridgestone Adrenaline-3 tyres and they are reasonably priced, and they are very good. I would say it's this—you should never tailgate anybody but never, ever think of tailgating a BMW because they stop quicker than you can, simple. They don't need much running-in too, which is good, which has helped me look at that problem I talked about with the polished road surface.

The CHAIR: Yes, okay. There you go. Roy Butler.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair. Member for Barwon, Roy Butler. Just looking back 40 years ago, we had two cars. We had a HZ Premier with a 253 and a Trimatic, otherwise known as a traumatic, and an Austin

1800, which was the school bus. I reflect back on driving north on what was then the Pacific Highway at 110 kilometres an hour in a car that had drum brakes on the back, discs on the front, and no driver-assist technology, radial tyres that were very skinny and had questionable grip.

A lot has changed in the vehicle technology space and tyre technology space, but speed limits have stayed the same, and our roads are so much better. The M1 is such a better road than the old Pacific Highway was. I am just wondering if you could provide some comment, again just from your experience, of what has happened in other places over years as technology has improved, as tyre technology has improved, as roads have improved, and what other countries have done to, I suppose, respond to those improvements.

Mr LANE: Well, the safety industries of other countries is not all that great because I have lived in Australia now for 56 years, and I was 22 when I arrived. What I do know is the limits in the UK were set back in—would be the 1960s, they have not been changed. A lot of political argument that they should be lifted to the standard—European freeway standard of 130 k. But what you have now, what I think we said in the submission is that everybody involved in road safety should try and drive a 1960s car and compare it with today's cars. They are so completely different.

The instructor for then the driving school that I took said that in a modern car it is even questionable to crash a car unless you are doing something really stupid and ridiculous, drunk for example, or some of the other things that they do, think their name is Geoff Brabham, son of Jack.

So, I think what has happened is that they are dead set in one set in the so-called safety industry that doesn't want anything to improve, but we warn people through, okay, there are all these things which are much better should be able to move them through much quicker.

You are quite right, the Pacific Highway as it was, I remember back in 1968 and it was a rather interesting road. Today, it is certainly quicker in terms of speed limits, but it is absolutely boring, and boring is—of course, it can send people to sleep. In some people it makes them aggressive. We need—the limits need to be lifted to something that is reasonable for the majority of people. This was quite very much the work of Solomon back in the '60s—he was the one that said that—it was discovered that when—

The CHAIR: Just to get back to that question. Is that the [inaudible] the 85th percentiles?

Mr LANE: No, it was done in the 1960s.

Mr PRYOR: 1964.

Mr LANE: But I wouldn't say it's a question of good science because he was looking for a solution—looking for information rather than trying to prove his own thoughts, and many of this so-called research that goes around is only people trying to prove their own thoughts and they often make a lot of scientific errors in those things, and that gets through my skin. I'm not saying professionally, I'm saying just in research.

Solomon discovered that in the absence of any restrictions on people, whatever people drove, they took the complacent speed of people driving at the absolute rate showed that the safest speed to drive when people were not completely restricted was at the 85th percentile, around 85 per cent, a speed at which 85 per cent of people driving at or less than that speed. It was a U-shaped curve. So, people going slower tend to deter more, people going faster tend to deter more.

Another interesting piece of research, a lot of these researchers have tried to rubbish it—none of them have ever succeeded. We like to call it in extremes and say oh, they are wrong, but no, the interesting bit is around about that 85th percentile. Unfortunately, we choose to in order to Trimitic get to that but [inaudible] and do that observation and that is that there is this safest speed that people choose to drive at, and that should be the guide and it should be regarded as the setting for the limits.

Mr PRYOR: Another way of explaining that is the research implies that lower speeds save lives and that the graph goes down to zero as it goes slower and slower and slower. In fact, the truth with what this research proved, it is actually a U-shaped curve, so it is not a straight line going down to zero, it is actually a U-shaped curve and amazingly, the safest travelling speed is the average speed of the traffic, which is what many people used to do in—

With regard to your question—what actually happens is that people that focus on research into showing speed as the big issue, they assume every reduction in fatalities is solely due to the fact that authorities are focusing on "speed". In fact, there has been a dramatic reduction in fatalities and serious injuries because the design of cars has improved so much, and we have legislation now that requires Original Equipment Manufacturers to do a "design risk assessment" before they even commence designing the car. And you might notice if you try to let the handbrake off on a new car, if you haven't driven it before you cannot do that unless you put your foot on the foot brake.

The CHAIR: I remember the old cars with their drum brakes and no power boost or anything, try and stop them.

Mr PRYOR: That's right.

The CHAIR: And the conventional tyres.

Mr LANE: So, the drum brake goes back in my youth, and if you will pardon me saying this, Mr Nile, we call them oh my god brakes, as in oh my god, this will never stop. They also used to tend to pull to one side.

The CHAIR: That is one of the issues, you never knew—especially in the rain, you never knew whether the car would—and it was quite sharp too. It would either go left or right, you never knew what direction your car was going to go.

Mr PRYOR: That is another aspect of driver training. People need to be trained in how to drive a car with ABS brakes. The previous thing was you braked as hard as you could without locking up the rear wheels, whereas if you do an advanced driver training course, what they teach you is to plant your foot on the brake pedal as hard as you can and keep it there until you actually stop, or the danger is passed. People find that very hard to do unless you give them some training.

The driving test we do with people is—a hill start, reverse parking and a three-point turn, very basic stuff like that, when the idea is to have them taught in being able to stop the car in the shortest possible distance because that's the best way of avoiding a crash. If you can stop, your speed is zero and there'll be no crash.

Mr CHAIR: Yes. Yes, that's right.

Mr LANE: There's a lot of focus on secondary safety, distinguish the submission between primary and secondary safety. There seems to be an issue where people in the road safety industry want to bring in things which are actually secondary safety, as in primary safety to make a restriction on people.

Primary safety is about not crashing in the first place. People who say if you stay at a safe speed, you only injure people, and our belief is that safety is about not having the crash, it is not about allowing people to crash and cripple people instead of killing them. To our view, the important thing is not having the crash in the first place.

The problem is, as I have said before many times, if you have a low speed, particularly on the open roads, you get bored. People go off to sleep. If you go off into the scrub, then it is not too bad because you get a damaged car. If you go on the wrong side and plough into a semi-trailer, it's a bit painful. It is not something that you want to do.

So, the speed that you drive at the moment when it's safe and if I can get away with it is to drive at—where there is sufficient information coming into me to keep me alert. I grew up in farming in England and from a very young age, was driving tractors all day and I remember that you've got to be very precise, I've got to keep my mind active otherwise I drifted off and then father was displeased with me. That is still with me after 70 years.

The CHAIR: Yes, you've got to be attentive all the time.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I think—didn't we hear from Professor Senserrick, I think, to say that with increased speed your mind is analysing greater aspects, but you then go into a sense of fatigue. Still, because you get into that mode and therefore when you do have a crash at greater speed, you have a greater danger of greater injuries. I think it was Professor Senserrick, I think she said that.

Mr LANE: Yes, it was. I can confirm that. We were sitting here.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You were sitting there? Yes, yes. So, you confirm that [inaudible], yes.

Mr LANE: Yes, I have done a lot of long distance and a long time driving at speeds.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is she correct or—

Mr LANE: She's wrong. I've done some surveys and they were so full of what we call scientific errors, and it would be worthless. I am sorry if that sounds like a really disrespectful thing, but it is not all that unusual that people have a fixation on whatever it is, and they will do their research and it's full of errors. I have seen that so many times in my professional life. You get the—I have had a lot of experience on it and that is not the case. If I am going up to the Gold Coast—I live in St Ives, so constantly—I could go for the first six hours without a problem, without a problem at all. It is quite easy, and you are from a country area, and you will understand that.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Mr Lane, I am used to 1200-kilometre days. I think that it is like a muscle, it gets trained, you get used to driving long distances. I think for somebody who never drives long distances I would be loath to put them in a car for 10 hours straight. But if you regularly, do it then I think that you do get used to it and a lot of people who live in my part of the world regularly do long distances.

Mr LANE: Absolutely. I think the problem is I have sometimes described some of the people who pontificate about this as the "dusk shift" drivers. They have only ever driven in the dusk— not the long distances,

just as you have explained it. Let me tell you when you are driving at high speeds, you do look further forwards, and I didn't understand this and did not know why until I had talked to an old colleague of ours, a Spitfire pilot from the Second World War, a survivor, and he sold it to me that you need to move your eyes around because you can see at a small point in the horizon. If you are a Vought and you are staying straight ahead and you do not recognise it until it's the size of a pinhead, then it is a Messerschmitt, you're dead.

That is the thing, if you've got any experience of doing this, over that period of time you might lose concentration. If you do, it is stop and snooze, and then 500 or 600 kilometres isn't any problem, particularly if you are used to it. If you're only used to driving, yes, you could have problems. Most of them do not, who are used to it, do not have those problems.

Mr PRYOR: In an advanced driving course, one of the things you learn is that you need to keep your eyes up looking further ahead. What happens is we drive around cities, we are used to looking out for potholes, so we look down the bonnet of the car. An advanced driving course will get through to the driver, don't do that, keep your eyes up, look further ahead.

The CHAIR: You have got to scan; you have got to scan your environment.

Mr PRYOR: Exactly right.

Mr LANE: I do know that one thing, that the cars with the head-up display help keep your eyes up. It is very good.

The CHAIR: I am sorry, I have to bring this to a close and I would say you are very, very informative and I would like to listen to you all day, quite honestly. I come from an automotive background myself, I concur with a lot of your thoughts, but unfortunately, we have to close it off. I do appreciate you both coming here and thank you both very much. I do not believe any questions were taken on notice but proceedings—today's transcript, today's proceedings will be for corrections, any questions will be forwarded on to you. Thank you both for being here.

Mr LANE: Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr PRYOR: Thank you opportunity of talking to you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We will now adjourn and come back at two o'clock.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

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

The CHAIR: Welcome Carla. Before we start the hearing process, do you have any questions at all?

Ms HOORWEG: No.

The CHAIR: Are you able to read a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

Ms HOORWEG: I will just make a couple of very brief comments. ANCAP has provided quite a lengthy submission, which I am happy to answer questions on. Our main point is that newer cars are safer, and the technology has been introduced into today's cars that ANCAP rates through its safety rating program are really focused on crash avoidance as well as protecting occupants and vulnerable road users in the event of a crash. But these crash avoidance technologies such as autonomous emergency braking, lane support systems and adaptive cruise control work together so having more of these technologies on board a vehicle multiplies their impact.

I think of particular relevance for today's hearing are lane support systems. They are really important and becoming a very clear indicator or assistant in terms of preventing run-off-road crashes and also head-on crashes. I think the—no doubt the Committee will be aware of the research released on 26 August by BITRE looking at run-off-road crashes with around 20 per cent of all crashes over the period 2016 to 2020 being run-off-road crashes but those represented 39 per cent of fatalities and 96 per cent of fatal run-off-road crashes are single vehicle crashes.

Similarly with head-on collisions, they account for around 12 per cent of crashes but 20 per cent of fatalities. So, the lane support systems that ANCAP examines when assessing whether or not a vehicle will reach five stars have been shown to reduce head-on and single vehicle crashes by 30 per cent and ANCAP has been assessing those technologies since 2018 with it not being possible to get a five-star rating without either AB or lane

support systems in place since 2020. From 2020 onwards, you need good performance in those systems, so I think that is probably it for me in terms of opening comments.

We are obviously focussed on vehicle safety. So, I think our scope will be limited in terms of the terms of reference for the Committee but happy to answer any questions that Committee members may have.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Hoorweg. How might improvements in vehicle technology impact driver's behaviour?

Ms HOORWEG: So, what we are seeing now with the new technologies that are coming in is what we call direct driver monitoring. For a number of years now, indirect driver monitoring has been in many vehicles. So indirect driver monitoring is where the vehicle might have some kind of algorithm that examines the driver responsiveness or the way the driver is handling the vehicle and it uses that algorithm to perhaps provide a warning to the driver and say, maybe you need to take a break or maybe it is time to stop and rest.

Those technologies now are advancing, and we are seeing technologies come into the market and that ANCAP will begin to start assessing from next year (from 2023) which are direct driver monitoring technologies. These are things more like cameras and other systems that can actually physically determine whether or not a driver is active or perhaps unresponsive. So, the ability of the vehicle then to provide other alerts, alarms or haptics to try and re-engage the driver with the driving task are where we are seeing those technologies go.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Yes, Mr Moselmane?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, just a—I am interested in your comment just then about the car telling the driver to take a break. How does it do it?

Ms HOORWEG: So, there are a variety of different ways that the car might do that. So, it could be a ding or a bell or some kind of alarm warning. Or it can be a haptic, like a sort of buzzing on the steering wheel and often a visual alert on the dash or on the—if it has got a screen, on the screen. So that kind of—the coffee cup reminder, it is often referred to as, you know, time to take a break.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Just a couple of quick questions. First, what are these key technologies that have made vehicles safer and are you—you say that the—and you use an extensive submission but, in a nutshell, if you like, what are those key elements that make the car safer?

Ms HOORWEG: So, at a very high level, what ANCAP is assessing is the ability of the car to avoid a crash in the first place. If a crash occurs, the ability of the car to protect both the occupants inside the car and vulnerable road users that it might impact in the crash and also the ability of rescuers or other first responders to be able to open the vehicle. So, we have an app with what we call rescue sheets, which emergency services use, which are becoming especially important with EVs, that we are providing blueprints so that first responders know how to access the vehicle without interfering with the battery or how to make sure that the battery is actually disconnected.

So, with the crash avoidance technologies, this is really where we are seeing those opportunities to avoid the crash in the first place and in some instances, it is not possible to avoid the crash, but it is possible to slow the speed or for the vehicle to assist steering out of the oncoming path of another vehicle or another obstacle, so therefore mitigating some of the effects of the crash or reducing the impact.

Now, the big technologies that ANCAP has been focussed on are the lane support systems. So that is where the vehicle is assisting the driver to stay in the lane and the vehicle can read either the line markings on the side of the road or the road edge if there are no line markings and can guide the driver back into the lane if they start to deviate or provide other warnings that they are departing their lane.

The other big technology that we are seeing significant improvements through is autonomous emergency braking. Now, autonomous emergency braking initially started with car-to-car scenarios. So, your sort of classic rear-ender scenario, where vehicles are able to see another vehicle in front of them. That it is not moving, that it is slow or that it is completely stopped and apply the brakes in an emergency braking scenario. That technology has advanced significantly since it was first introduced and there are now more and more scenarios where autonomous emergency braking can operate, including at higher speeds and also where we see situations like back-over. So, backing up with pedestrians walking behind the vehicle, that is something that ANCAP has been assessing more recently.

When these technologies first come in, we reward fitment of the technology, and we are maybe not as focussed on the performance or how well it performs but as our protocols increase in—you know, we raise the bar every couple of years, we then start to look at the performance. So, whilst in the first round, you might just need to have it to get a tick, then we start to look at performance when the protocols increase and then we look at more and more scenarios.

So, for those car-to-car scenarios that have been in place for quite a while with autonomous emergency braking, now we are looking at a wider variety of speeds of both the vehicle that is the test vehicle and also the

counterparty vehicle. Then a wider—higher speeds are much more difficult for manufacturers to develop technology for but now we are seeing a wider variety of scenarios like head-on scenarios and turn-across-path scenarios where another vehicle's turning across the path of the test car. So as those technologies proliferate in terms of their applicability to different real-life scenarios, we start to see vehicles stopping in those emergency situations where a driver might not have seen or been aware of the situation. So that is really—I mean there are many, many technologies but those are the two big ones that we are really seeing significant improvements from.

The CHAIR: Thank you, excellent. Reverend Nile?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you, Chairman. What type of new safety vehicle technology warrants a five-star base ANCAP safety rating for the vehicle and what is the highest speed that a vehicle with a five-star ANCAP rating can be driven safely?

Ms HOORWEG: So, we only assess vehicles at the—at certain speeds and our, I guess assessments of those speeds, are determined by common crash scenarios. So, there are different speeds that we do the crash tests at. We do a series of crash tests and then we do a series of what we call active safety tests which are out on a track. I will provide that on notice because there are really hundreds of scenarios that we test.

So I can—it would probably be more useful for the Committee to receive a very short submission on outlining that in more detail in terms of all the different technologies that we require to get a five star rating but we do assess across four different pillars and the way the scoring works across those different pillars is that you must meet the minimum score for all of the pillars, otherwise your five—or your rating will be reduced to the lowest common denominator. So, for example, it is not possible to score really well in adult occupant protection and really poorly in safety assist and still get a five-star rating because we are trying to encourage good performance, good safety technology across all different facets that we examine. But I am happy to provide further detail on all the tests that we do.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Because I live in the regions and I have got a car with—it does have a lane departure assistance as well as adaptive cruise but of course in the country towns, there is a lot of roads that do not have line marking—that the edges are indistinct.

So how do we roll out these new technologies to ensure that people living in those remoter country areas can have that same safety wrapped around them that the new technologies provide. How do we do that with—given that we do not have these roads that are the same standard as they are in the city with a centre line and edge marking and do we have any technology, for example, it coming out, that can actually determine or identify the width of a road and to keep a driver within a lane even if it is undefined?

Ms HOORWEG: Yes, so I guess to start with, the technologies that we are seeing and what ANCAP assesses, we assess both solid line, broken lines and no lines. We assess whether or not a vehicle can actually detect the side of the road where it might be asphalt onto pebbles or asphalt onto grass, for example. We are seeing more and more vehicles do better at that. The lack of a centre line marking is something where we would like to see more improvement. It is something that it is an important area so definitely with the left-hand side marking, we have seen really good technology emerging there and vehicles really improving in their ability to steer back in.

Look, there are other—to your question about, I guess it is sort of a geospatial question in relation to vehicles knowing where they are. There are some really interesting areas that vehicle manufacturers are developing, and this is not something that ANCAP is testing at the moment. It is something that we are aware of but I would say the technology is not at the point yet where it would be something we could introduce into the protocols but there are mapping technologies that manufacturers are using to map roads, using either driving around and actually mapping it with GPS equipment and other equipment or whether it is connected vehicles that are mapping the road as they go and feeding back to a cloud. This is not something—I am definitely straying outside of ANCAP's area of expertise, but I think there are manufacturers that you could possibly talk to that could explain in more detail some of the systems that are operating overseas with respect to that.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Yes, so I guess it is really—we are looking at years away for country people to have that same level of safety from driving those cars with the new technology?

Ms HOORWEG: I think one of the technologies that is worth mentioning, though, is adaptive cruise control and most vehicles, I think, you will find most vehicles will have some form of speed limiting system in them. So, there is the opportunity for—in terms of speed management, for drivers to utilise those systems. It is something that obviously we cannot mandate. That is a matter for government setting the speed limits and setting vehicle parameters around that. But those technologies are certainly available and for people who are conscious of not speeding, they are very, very valuable technologies. Yes, so look, in terms of how far away those things are, I think they are happy to provide you with potentially some manufacturers that might be able to share more about what is happening in other markets with respect to that and time from the Australian market.

The CHAIR: Yes, thank you. Mr Roy Butler.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms Hoorweg for your detailed submission and for your time today. Just a point, I agree totally that the performance of technology may differ between manufactures, and I am glad you are considering the qualitative factors of features like lane keep assist. Without mentioning manufacturers, I currently drive a 2022 that does not see the lines very well but in 2019, had a car that saw the lines very well. So, I appreciate what you are saying. Through your submission, it came through very clearly that newer cars are safer. I totally agree with that.

I suppose my question to you is, on very open roads such as the Barrier Highway, the Newell Highway and the Mitchell Highway where, for 40 years-plus, we have had the same speed limit, do you think that the improved technology and safety features built into cars and also the physical safety features around tyre technology and passenger or occupant protection, do you think that gives the opportunity under certain conditions like daylight hours and dry conditions, to consider an augmented speed limit? To increase the speed limit if the evidence supports that.

Ms HOORWEG: Setting of speed limits is not really something that ANCAP would comment on. I think that is really a matter for governments and local governments. So yes, that is unfortunately probably outside of our scope. I think there would—there are obviously Germany is a country with a very high-speed limit in some situations. So, I think the difference or the challenge just comparing those two jurisdictions is that the type of road that no speed limit applies to in the autobahn scenario is very, very different, potentially, to some of those roads that you have mentioned in terms of the quality and the maintenance and the upkeep.

I think one of the important factors to note with all of these technologies is that they do, to a certain extent, rely on the infrastructure and I think to the earlier question about road edges, the same thing can be translated to speed sign recognition, which is a technology that we see and require in vehicles to reach five stars. But with the variability in speed signs around Australia and even within states, it is very difficult to create technology that 100 per cent of the time consistently reads those different signs and when you have roadworks and other scenarios like the requirement to slow down to 40 kilometre when a police vehicle is on the side of the road with its lights flashing, those kinds of scenarios, a car is—it is very difficult to create technology that is going to be able to deal with those. So, I think that is really all I can say on that topic.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you and I take your point. The speed sign recognitions is something that my current vehicle has. It sees a 40, it does not matter if it is school time or not, it still tells you that you should be doing 40 so it is not ideal and it still needs improvement, but I am sure that will come in time. More broadly, we would agree that newer cars are safer. We agree that newer cars are safer, that the road building is better, the tyre technology is better, braking is better. Forward collision avoidance, lane keep assist, anti-lock braking systems. Even just down to the suspension, you know, there is not many vehicles these days apart from utilities, that have light axles. Most of them have independent rear suspension which improves road holding immeasurably.

We are agreeing cars are safer but what we are saying is that in 40 years, 30 years ago travelling up the Pacific Highway in an HZ Premier with lap-sash seatbelts and drum brakes. Our [inaudible] have not changed but the vehicles have changed dramatically. Driver training has changed dramatically, and I appreciate you saying that ANCAP will not necessarily throw any information either way. Looking at it, there has been a lot of change but one thing that has remained static is the speed limit themselves.

Ms HOORWEG: I am not sure if there was question for me there but—

Mr ROY BUTLER: Well, I suppose it is—

Ms HOORWEG: I will take that as a comment.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Well, it was a comment but also inviting you to comment on the lack of movement in speed limits even though you are saying that is not ANCAP's position, I do not know if you have a personal opinion as somebody who is a professional in the automotive industry. From your own personal experience, even.

Ms HOORWEG: Well look, I think the statistics are pretty clear in relation to speed and crash fatality and serious injury. Especially in regional and remote areas. So, I think probably the—what we would like to see as a participant in this space is at a national level, that there is better reporting of crashes so that we can all understand what the factors are involved in particularly regional and remote accidents and crashes. I think that would be very, very useful. I know New South Wales has pretty good data, but I think yes, from ANCAP's perspective, certainly having access to national data around those crash scenarios would be helpful.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Ms Hoorweg. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Shelley, do you have any questions?

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Sorry, can you hear me?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: No, no I do not, and I want to thank you too, Carla, for your information on new vehicles. I just think I will ask the question out of left field on electric vehicles coming our way and we presume that they will be exactly the same safety standards as the current kind of vehicles that we drive now. I think that it is going to be around the question of how do we actually educate the public on the safety features of vehicles? Especially in areas like mine and Chris's and Roy's because you can get a new vehicle and suddenly you do not really understand what some of those provisions are. There needs to be some education from the salespeople, I think, on site, to tell people how they work and what those new provisions mean for them. It is a statement and a thank you and a question about electric vehicles because they are just around the corner for all of us. Well not me, quite. Not us quite yet. I still like my diesel guzzler, sorry.

Ms HOORWEG: So ANCAP actually released ratings for three electric vehicles last night. We have rated many. We have actually produced a guide and I will include that in the material that I forward to the Committee after—

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Oh, great.

Ms HOORWEG: —this inquiry. We have produced a guide that outlines all the alternate power train vehicles. So that is including—

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes, hybrid.

Ms HOORWEG: —hydrogen and all the hybrid-types as well. So, we test to the exact same standards. There is a little bit of—if we have an internal combustion engine or a diesel variant come into the market first and then an electric version or hybrid version, we will do some—we will repeat two of the tests which are particularly crucial for battery integrity. So, two of the physical crash tests get repeated. If we get to test the electric vehicle first, we do not need to repeat those tests. So, it is purely to look at the battery integrity in those crash scenarios. There are a number of things that we also look at about the battery needs to shut off appropriately when it—when there is a crash and also these rescue sheets are mandatory to receive a rating now. So, for all of those electric vehicles that we have rated, there is this information sheet that I know the New South Wales fire brigade have on hand and other emergency services as well.

So, in terms of EVs, I think at a high level, it is a really once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have a significant change in the make-up of the vehicle fleet. ANCAP's position is that the government incentives for EVs should only be provided to those vehicles that do demonstrate five-star safety. To date, most of the vehicles have but we are aware that there are many, many vehicles or many manufacturers looking to enter the market with new EVs and we want to make sure that we are not sacrificing safety for those incentives. So, we think there is an important part for government to play in terms of ensuring that that aligns to increasing the safety of the fleet. Because many of the new EVs are actually EVs from the ground up, we do see that they do have some of the most advanced crash avoidance technology on board. So, it is really an important element in terms of improving the safety of the fleet.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Indeed. Thank you very much, Carla. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Carla, we are almost out of time. I will just ask one last question. Can you tell me, all the technology that is coming out, what we heard earlier from witnesses, a lot of the rural and regional areas, they do not have the infrastructure in place, like in the roads, to measure or to identify that new technology. So, it is all very well said when we are—if you are in the city, all that has been implemented. So how does all this new technology work in the country and rural areas and particularly even electric vehicles considering we do not even have charging stations in a lot of places. I—

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Most of it—

The CHAIR: —presume it is going to be long-term.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Sorry.

The CHAIR: No, no, look, I just see it as being something that is long-term.

Ms HOORWEG: Most of the technology that we are talking about today in terms of lane support systems and autonomous emergency braking is using either radar or LiDAR. So, it is reading the road and it is detecting other vehicles through those technologies. As I mentioned, we test a variety of different road edge scenarios but when you are looking at the autonomous emergency braking, that is about radar bouncing off a metal frame of another car. So it is, to a certain extent, impacted by the road but probably a lesser extent than lane support systems and obviously things like speed sign recognition. But yes, the road infrastructure is an incredibly important part of the whole picture. There is no doubt about that.

The CHAIR: Yes. No, thank you. Well that brings us to the end of our time, unfortunately but thank you so much for appearing today. I think you took one question on notice. Was it one question? Yes. Right, so yes, I think it was just one, wasn't it? Two questions were there? Okay so anyhow, you will be provided a copy of today's transcript proceedings for corrections and any question on notice taken today will be forwarded to you by the

Committee staff. Thank you so much, again, for your time.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

RAYMOND HASSALL, Executive Director Statutory Compliance, National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, affirmed and examined

RICHARD CALVER, Advisor Compliance & Workplace Relations, National Road Transport Association, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: . Would you now—anyone like to make a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

Mr CALVER: Yes, please.

The CHAIR: Okay, thank you, Mr Calver.

Mr CALVER: Thank you. As expressed in submission number 55, which you have numbered—which NatRoad lodged, reducing heavy vehicle fatalities and serious injuries is one of NatRoad’s core objectives and one of the areas where our intent and that of government’s overlap. We want to reduce the number of road deaths and serious injuries. In the submission made to the Committee, we emphasise that better and improved road infrastructure is an immediate priority. One area where the submission could have been expanded is in relation to our commitment to improving rest area construction and upgrade. In that regard, we commend the TWU submission to the Committee. It emphasises the need to urgently attend to New South Wales rest areas.

NatRoad believes that government must mandate rest area construction along new or remediated road structures so that there are adequate rest areas throughout Australia’s road network. Rest area construction should be a mandatory component of the construction of new roads and where roads are upgraded. Happy to take questions, Chair.

The CHAIR: Okay, thank you very much. I think in one of our earlier inquiries, it was brought up about the rest areas, if I am right? I think that was part of this—the recommendations to the Government at the time. Mr Butler?

Mr ROY BUTLER: Look, no, Mr Chair, I am all right at the moment, but I may come back.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes, I have one. Or two.

The CHAIR: Yes, the Honourable Fred Nile, then Honourable Shaoquett Moselmane.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, sure, I am happy to ask.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you, Mr Chair. Submission number 66 states that crashes in regional New South Wales are higher than those in metropolitan areas. In the period 2012 to 2020, there were 17,646 heavy vehicle crashes in New South Wales with 89 per cent of those crashes occurring in regional locations.

Eleven per cent of those heavy vehicle crashes occurred in metropolitan locations. Can you tell us what are the main factors that cause heavy vehicles to crash more readily in regional areas? What needs to be done to reduce crashes of heavy vehicles in regional areas?

Mr CALVER: Well, the NHVR can start.

The CHAIR: Mr Calver?

Mr CALVER: Yes, it is for Mr Hassall.

The CHAIR: Oh, Mr Hassall.

Mr HASSALL: The—thank you for the question. The crashes arise in both regions as a result of interactions between heavy vehicles and light vehicles which I appreciate goes some way without saying they both occupy the same road space.

Rurally, the figure that does get omitted in that discussion is the extent to which the light vehicle at fault is driving that number. It obviously does not necessarily exhaust the 100 per cent but there is a very significant over-representation of light vehicles being at fault which is, of course, problematic for us as the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator because our direct regulatory controls speak to the industry. Which means that one of the main areas of influence that is of interest to us, and we hope to the Committee, is how we improve the competency of all light vehicle drivers in relation to their interactions with heavy vehicles, especially the competence and awareness

of young drivers as they interact with heavy vehicles because from our experience, it is really not where it could be and there are significant opportunities for improvement there.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Moselmane.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, just a question with—either of you gentlemen can respond, if you like. What impact is improved vehicle technology had on the heavy vehicle industry?

Mr HASSALL: If I can speak to that first before Mr Calver? Look, our general proposition is that newer vehicles, particularly when they get to about four or five years old, are safer than vehicles around the nine-year age, which is your average in service age of vehicles as we see it through the national baseline surveys. So, I guess that is to be expected. You back-capture a whole range of technological advancements within that four-to-five-year window. You know, your electronic brakings and so forth.

So, it is difficult to isolate an individual technological innovation at that level but as a general basic message, the newer the vehicle, particularly in relation to your high productivity vehicles, for your B-doubles and your performance-based standards vehicles, at the vehicle level, new equals safe or safer. The driver management issue or driver self-management issue to be more accurate, is a bit more complex. The research there is still less well tested than the evidence in relation to the vehicles and the engineering controls. There, I am talking about things like the distracted driver—fatigue and distracted driver management tools. We think there is a significant untapped benefit there, but it would need to happen, I think, at a greater scale and of course, no technology is a silver bullet, it needs effective management systems and commitment to make it actually work.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Mr Calver?

Mr CALVER: Look, the—first of all, I would like to reinforce what Mr Hassall said in relation to newer vehicles. It clearly, the assumption that heavy vehicles are involved in more crashes because of their increased mass and the distance they travel is not held out by the fact that PBS vehicles which are greater mass and generally longer than their conventional heavy vehicles, have a much lower accident and incident rate. So, PBS articulated combinations have the lowest rate of crashes per distance travelled per 100 million kilometres, almost 70 per cent lower than the rate for their conventional counterparts when that was measured by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

So, the common assumption that because heavy vehicles have a higher mass and a longer—and take a longer period to stop is not held out when it comes to those newer performance-based vehicles. It shows that you get both a safety and a productivity benefit from PBS vehicles and that is to do with the more up-to-date technology and the fact that those vehicles are newer than prior technology. The Productivity Commission found that the improvements around infrastructure and modern vehicle design were the two factors which had contributed most to all vehicle safety improvements, not just light vehicle safety improvements. That was during their Transport Regulatory Inquiry, the report of which is available on the Productivity Commission website.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, gentlemen. Gentleman, a question for both of you. How involved are each of your organisations in the design process for both new roads and the upgrade of existing roads?

Mr HASSALL: I think—if I can attempt to answer that first? We do not have a role in the construction and maintenance of the road network at all. What we do or how we are able to positively contribute is through our Strategic Local Government Asset Assessment Program, which I appreciate is a long acronym, but it is a set of tools. Just to backtrack a bit, our experience working with local governments is management, control and responsibility are very long networks on relatively modest budgets. So, they are not necessarily—they do not necessarily have access to sophisticated back-end IT tools that might allow them to undertake the sort of engineering assessments you need to responsibly deal with newer vehicle combinations or identify quite specific safety issues in many cases.

What we are doing at the moment is working with local governments to provide them with some of those tools. Now, they are—at the moment, it is ring-fenced productivity-related assessments. You know, the strength of culverts, having a better sense of the capacity of bridges, which I know in regional New South Wales is a particular issue. But as a strategic tool, there is no reason why that could not be considered for deployment in relation to your—to assessments relating to speed and safety, particularly as it relates to heavy vehicles as well. But in terms of statutory responsibility for build and maintain? No.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Could I come in there, please, Mr Chairman?

The CHAIR: Yes, certainly, Mrs Hancock.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Just on the back of that question and I think the question asked as to whether there was input into the design of new roads or upgrade of older roads. I mean, here on the Princes Highway, we are making massive changes to the Princes Highway, including new major bridges, et cetera, all the length of

the Princes Highway. What input—you say you have no input to state government in how—what design process we should undertake when constructing new highways?

Mr HASSALL: No, not directly in my experience. I think there are Austroad standards that are developed to guide the construction process and we may well sit on technical working groups that provide some impact on pavement load and so forth, but I do not believe that we have a specific, if not statutory responsibility for input there. I can take that on notice for sure.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes, please. I am interested in that and just a second follow-up but unrelated but related. In terms of young drivers on the road, I see a lot of young drivers and—well not just young drivers, who have no idea about how long it takes for a truck to stop or to slow down. You know, they overtake then they go in between, behind a truck and between another truck because they are just in a hurry, and it is not just young drivers.

Do you have any knowledge of whether we are—because it has been a long time since I have been to get my license, whether we have any input at all into the L-plate, P-plate driver education process? Because they need to know that they are in a dangerous situation if they keep overtaking or try to scoot around a large truck, a B-double on a round-about and I have seen accidents happen here. So that education component is absolutely vital. Are we improving that education system and if not, do we need to?

Mr HASSALL: We need to. I think that one is—that is very straightforward. I think any time spent helping young drivers better understand the risks—and benefits, obviously but the risks in terms of their own behaviour in relation to heavy vehicles is well spent. All our activity, because of our statutory responsibility, is really at the marketing education role to try and get to young people to say, do not take risks around trucks. Educate yourself. We provide some materials that are quite simply targeted around stopping distance, around overtaking distance. That is an absolutely crucial issue. Even a driver unaffected by drugs or alcohol who does not understand how to safely overtake, can get into trouble very quickly.

So, we have got specific programs for young drivers under the Don't Muck With a Truck program. We have a separate initiative launched yesterday to help people again, particularly relevant to route—regional drivers and areas in dealing with over-sized and over-mass loads because you have similar but slightly more niche issues. For example, getting in between the pilot and a heavy vehicle, not understanding what the signals from the pilot driver actually mean. So, we have a separate campaign there. They are targeted through social media channels rather than being part of other formal driver education process though.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Well gee, I think they should be, shouldn't they?

Mr CALVER: We have a policy where we believe that there should be questions about behaviour. Driver behaviour around heavy vehicles' stopping distances embedded in the tests for obtaining a licence for younger drivers in particular. I will go back to that statistic, which is quite scary, which is that where there is a car or a light vehicle and a heavy vehicle, between 80 and 90 per cent of the time where there is a fatality, it was the light vehicle that was at fault. Now, you have got to stop that kind of behaviour if you want to reduce the road toll to zero, which is the target in 2050.

The other question that was asked, that Mr Hassall responded to in respect of the NHVR, is do we have input into the design and construction of roads. Sometimes we are asked—in relation to the Pacific Highway, we were asked to be involved and we commented on the initial strategy. Then from time-to-time, we consulted on where bypasses, for example, should be constructed but generally, we are not consulted. We have a quarterly meeting with Transport for NSW where we provide input into some of the projects and at the moment, the thing we are pressing is that in the flood remediation—and this is a matter that the Committee might want to address in the flood remediation of roads. If they can be actually increased in strength, if they can avoid the sort of problems we have with culverts and bridges and their reconstruction, then it will be much more suitable for heavy vehicles and it will be much more suitable from a Road Safety point of view if they are not merely remediated to the condition they were in prior to those floods. So yes, so—

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes, yes, good point, Richard. Good point.

Mr CALVER: Thank you.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much for those responses.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Gulaptis, then Mr Butler—

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Thanks, Mr Chair. Chris Gulaptis, member for Clarence.

The CHAIR: —and Fred Nile.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: We know that fatigue plays a significant role in crashes. In particular on our regional roads. What do you think about increasing our speed limits as a way to reducing driver fatigue? Do you

think that is an option that we can look at?

Mr CALVER: Sorry, what was it? Increasing or decreasing speeds that you [inaudible].

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Increasing.

Mr CALVER: Increase.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Increasing the speed to reduce driver fatigue.

Mr CALVER: Well, if I can go first? Sorry, Ray, I am not trying to cut across you, but NatRoad policy that is expressed in our submission is that heavy vehicles, the road trains and B-doubles should not have a different speed. They should both be permitted to travel on New South Wales roads at 100 kilometres an hour. That is not to ameliorate fatigue but to stop poor behaviour by light vehicle drivers or from stopping B-doubles trying to overtake road trains because of that 10 kilometres an hour differential. The real problem that has manifested itself of late in rural and regional New South Wales is that there are not enough rest areas, going right back to my initial point and that when there are rest areas, they are over-crowded, and the driver does not know before they reach that rest area that they are unable to rest there.

So, Transport for NSW has a project which is investigating both the upgrade of rest areas and mechanical means to flag to the driver that a particular rest area is full so that they can find alternatives. Now, those alternatives generally are unacceptable, particularly on two-lane highways because you cannot just pull a B-double off to the side of the road. So, the fatigue issue is exacerbated by the lack of rest areas. When they get to a rest area, it is full either of caravanners or other heavy vehicles and they have to drive to get to the next rest area to properly rest. Now, that second drive means that they are quite often in breach of their logbook rules with heavy fines, and they are driving whilst they are fatigued because that rest area is full, and they planned to rest there. That is the very point that the TWU, whose submission I commended, makes, which we reinforce. Thank you.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: What about the facilities at those rest areas though? Rather than just have somewhere where a B-double can pull off and have a sleep or somewhere where he can have a shower and have a feed, are there enough of those rest areas where you can actually have those facilities available so you can refresh yourself?

Mr CALVER: No, the facilities are generally not up to scratch and that is one of the issues that is stopping us attracting drivers generally but particularly women. You know, we have put in submissions in other inquiries that if you want to attract women who are only three to four per cent of drivers at the moment, you have got to have facilities that are not third world. That is a very important issue for sustaining sufficient drivers and giving them their basic human rights.

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Butler?

Mr ROY BUTLER: Gentlemen, thank you for your submission and thanks for appearing here today. Thanks to Mr Gulaptis, that was a great segue into the question I have got which is around overtaking. Mr Calver, you pointed out the speed differential between a road train and a B-double, 10 kilometres an hour in New South Wales and 100 kilometres an hour for most heavy vehicles. That is in contrast on some roads with 110 for class A or light vehicles and motorcycles. Just wondering what your thoughts are in regard to the thresholds or the tolerance that is allowed for overtaking, whether it is a burst-speed function or something like that, to allow these long vehicles to get around each other and not lead to risk-taking behaviour by other motorists? Notwithstanding that professional's driver's licence is incredibly important to them and any transgression or crossing over the speed limit could result in losing their licence.

So just wondering what your thoughts are on how that should be managed, that overtaking behaviour between different classes of vehicles and whether people should be allowed to exceed, for example, a posted limit or a limit that is designated for a vehicle in order to safely get around the vehicle they are overtaking.

Mr CALVER: It is a difficult issue because as you will see from the submission that we lodged, there is speed limiter rules in relation to heavy vehicles where the operator as well as the driver can get heavy fines for going over the speed limits that are—that the speed limiter sets and that is—in New South Wales, that is being particularly emphasised by what is called a derogation from the *Heavy Vehicle National Law* in that regard. The issue is, we do not want B-doubles trying to overtake road trains because of that 10-kilometre difference. It is crazy and we want light vehicle drivers to be better educated, going back to the point we made earlier, about the fact that heavy vehicles have a maximum speed of 100 kilometres in rural and regional New South Wales and that they are unlikely to get around them quickly.

The issue that we highlight in our submission in this context is that we want infrastructure where there are two lane highways to include overtaking areas. More frequent overtaking lanes along major highways and that is why we commended the road construction between Canberra and the New South Wales south coast which is

building rumble strips for the middle of the road and rumble strips for the side as well as incorporating greater number of overtaking lanes, which we think is absolutely vital in reducing the road toll. Thank you.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, so more infrastructure as opposed to tolerance when it comes to overtaking is your preference, Mr Calver?

Mr CALVER: Well, it is not my preference, it is basically that if we want more tolerance in overtaking, then the speed limiter law would have to be changed and we would have to go right back to fundamentals as to why the New South Wales Government and New South Wales has actually reinforced that speed limiter issue. So, it is a much better to accommodate that by adapting infrastructure.

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

The CHAIR: Mr Calver, in your—sorry, [inaudible], I will go over to Reverend Nile.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you. Just a general question, Mr Chairman, that in 2020 there were 17,646 heavy vehicle crashes in New South Wales with 89 per cent of those crashes occurring in regional locations. Nineteen per cent of those heavy vehicle crashes occurred in metropolitan locations. Can you tell us what are the main factors that cause heavy vehicles to crash more readily in regional areas? What needs to be done to reduce crashes of heavy vehicles in regional areas?

Mr CALVER: Is that directed to me or Mr Hassall?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes.

The CHAIR: Either one, it does not matter.

Mr CALVER: Okay.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I was aiming at Mr Hassall.

The CHAIR: I do not either.

Mr CALVER: Look, let me start. The submission that we lodged addresses this issue. We want improved infrastructure in rural and regional areas. We want roads that have creditable speed limits that are credible, and we want areas where there are identified fatalities given priority. So, it—what we want is for Transport for NSW, particularly at Centre for Road Safety, to match where fatalities occur regularly with the need for infrastructure upgrades.

We also want issues associated with suicide by truck to be ameliorated and even though suicide by truck, when it is identified as such, is excluded from the road toll. Where there is some doubt, it is included in the road toll. The statistic we put in our submission, which is verified, is quite frightening. That 37-and-a-half—

The CHAIR: That is—so what is the percentages?

Mr CALVER: —percent of road deaths where there is a light vehicle, and a heavy vehicle were attributable to suicide by truck. Absolutely extraordinarily large numbers. It is a terrible phenomenon. So, it—there is a range of factors that are published every year by the National Transport Accident Research Centre, which detail the cause of heavy vehicle crashes, particularly in rural and regional areas and that report for this year is overdue but I will send a copy to the Committee when it is published.

The CHAIR: All right, so thank you. Mr Calver, just come back there. Could you just elaborate a little bit more about this suicide by truck? Thirty-seven-and-a-half percent, you are talking about intentional suicide. They are driving into light vehicles. Is that what—is that my understanding of it?

Mr CALVER: Yes. Where people are choosing, unfortunately, to take their lives by deliberately driving into a heavy vehicle. A truck.

The CHAIR: Okay so yes, you are talking about a light vehicle driving into a semi. Okay, as a source of—

Mr CALVER: Yes, well—

The CHAIR: As a suicide. I was not—

Mr CALVER: —any heavy vehicle. Yes, yes, and it is something that we are increasingly concerned about because even though it is—we think it is a road safety issue, it was not included in the Federal Government's Road Safety Strategy and that is why we mention it in our submission to this Committee and I will just go to the paragraph number where [inaudible]—

The CHAIR: Is it increasing? Is that increasing?

Mr CALVER: Well, yes, it is because that percentage is disturbing; 37.5 per cent of fatal truck and car

crashes multi-vehicle incidents in 2017 when it was last measured were indicated or strongly indicated to be suicides by the driver of the car and members—my members, have reported that light vehicle drivers often speed up and direct the vehicle to an on-coming truck as a means of committing suicide. It is simply tragic and—

The CHAIR: So, they do—they are going head on. Head on? Sorry to interrupt you but—

Mr CALVER: No, no, no. Please.

The CHAIR: No head on?

Mr CALVER: Well, it does not need to be head on to cause death but—

The CHAIR: No, no, I understand that.

Mr CALVER: —yes, quite often. Quite often, yes. So, it is an increasing means of people committing suicide, which is absolutely tragic, and we draw it to the Committee's attention because it is—

The CHAIR: Terrible.

Mr CALVER: —something we know happens on rural and regional roads.

The CHAIR: Okay so why does that—it is more prevalent on rural and regional roads?

Mr CALVER: We believe so, yes.

The CHAIR: Okay. Yes. Any other questions? No? Nothing? Oh, Mr Hassall, sorry, do you—you have something further to add or did you want to say something?

Mr HASSALL: In terms of the suicide issue?

The CHAIR: Either one or the previous question, does not matter.

Mr HASSALL: So yes, the suicide is a tricky one. It tends to be separated out from the mainstream road safety figures, so it is a bit difficult to say, well what proportion is it and which way is the line going? But it is certainly something that we have seen, and our staff have been exposed to as well. There is a lot of stress being experienced by people out on the roads all manifesting in those events.

In terms of things that—as a sort of general wrap up of things that could be done, we put a few recommendations in our submission but really, safe scheduling practices to ensure that drivers are not pushed into unrealistic timeframes, improved rest areas so that they can safely break up their rest and do not have to drive or feel they have to drive to arbitrary timelines. Probably some purchasing decisions, better information for operators and even for Government who contracts with those parties to make sure that they are using the newest and safest commercially, realistically available vehicles and of course, the education and training issues we talked about in relation to light vehicle drivers and young light vehicle drivers in particular.

The CHAIR: No, thank you. I think we are out of time. Well, I like to thank you both for appearing before the Committee today. You will both be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. I do not believe there was any questions or notice? No, no there was not. Oh, Mr Hassall did. Yes. Sorry, you took a question on notice today and that will be forwarded to you by the Committee staff. Thank you both again for your time today.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

SIMON O'HARA, Chief Executive Officer, Road Freight NSW, sworn and examined

MATT THRELKELD, Executive Director, BusNSW, affirmed and examined

JOHN KING, President, BusNSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you. Who would like to start off with making a short opening statement before we begin the questions?

Mr O'HARA: Yes, I am happy to proceed if—

The CHAIR: Yes, thank you, Mr O'Hara.

Mr O'HARA: —that is satisfactory?

The CHAIR: That's fine. Please proceed.

Mr O'HARA: Road Freight NSW appreciates the opportunity to appear today before this inquiry. I would note for the industry that the rating system, including regional and rural roads is effectively the heavy vehicle industry's workplace. Truckies, more often than not, use roads more than light vehicle drivers and commuters at all hours under work informed by freight operators. Many heavy vehicles are already speed limited to 100 kilometres per hour, in some cases, to 90 kilometres per hour. Speed limits and travel times are extremely important for freight operators and their customers, reducing speed limits may not deliver safer outcomes. What will deliver safer outcomes? Infrastructure and significant improvement to rural and regional roads, including but not limited to road widening and overtaking lanes would provide safer outcomes for the community and the heavy vehicle industry alike. It would also deliver significant productivity for New South Wales and the Australian economy.

During the bushfires in 2019, it became apparent that some rural and regional roads, including major arterials required greater flexibility to allow contraflow for traffic and there needed to be some design around greater flexibility, particularly for use during emergency situations. We had members who lost drivers. They were directed by New South Wales police to immediately leave these major arterials and turn around. They could not turn around because they had a truck and a trailer, and it became traumatic. Then, of course, we have got this situation with floods which is perceived in lots of ways but equally devastating. Education for light vehicle drivers, particularly in relation to their introductions with heavy vehicles are extremely important and you need the evidence from the previous group in relation to this.

Post COVID driving—and I say this anecdotally, seems to have deteriorated due to a lack of driving experience during the lockdowns. You have a lot of people locked down and they were not driving. That has been borne out on the roads. Metropolitan rest areas for drivers, for instance. We have members who come into Port Botany for container drop offs and pick-ups and have nowhere to rest or wait after their long journey from rural centres. We have members from Wagga, we have members from Wollongong that come in and find it very difficult to be able to find anywhere to rest. In fact, they are moved on lots of the time. Drivers need proper rest areas that regularly clean and have space for them to rest and meet their fatigue and chain of responsibility requirements and on this point, we are as one with the Transport Workers' Union in terms of their submission in relation to rest areas and fatigue.

Just remember also that urban road networks affect rural roads and any diminution of a program such as the Port [inaudible] Government Strategy [inaudible], would potentially have a negative flow-on affect to operators across the state in terms of safety. For [inaudible], both urban roads and rural roads, it is not [inaudible] regionally and rural operators just stay within that particular geographic location, they move across the metropolitan areas as well. Some roads, particularly after flooding and some neglect through the pandemic need urgent repair and upgrade as well.

New vehicle technology, heavy vehicle technology, is moving in leaps and bounds. It is truly astonishing. New heavy vehicles have the most cutting-edge technology on them, including after-market installation of further safety technology so when you are looking at light vehicles versus heavy vehicles in terms of safety technology, heavy vehicles are actually a lot safer and ahead of the game in terms of that particular safety technology. So, they are cutting edge and it is not [inaudible] to say that. It is likely that this technology will deliver greater safety for truckies and the community at large as we progress on. Our members have made significant and large investments over the generation into new trucks with safer technology and also post-purchase of safety systems in the forms of Tolomatic and active intervention safety systems. Our members put safety first. I would [inaudible] automated vehicles and I note some of the evidence given this morning and questions around automated vehicles are still some way off and would require a level of investment in roads and any vehicles that would be substantial.

Variable speed limits. Heavy vehicle drivers drive at all times of the day and night with rest areas that require upgrade and new ones that need to be built. Sometimes road signage is confusing in the rural and regional areas. Signage needs to be correct for the roads that are being driven on. Consistency is required for regional roads to deliver safer outcomes. I would note that higher productivity vehicles deliver greater productivity and mean that the number of trucks on roads are reduced.

Lastly, I just note road freight is an essential service. I would suggest that as the pandemic has illustrated, road freight is essential for our community and that its operations should have greater focus on it through the bureaucracy at all levels in terms of driving safety and also productivity in our rural and regional roads. I would note that New South Wales is a through-state so regional and rural roads are extremely important for freight operators in other states and essential for the supply chain in Australia. Thank you very much for the opportunity for providing this submission.

The CHAIR: No opening statements from other gentlemen?

Mr THRELKELD: Yes, I would like to make a statement.

The CHAIR: Mr Threlkeld, go ahead.

Mr THRELKELD: Good afternoon. My name is Matt Threlkeld. I am the Executive Director at BusNSW. I am joined by the President of BusNSW, John King, who operates bus and coaches in regional New South Wales.

BusNSW is the peak body for the New South Wales private bus and coach industry. Our mission is to foster the efficient and sustainable growth of public transport in New South Wales and to promote the benefits of bus and coach travel. BusNSW members provide bus services under Transport for NSW contracts in Greater Sydney and in regional and rural areas of New South Wales. There are approximately 500 bus operators who deliver rural and regional bus services in the state. BusNSW also represents operators who provide long distance tourist and charter services in New South Wales.

In regional New South Wales, some Transport for NSW contracted operators exclusively provide dedicated school bus services whilst others provide a combination of both school services and regular route services. Regional New South Wales has close to 4000 bus routes and nearly 90 per cent of these are dedicated school bus routes. Buses are often required to set down and pick up children on roads that are sign posted with a speed limit up to 100 kilometres per hour in regional New South Wales and as such, BusNSW members have a special interest in this inquiry. BusNSW understands that two-third of fatalities occur on country roads and the fatality rate on country roads is four times higher than on urban roads. Given the number of passengers that buses carry, a bus related incident is likely to be a major safety concern. However, many road safety initiatives tend to focus on cars.

In recent years, the bus industry has become increasingly concerned with the behaviour of motorists in the vicinity of school buses, particularly in regional New South Wales. There seems to be little adherence to the 40-kilometre speed limit rule among motorists in regional New South Wales. This is despite the Transport for NSW bus flashing lights campaigns that are run at the start of each school term. BusNSW would like to see greater enforcement of the 40-kilometre per hour when lights flash rule to ensure motorists slow down to 40 kilometres per hour when passing a bus that is picking up or setting down school students, similar to the on-road enforcement by the NSW Police Force in school zones.

We look forward to ongoing consultation with the industry on this important topic and thank the Committee for the opportunity to participate in the inquiry. We are happy to take any questions in relation to our submission.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed. I will pass you over to Honourable Fred Nile.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Good, thank you, Mr Chairman. Submission 61 states school buses and regular route services compete for space on local roads, and this impacts the safe operation of those services. Are more designated bus zone lanes the answer? Another point that was raised in submission 61 is designing roads that have better access for passengers with disabilities. Have you had feedback from the elderly and disabled regarding what provisions they would like to have? Thank you.

Mr THRELKELD: I might start, then I will ask John to also comment.

The CHAIR: Mr Threlkeld.

Mr THRELKELD: Thank you. Yes, look we have only got anecdotal evidence in terms of feedback from our membership but certainly in terms of infrastructure in regional New South Wales to support the setting down and picking up of passengers and particularly those with disabilities, that we consider that there is some room for improvement. We understand that the investment required for that infrastructure is quite significant and obviously there is other priorities that need to be taken into consideration.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes, Mr Chairman?

The CHAIR: Yes, Shelley.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes, look, during the last period that we heard from witnesses talking about heavy vehicle regulations and lack of awareness of the public about heavy vehicles on the roads, I see quite regularly and John, you would know this, that so many bus drivers in particular, I think are in a more perilous situation because they have been forced onto very, very narrow country roads. One lane, sometimes.

I just—my question to previous witnesses was how can we increase awareness of these problems? Because obviously things are not necessarily working all that well and could work better. I know you have talked about enforcement, Matt, but in the face of not always being able to have a policeman at every bus route, can we—and this was my suggestion, can we in our L-plate, P-plate, do you think, education process, increase awareness of at least our young drivers when they are going to get a licence, about the problems that buses have with stopping, slowing down, getting around a round-about and how we should just allow the bus to get around the round-about without trying to overtake them? It seems to me there is a lot of ignorance on the roads about heavy vehicles and buses in particular, because they have to negotiate school accesses which are not always the best. So that is the first

thing about education in L-plate and P-plates. I suppose—well I will ask that question first. What is your view on the education process that we are actually providing for our young people during their education process with L-plates and P-plates?

Mr KING: It is definitely—I fully agree that we should do a better campaign and particularly in relation to trying to get more information out there. To get it to the younger generation who have just come off school buses in a big way and getting into that car and the P-plate, the education is imperative that we actually do something with that. [inaudible] be an issue. I think it is a general training and education across the board.

We do not [inaudible] many P-plate [inaudible] at 100 kilometres an hour when we are pulling up at informal bus stops that are inadequate to really [inaudible] at times. However, we do safety audits [inaudible] those, do see that the general awareness around it. But I will just add to that too and we do, in our group and sure that the industry does it as well and Matt and I try to educate that as a platform, we have got to educate the parents. If the parents are involved in these informal bus stops on safety speeds, then maybe we [inaudible] halfway there.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes, I agree and the second part to my question was—and it came as a surprise that the heavy vehicle witnesses that appeared just previous to you, I asked them the question, was—are—is the bus industry in particular involved in either the design of new highways or the upgrade of older highways, as is occurring on the Princes Highway and if you are not, shouldn't you be, because they were not necessarily. It was a very ad hoc involvement of the heavy vehicle industry into the design of new roads and highways.

Mr THRELKELD: Yes, certainly the bus industry is not directly involved so yes, I think there is an opportunity there for some better consultation with the industry around those particular issues.

Mr O'HARA: Just in relation to that question, if I may? Just from the heavy vehicle point of view, Road Freight NSW. Look, in fairness, we have had consultation with Transport for NSW and building contracts amongst others, in relation to these two things over the years and the first was involving—and the most recent was the heavy vehicle rest areas in rural and regional New South Wales. So, what we had was a round table of discussion done via Teams which meant effectively that not only were we involved but also we invited operators along so that we could have those guys and girls who do the work provide their feedback about specific rest areas. That was quite productive.

The second point I would raise is—and this is in relation to particularly the bottom of Mount Ousley. We have had direct discussions over the years with Transport for NSW and their contractors about what the situation is for heavy vehicle drivers using that particular road and the upgrades that are proposed, what that means. So, we were able to provide feedback that they took on board and they took forward with us in terms of what we saw as being important for heavy vehicle drivers in terms of both gradients but also safety features of those upgrades. So, there has been consultation. Of course, we would like more but from our perspective, there has been consultation in fairness.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: All right. Okay, thank you. Thank you for that, all of you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mister—

Mr THRELKELD: If—

The CHAIR: No, no, go ahead.

Mr THRELKELD: If I could just make a quick comment in relation to the first question around education? I think government and the industry does a reasonable job in terms of our Be Bus Aware campaign and bus safety week but I guess that is focussed on a particular time of the year and does provide information in relation to risks around buses, based on their size, weight and the fact that they cannot slow down quickly but I think there is definitely an opportunity there to try to better educate kids coming through the provisional licensing system at that early stage of their life and I assume the same would apply in terms of the truck sector.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Yes, I agree. Thank you, Matt. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Hara, in the submission from Road Freight NSW it said a review of speed limits relative to road conditions across regional New South Wales will help address safety on our roads. Can you talk us through that?

Mr O'HARA: Sure.

The CHAIR: Why Road Freight NSW wants this review and the outcomes you would like to see coming from it? I also welcome comments from BusNSW on this issue.

Mr O'HARA: Thank you, Chairman, I appreciate the question and for the transcript, Simon O'Hara, CEO of Road Freight NSW. In relation to road conditions and speed limits, what we would like to see is the speed limits

being as correct as possible for particular roads and I note that some speed limits are reviewed, particularly after incidents and accidents but what we have found in the past is that sometimes the—not only the speed limits but also the description of the road through signage has not always been as effective for heavy vehicle drivers as it could be.

In terms of the outcomes that we would like to see from this particular review and inquiry, we would like to see greater investment, particularly in infrastructure. What we are seeing over the course of at least two-and-a-half years is a number of things. We have seen fire; we have seen a pandemic and now we have seen floods. Some of the rural and regional roads are in desperate need of upgrade to ensure that they are fit for purpose. So, from our perspective, it is about funding, but it is also about ensuring that we target particular areas. Particular blackspots for not only heavy vehicles but also the light vehicles in terms of funding those improvements and those upgrades for roads.

I note particularly the interaction between heavy vehicles and light vehicles. There is a dynamic there that it can be problematic at times and that a lot of the time falls [inaudible]. Sometimes lack of experience of the light vehicle driver, sometimes conditions. From our perspective, what we would also like to see is greater education and tested education from light vehicle drivers. That might take the form of the tests that L- and P-platers have to perform and pass to be able to get their licenses. From our perspective, we believe that there needs to be a component within those tests that are heavy vehicle-centric so that it is almost separate to the test, but it relates only to heavy vehicles because what we see on the roads are numerous situations involving drivers, whether they be young or inexperienced, that leads to outcomes that sometimes are tragic.

What we would like to see is a greater emphasis on the knowledge of light vehicle drivers and their interactions with trucks. So, for instance, a truck does not stop on a dime. It does not stop, as one of your previous witnesses said, like a BMW, very quickly. Trucks take some time to stop, and particularly light vehicle drivers have a problem in the sense that they like to cut in and the stopping distance for a truck, particularly if it is a B-double or a larger combination, it can be problematic. There is a lot of improvements, but you do not stop weight quickly. It is not the same as a light vehicle and so we would like to see greater education for light vehicle drivers but also tested education where light vehicle drivers at the front end of their experience driving, actually get tested on what they know about trucks, and I think that is essential for the way in which we all interact on the roads.

I note as well that particularly given what we used to call a once in 100-year events are now becoming more regular, so I think the way in which we look at roads has to change. It cannot necessarily be that we look at it in terms of once in 100 years because those once in 100-year events are now occurring—I mean, in the last three years, we have had a number of once in 100-year events. They seem to be getting more frequent based on my math at least. So, we need to ensure that the roads are fit for purpose and particularly that they are flexible. That they are flexible, not only in design but construction, so that we are ready to deal with communities that are cut off, particularly up north. So, from our perspective, this is a great opportunity for what are essential and vital roads for the Australian supply chain being fit for purpose for the future. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Right, thank you. Any comments from Bus?

Mr THRELKELD: I will make a start and then John may wish to follow. Three things in particular for us. First one is that we certainly support the regular review of speed zones and obviously with consideration of the condition of the road and also further to Simon's comments around incidents and accidents.

The second is in relation to signposting for the bus industry and where it is important to make motorists aware of school bus routes on regional roads. The third relates to the use of variable speed limits where possible to consider the relevant weather conditions and also in relation to breakdowns which may involve heavy vehicles, including buses and also cars.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Chair, just—I know, I am conscious of time, we are almost done. I would just ask—

The CHAIR: Yes, a quick one.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Very quick.

The CHAIR: You have not had an opportunity.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: A very quick one to Mr O'Hara. Mr O'Hara, you have mentioned road widening as a way of improving road conditions for heavy vehicles. What else can the re-design of existing roads and the design of new roads be improved to better accommodate heavy vehicles?

Mr O'HARA: So, you would—thank you for the question. Appreciate the question. There is—I think at this point, at this threshold point, what we have got is a situation where we have got roads that are not necessarily as fit for purpose as they could be. So, where they sit currently, perhaps is not where they were in 2019, for instance.

So, from our perspective, there is a base level of need here to address the current road system, much less improving it. So just getting that threshold issue out to one side.

In terms of the improvements and what would occur for some roads, it may be, for instance, that we are looking closely at bypasses and how they operate and where they are needed. There is a number of places that I could name that require an examination of the bypasses but also given that you have got the interaction and you see this on Mount Ousley, particularly, that there is this interaction between the heavy vehicles and the light vehicles. So, what you have got is dedicated lanes, effectively.

At times, on certain roads, there may be a need for those dedicated lanes to be in place but if you have got single lanes on some pretty significant roads and you have got heavy vehicles travelling along and you have got impatient, for instance, light vehicle drivers or you have got people who have to get where they need to get, maybe there is an argument here as well for over-taking lanes being more frequent. Because one of the things that I do see in my travels is—and perhaps it is just me, perhaps I am just seeing this, it is certainly anecdotal, is that the level of patience on the road has decreased. That there is an issue there in terms of the amount of patience people have and every year it seems to—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: There is a lot of faster cars around.

Mr O'HARA: Indeed, and maybe I am just getting older. Maybe I am just getting older but what we need to see is these overtaking lanes in more places so that vehicles can get passed and move on because a lot of trucks are speed limited to 100 kilometres an hour but look, what I have found useful in the past has been some of the education that has come out from Transport for NSW, for instance, in and around A-doubles and whatnot. I thought a particularly good example was the one in which they had a truck parked up and they had cyclists around that truck. I do not know if you have seen that one. They get people up into the cab and they say, can you see the cyclist? They look around and they say no, we cannot see them at all. They open up the door and they go well there is some there and there is some there.

So, this understanding and this empathy toward heavy vehicle drivers as to what they can and cannot see, I think is really important. I thought that was excellent in terms of education, but we need more of it because the interaction between light vehicles and heavy vehicles is deadly and road widening and overtaking lanes, I think will go some way towards addressing that.

The CHAIR: Yes. No, thank you. Mr Butler.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I appreciate that.

The CHAIR: We will go to mister—sorry, Mr O'Hara, we will now go over to Mr Butler.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Mr Chair and there is just a very—

The CHAIR: Last one.

Mr ROY BUTLER: —brief question and I am only seeking a brief response. Just thoughts on previous evidence regarding the consistency of speed limits between road trains and other combinations? The 90, 100, do you think that that should be harmonised, or do you think it should stay the way it is?

Mr O'HARA: I heard that submission. I note that there is a difference in speed limits, and I will take that question on notice.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Okay, well I like to 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 question on notice taken today will be forwarded to you by the Committee. I do not think there was any—yes, that is right, just one, just then. Yes, and thank you all again.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

BERNARD CARLON, Chief, Centres for Road Safety and Maritime Safety, Environment and Regulation, sworn and examined

LOUISE HIGGINS-WHITTON, Director of Road Safety Policy, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you and would anyone like to make a short opening statement?

Mr CARLON: We do have a short opening statement that Louise will give in a moment. I just wanted to acknowledge the tragic loss of the five young lives on Tuesday night at Buxton and just from—

The CHAIR: Terrible.

Mr CARLON: —the Road Safety and Transport for NSW perspective, get on the record, our condolences to the family and the community that have been so tragically affected and also our acknowledgement of the emergency services that attended on that evening as well. Really important the context of why we are here and the great work that has been done over many decades by the Staysafe Committee and our efforts to prevent the loss of life on our roads.

The CHAIR: Yes. No, thank you so much, I could not agree more. I know each and every one of us here on the Committee, we are also each so shocked and shattered by all what has occurred and can only imagine what those families are going through and the community at large. Thank you. Thank you for those kind words.

Mr CARLON: Yes, and Louise does have an opening statement.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: Thank you. I acknowledge the Committee's invitation to appear today in my capacity as Director of Road Safety Policy to support Bernard Carlon, the Chief at Centres for Road Safety and Maritime Safety at Transport for NSW.

The rural New South Wales Road network spans over 200,000 kilometres and it is made up of major highways, state roads and local streets with speed limits ranging from 10 kilometres in high pedestrian shared zones up to 110 kilometres an hour on our high volume and critical corridors. Safe speeds are a fundamental part of the New South Wales Government's Safe System approach to road safety and are critical to the movement of people and freight on roads in regional New South Wales. Our regional connectivity, as well as the freight task, will continue to grow into the future.

Safe speeds on local streets where people live and in regional towns and centres, also deliver vibrant and productive places and communities. Reducing trauma on regional roads is an ongoing commitment for Transport. People living in country New South Wales make up only a third of the state's population but deaths on country roads make up around two-thirds of the road toll. Between 2019 and 2021, speed was a factor in 43 per cent of fatalities on country roads in New South Wales compared to 38 per cent of fatalities on metropolitan roads in the same period.

The Safe System approach that underpins the road safety framework in New South Wales is based on safe road design, safe vehicles, safe travel speeds, as well as safe road user behaviour. Robust international and Australian research consistently shows that safe speed limits save lives and prevent serious injuries. Safer travel speeds can increase the amount of time available to a driver to react to a hazard or correct a mistake reducing the likelihood of a crash. Safer speeds also result in less energy being absorbed by the human body if a crash does occur, thereby reducing the risk of death. The human body can only withstand certain forces before injury or death occurs. Speed limit decreases, where warranted due to risks in the road or roadside environment, land use change, road user mix or crash history, have been shown to save lives.

Transport for NSW is responsible for setting speed limits on all roads and conducts reviews in accordance with the *New South Wales Speed Zoning Guidelines* with input from key stakeholders. This includes our regional teams working closely with and responding to requests raised by local councillors. The reviews consider the physical characteristics of the road and roadside as well as other local factors such as a crash history and land use. The community can also nominate where they feel a speed zone review may be needed.

Under the 2026 New South Wales Road Safety Action Plan, the Government's conducting speed zone reviews on high-risk default speed zones of low quality, high-speed country roads as well as delivering safer speeds in towns. Roads that meet high design standards and have proven safety features may safely support higher speeds. The New South Wales Government is committed to delivering a new towards-zero road safety program by 2030. This involves building a safer road network through safety infrastructure and speed management with the majority of this investment going to the saving lives on country roads program.

The Government has invested \$822 million in the Safer Roads program between 2018-19 and 2022-23, including \$640 million for saving lives on country roads. In August 2022, the Government announced a further \$186 million commitment to the toward zero safer roads program. However, even with the presence of safety infrastructure, increasing speed limits beyond what has been assessed as safe for a length of road may result in the safety infrastructure providing little, if any, safety benefits. Whilst safer design of modern vehicles can help protect vehicle occupants if a crash occurs, crashes at high, high speeds continue to lead to a high risk of fatality. That is why safe speed settings are needed to reduce crashes, especially on narrow and unsealed roads where retrofitting safety infrastructure is challenging.

Available research indicates that New South Wales drivers are generally supportive of and comply with speed limits. There can be a perception that lower speed limits will dramatically increase travel times and hence fatigue, especially in rural areas. However, there is no evidence to support a link between lower speed limits and an increase in fatigue-related crashes. In fact, research shows where speed limits are lower, there is a reduction in net road injury, no increase in effect of fatigue crashes and there is only a slight increase in travel times. There is a substantial safety benefit for the community, noting the cost of road trauma in New South Wales is estimated at \$8.3 billion a year.

The New South Wales Government is committed to improving road safety and has allocated \$2.6 billion towards implementing road safety initiatives in the 2026 Road Safety Action Plan and will—Transport for NSW will continue to work on road safety strategies, policies, programs and community education campaigns to reduce trauma on New South Wales roads. Thank you for the opportunity to attend today.

The CHAIR: Yes, thank you very much and who would like to start off? Yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, happy to ask—

The CHAIR: Yes, Mr Moselmane.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: —a couple of questions. First of all, as I indicated earlier to Mr Carlon about the concerns from Leeton City—Leeton Shire Council for lack of consultation with Transport for NSW or Transport for NSW lack of consultation with Leeton Shire Council and they are extremely frustrated. I have taken up the issue and I think Mr Carlon will address that.

Mr CARLON: Yes, thanks very much and I have had a conversation with our regional staff members who do a great job across New South Wales road network in improving—managing and improving safety and managing the network as well. Particularly in this last 12 months of very significant events which have led to the road network being under considerable stress and they do a really great job.

In relation to the issues that have been raised by Leeton Shire Council, certainly we know there is always room for improvement in the engagement with local government and I have got to say, I appreciate the contributions that many of the local councils have made in the submissions forward to the Committee. They have raised some really important issues around the timeframes for speed zone management as well as consultation, training and other aspects which hopefully, we will be able to have a conversation about this afternoon in terms of where there may be further room for improvement in the way in which we work with local government.

Certainly, in relation to the specific speed zone review that one of them, which was undertaken, did actually go to the—in 2018, to the Councils Traffic Committee and was voted at that Committee and in fact, when it progressed to actually be implemented, it was actually Leeton Shire Council who did the works to put the signage in for that speed zone reduction.

Many councils actually do facilitate that work in speed zone adjustments which are made locally by installing the infrastructure and Transport for NSW funds that process to ensure that. But certainly, in relation to the specific issues that have been raised by Leeton Shire Council, our Community in Place Executive Director is keen to reach out to them and to ensure that we are working collaboratively with them in addressing any issues they might have.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I appreciate your response and my other question relates to—we have heard earlier from Road Freight NSW and others about further safety on our main roads and the Committee has heard that where possible, there should be physical separation of light and heavy vehicles on roads, particularly on key freight routes as a way of reducing—actually it is like dedicated roads. What is the Transport for NSW view on this suggestion?

Mr CARLON: Look, I think with all road users, where there are potential conflicts on the network, whether it be pedestrians and cyclists or cyclists and motor vehicles or heavy vehicles and other road users, having separation is like the ideal outcome in terms of being able to reverse that but of course there is significant infrastructure costs associated with achieving that outcome.

There has been, I think, throughout the days, some useful references to the need for continued education along the lines of our Be Truck Aware and Be Bus Aware campaigns where we are attempting to have all road users understand the limitations of heavy vehicle driver trained responsibly to do their job and get from point A to point B and deliver those goods and services that are absolutely critical to our economy and our Communities and certainly, that is why we continue to run those programs.

Certainly, the way in which our investment strategy on our major routes in terms of when we look back, the last three or four decades in what we have done in relation to the Pacific Highway and essentially cut the travel times in half but also halved the actual fatal crashes that actually occur on that road as well. So, we can achieve those efficiencies in the network.

At the same time, it is improving safety and certainly on the major routes like the Newell and the Princes Highway, you can see a significant investment at the moment to ensure that there is sufficient space and opportunity for overtaking. Those investments, you know, there are record investments in the road network to attempt to give our trucks space on the road but also facilitate the safe movement of all the other road users that also need to get from point A to point B.

So yes, I think the philosophy of actually [inaudible] our road network cannot accommodate everybody separately but whilst we do have the road network that we do have, working towards separation is really critically important for particularly vulnerable road users and meanwhile, the upgrades that are being done right across the network clearly are aimed at ensuring particular on major freight routes that we have that safety as well as productivity embedded in the way in which we are upgrading the network.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I understand your response, thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Butler?

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair and thank you, Mr Carlon, Ms Higgins-Whitton. Just two quick questions. One of the issues that was raised by councils, and I think we have glanced it in the last question, but the timeframes for council requested review of speed limits? When it comes to reductions in speed limits, especially in towns, in CBDs, what is the delay? What takes so long to get that done? I mean a reduction seems to me to be a simpler decision than an increase in terms of safety.

Mr CARLON: I might just start out and have Louise address some of the detail in terms of the processes and probably contest those reductions are always as easy as increases and [inaudible] that there is quite often contested views within communities about reducing speed limits or increasing speed limits.

Certainly, we have systematic process. I think there is always opportunities to improve that, and I think at the moment, we are currently reviewing our speed zoning guidelines and the processes within it. This opportunity for Staysafe to have this at this particular time was a great opportunity for a contribution to actually ensuring that we get some further input to that process as well, but I will hand over to Louise who can talk a little bit about the timeframes and how the process works and clearly councils and others who identify potential improvements, we would be very happy from the Committee to make recommendations along those lines as well.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you.

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: Thank you. Look, I think the council's submissions to the Committee this morning also highlighted some of these factors but the request for speed zone reviews can come to Transport in various ways. So, they are often raised through local traffic committee or directly to Transport for councils. Once Transport becomes aware that a speed zone review is needed, the speed zoning guidelines set out a 10-step process that is gone through. That really guides the technical assessment which is what a speed zone review is, a technical assessment of the environment, to determine what the appropriate speed would be.

That involves looking at factors such as the road itself, the road design itself, the road user characteristics, whether there are vulnerable road users there. The land use in the vicinity of the road and that process can take a couple of site reviews as well as technical assessment and evidence gathering, which is done by us as Bernard mentioned.

Our regional team is out in the regions, so that ensures that we get that local information coming into the decision process. Then ultimately, all speed zone reviews are advised out to council, the decision. Look, the process can take some time. It may depend on the length of the road that you are reviewing and the types of factors that you need to take into account and measure. We may need to potentially do speed surveys and things like that to pull that evidence together to decide what the speed limit should be.

Generally, the process can be completed in a couple of months from the beginning to the end though some more complex speed zone reviews can take a much longer period than that, particularly if you incorporate in from the start to finish, the community consultation and advice that may need to happen at the end. So, it is variable. I would support the comments that Mr Carlon made earlier about there is always opportunity to look at improvement in how long it takes for those reviews to occur.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you and I suppose yes, I am no road safety expert, I just thought a reduction would be something that seems to be a much simpler thing than increasing the speed limit. Next question I had for you was just in regard to particularly the Barrier, Mitchell and Newell highways. What, from your perspective, would need to happen to sustain or support a higher speed limit on those roads?

Mr CARLON: Look, I think that there is significant investment that has happened in particular in the Newell and I note that it is probably about eight years ago now or maybe a little less that the speed zones were actually increased on the Newell accompanied by a significant package of works in terms of increasing the safety features of the network, increasing the number of over-taking lanes on the Newell and a lot of work has actually

gone into that. Meanwhile, I think the key here is always about what our safety outcomes are in relation to that. I know that in the Barrier over the last five years there have been seven fatalities and 168 injuries from crashes and on the Sturt, 293 crashes resulting in 18 fatalities and 300 injured. I think that always there is this balance around how do we design the road network? The vehicles that are using it, the speeds that they are travelling on.

I think like the Pacific Highway, which is a tremendous success in terms of grew up in Taree and I know it used to be a six-and-a-half to longer hour trip to come to Sydney to visit rellies when I was young, which is now three to three-and-a-half hours to get up there. Meanwhile, the safety and the design of that road network is significant investment over many years has halved the number of fatalities and series injuries on the network as well. So, we can achieve both outcomes. I think it does take a significant investment management of the network, the speeds, in order to continue to get that outcome that I think we are all after, which is to reduce the trauma on our roads as well and I think in particular, on the Newell, you can see that the efforts that have gone in over the last 10 years as well, significant efforts to improve the quality and productivity of that road whilst improving the safety outcomes as well.

Mr ROY BUTLER: No, thank you, Mr Carlon and the improvements on the Newell, they came after the reduction to 100 for all vehicles and then the re-introduction of the 110 after we had that concertina effect and bottlenecks and people taking risky overtaking behaviours on the Newell. Is that right?

Mr CARLON: So, I think there was on the back of a significant investment for the upgrade of the network as well and look, we still had last year on the Newell, five fatalities on the Newell last year. Certainly, we want to be trying to balance the—all of those aspects that I have covered, and Louise may want to say something else about the Safe System approach to managing the network so that we get safety outcomes that are balanced as well in terms of vehicle and behaviour and the network itself.

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: Look, I cannot speak to the Newell. I am sure you know more about it than I do but I think it is probably important to note that even when we have a road upgrade or road safety measures are introduced, it does not always necessarily mean that a higher speed will be safe in that environment, particularly if the need for an upgrade may have been driven by the crash history and the potentially the prevailing speed limit before the upgrade may have been inappropriate. What the upgrades may enable is for the road to be safer—safe at that operating speed that was already in place before the upgrade. So, this may depend on the nature of the works that are done and whether they remedy those potential fundamental issues with the road design and enable that standard to be lifted up to a higher speed zone.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you and if I may, Mr Chair, just a follow up? So back to my original question, what would need to happen on those highways to sustain a higher limit of [inaudible] additional investment and understand that. That is money, resources. What sort of changes would you need to see and here, particularly I am asking this question with a view to what recommendations the Committee might be able to make to Government?

Mr CARLON: Yes, look, I think I can refer to the Austroads's guidelines here in the cross-sections that have been designed for different standards of roads for the volume of traffic that those roads can sustain and therefore the speed zones that they can sustain. Certainly, like the Pacific Highway, complete wider lanes, audio-tactile on the roads, wide shoulders, barrier protection on either side of those dual carriageway type facilities. Other—in the Austroads cross-section guidelines, of the sorts of attributes that are actually recommended for those higher speed roads in order to manage both the safety risks associated with being able to sustain a high-speed zone.

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

Mr CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Carlon, just touching on the speed zone earlier, talking about—I think there is a review happening at the moment. Are you able to provide an update on this review?

Mr CARLON: Yes, look, again I will pass to Louise for some of the detail but certainly it has been—I think 2011 was the last time that the guidelines were updated and certainly in the context of the future transport strategy that has been released and the move towards a Movement and Place Framework for our future network and movement for goods, services, people, around New South Wales, that we—it was time to actually re-look at the guidelines in terms of the speed zoning process but also the outcomes for speed zoning as well.

I know there has been a lot of interest from local government in terms of placemaking in a lot of regional centres as well as in the metropolitan area around lower speeds for high pedestrian activity areas which actually, generate more vibrant, liveable places that are actually also safe. Again, similar sort of outcome to the Pacific Highway where we get a whole range of benefits in terms of amenity and safety as well as economic benefits and the way in which those town centres thrive in that environment.

Certainly, that is part of the review process. In terms of the details, I might ask Louise to contribute to that as well so we—and look, I think this process from Staysafe, very timely for us to take on board as well any additional sort of recommendations and thoughts that the Committee may bring forward from the submissions. Certainly, in our reading of the submissions, we have seen some opportunities for incorporating some of the feedback that we

have got from local government as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Carlon.

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: So as Bernard mentioned, the review of the speed zoning guidelines is underway and it is taking into account the advances that have happened since 2011 when the guidelines were last published in research and practice in road safety but also in the development of the Movement and Place Framework, as Bernard mentioned. The New South Wales Government Movement and Place Framework, in an attempt to make sure that our road function and our speed limits are more closely aligned.

So nice example of a gap currently in our speed zoning guidelines is implementation of 30-kilometre, high pedestrian area zones. That is not currently covered off in the speed zoning guidelines, but we know it is something that has the potential to save lives. There is also community demand. So, I note that Moruya was the first regional area in New South Wales to implement a 30-kilometre zone in November last year. That particular piece was only achieved because of the close collaboration that was really led by the council there, and the community, to make the town centre a safer place. A more liveable place. So, there are gaps in our guidelines that we are aiming to fix and as Bernard has mentioned as well, there is opportunity to look at the process and see where we can tighten things up and bring it more up to date.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Well, I will go to Reverend Fred Nile in just a minute. Just another question before we go there. In terms of the rest areas, we heard from some of the witnesses earlier. What is happening in that space?

Mr CARLON: Yes, look, I think it is really important. We have seen fatigue over the last decade become an even more critical factor in crashes on our network as well and when we look to the literature and the research, in the health research, there is a very clear pattern of increased sleep dep right across Australia in terms of our lifestyle and the way people are working. So, we have seen a significant increase.

I also comment on the fact that there are our casualty crashes, even in western Sydney, fatigue related have actually increased over that period of time as well. So, the issue of, I suppose our historical view of it being a long trip that actually contributes to fatigue, in fact, there are many people who get into a vehicle, start their day fatigued at the very beginning. So, managing fatigue, taking it from that context of just the long trip to do not get behind the wheel tired, it is critical—

The CHAIR: If I can jump in? Sorry to interrupt you. Jump in, just a classic example. I am sorry to do that to you, Mr Carlon.

Mr CARLON: Yes. No, you are right.

The CHAIR: One of them is [inaudible] because I notice the way I—it just happens the way I have to go home down south. When you leave here, the first stop you have is just before—you have got the Pheasants Nest service stations, the twins, and before that you have got one rest stop but if you have got traffic here and it is usually bumper-to-bumper, you are looking at two, two-and-a-half hours before you can actually stop.

Mr CARLON: Yes, I am just going to comment on a personal practice that—

The CHAIR: Yes. No, [inaudible].

Mr CARLON: No, no, of course. I very often, if I am tired, actually pull over to a residential area, find somewhere safe and may have had a coffee just prior to that and set my alarm for 20 minutes in order to nap because the research is really clear that that 20-minute nap is restorative in terms of your ability and finding a place in residential area and actively managing your own fatigue is really critical.

Going to the point of the heavy vehicle industry's issues around rest stops, which I think is absolutely critical, when we have got more freight happening and we have got more movement and I know that our freight team and our regional team are currently working on a business case to develop infrastructure plan for ensuring that we actually invest into the future in up—not just the existing—upgrading the existing facilities, but looking to where we need to implement additional facilities to manage that growth in the freight tasks that has been mentioned several times today.

Certainly, that is a focus of Transport for NSW, that there is a need to significantly look at that investment as well as the upgrade of facilities in order to accommodate the growth in the freight task and of course the fatigue that actually results from that type of work as well. It does—as well as that, I would just like to reinforce that it is all vehicles on our roads. In fact, the fatigue-related crashes are significantly higher in our passenger vehicles than they are in heavy vehicles because the heavy vehicle industry does have a regime for managing fatigue as well.

That regime is working. We have a lot less fatigue-related crashes on our network in the heavy vehicle industry than we do in our general passenger vehicles but yes, certainly Transport for NSW committed to developing that. I know that the Road Freight Industry Council that Minister Faraway also has initiated, are being

kept abreast of the work that is being undertaken to address those issues.

The CHAIR: Yes. No, thanks, Mr Carlon. Honourable Fred Nile?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you, Chair. In the submission from Transport for NSW, they say that two-thirds of fatalities occur on country roads. The fatality rate on country roads is four times higher than on urban roads. What can be done to reduce fatalities on country roads?

Mr CARLON: Louise, do you want to jump in?

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: So, the New South Wales Government's Road Safety Action Plan has a really strong focus on a range of actions to be taken to reduce the road toll in country areas and those initiatives span across improving the road network itself, ensuring that we get drivers into the safest vehicles that they can afford, ensuring that we have safe road user behaviour and ensuring that we have safer speeds. This is all part of the safe system approach to improving road safety and those initiatives need to be implemented as a whole to deliver real benefits in country areas.

So, some of the highlights from that plan include the towards zero infrastructure program which, as I noted in my opening statement, is an ongoing investment after a record investment over the last five years in delivering safety infrastructure through the Saving Lives on Country Roads program. The addressing of unsafe speeds where we have them is a critical part of that. Also, a range of enforcement and education programs that we need to keep supporting. So, our enforcement delivered by New South Wales Police Force on our regional roads, our public education campaigns, our education through schools and support for young driver education. So, including through our safer driver's program and through our schools as well.

Mr CARLON: Yes, and look, I think Reverend Nile, the—it is a really critical aspect of our recognition that regional communities are significantly impacted by road trauma and 70 per cent of those fatalities that are happening on our regional roads are local people. Mostly within the LGA that they actually reside, those crashes are happening.

We need to address the deficit that we actually already—we do know we have, which is that in the regions, five-star cars, there's 10 per cent less five-star cars compared to the metropolitan area. When we are talking automatic emergency braking, it is 16 per cent of our vehicles in metro area and only 10 per cent in country. When we are talking things like blind spot warning, it is 13.6 in metro and only eight per cent in country. The road network in the region when we look at our star ratings, safety rating of the road network in the region, is significantly lower star rating because of the higher speeds and the enormity of the network out in the region as well.

The CHAIR: Do you know what that is? What the rating is?

Mr CARLON: Yes, we can actually provide that on notice, if you would like. The star ratings but look, it is—we know that the enforcement regimes in the regional areas are less. The distribution of police is thinner in the regions than it is in the metro but just because of a geographic spread. So, these—this is why the Road Safety Action Plan launched by the government in April this year has a really significant focus on investments and projects and programs, initiatives, that will improve that—those deficiencies that we have in our regional areas. Certainly around 70 per cent of the funding that goes to the Safer Roads Program actually goes into upgrading the safety features of the regional road network.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just one final question. In your submission, you mentioned Future Transport 2056, which includes a vision for zero trauma on New South Wales transport network. In addition to all the things you have been sharing, is there anything else you wish to add—

Mr CARLON: Look, I think—

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: —to achieve that?

Mr CARLON: Yes, the best performing countries in the world in terms of road safety over the last 40 years and all the European countries, Norway, Sweden, the UK, for a number of decades now had a vision for zero trauma on their road because they recognised early that these are preventable deaths and preventable serious injuries. If we take a holistic system-based approach to a safe system, certainly, we have done a significant amount of work here and nationally now, there is a Road Safety Action Plan nationally that is agreed to an ambitious target for zero trauma on our roads by 2050 and we have just recently updated that from 2056 to 2050 in our road Safety Action Plan.

We have done the modelling work to see, well if we really fully implemented all of those infrastructure—accelerated infrastructure changes that we need, the safe systems, the enforcement programs, the education programs, the vehicle safety features and got the safest vehicles that we can that are available to come into Australia through our Australian design rules, our modelling shows that we can just, with what we know now, get to 90 per cent reduction by 2050 of our fatalities on our road network.

So, it is possible, and you know, we have seen over the last forty years in road safety, that continuous improvement. You know, from 1980 when we had more than 1300 deaths on our road, down to less than 300 last year when we have had significantly—millions more people and millions more vehicles on our roads, the efforts to implement those safer roads, safer people and safer vehicle initiatives continue to drive down our road toll and certainly the plan for the government is to continue to drive down towards zero for 2050.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: That is most encouraging, and you have our full support to help you achieve that objective. Thank you.

Mr CARLON: I appreciate that.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes, Mr Moselmane.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In your submission, you speak of safe speeds. Can you tell us, what does Transport for NSW mean when it refers to safe speeds?

Mr CARLON: Louise, do you want to start off on that one?

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: Yes. Look, so as a general principle, the safe speed means the appropriate speed for the area. That ensures we have a good road safety outcome while maintaining mobility and amenity or according to the function of the road. So, the safe speed scheme, it will vary according to what type of road environment you are talking about. A safe speed in the Sydney CBD is not going to be the same as on the Mitchell Highway. So that is why the speed setting process is—involves a technical assessment and consideration of all those local factors in particular places. I think that position has really been something that we have heard also this morning from some of the witnesses.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: They were some issues that came through, yes.

Mr CARLON: Yes, and look, I think again, we have our Movement and Place Framework, we want to actually make sure that we have productive and—that we accommodate the essential freight movements and other movement for people to travel across New South Wales in a safe way. In an efficient way and have a safety outcome and the level that we do, clearly have a long way to go to get towards zero when we have 270-odd deaths and 10,000 people admitted to hospital each year with serious injuries.

However, as I said, we started last decade over 400 deaths and we ended it below 300. I will say, some of the particular initiatives around the introduction of the Safer Driver's course for young drivers, you know, in that decade we saw a halving in the number of fatal crashes that young drivers are involved in. With the separation of cycleways, we have—and we have had a growth in cycling as well. We have to continue to look for the appropriate speed matching for where we want people to have that sort of active transport engagement in our towns and cities and regional areas across the state as well.

So having safe speeds that actually manage the interaction between vehicles, as well as the opportunity to continue to thrive as an economy, absolutely critical and I think the Movement and Place Framework that has been now developed actually provides that roadmap forward for ensuring that we have safe speeds that continue to accommodate the new technologies that are being introduced in vehicles as well as on our road network. I think certainly the safety management on the M4 of the smart motorway system is another great example over the last decade of new technology actually being able to manage safer speeds and also the safe movement and efficient movement of vehicles on our network as well.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Appreciate that, thank you.

The CHAIR: Mr Butler?

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you, Chair and just I suppose one question in regard to—let us focus on the Barrier Highway, for example. It is something I would be more than happy for you to take on notice. Is there a willingness or capacity for Transport for NSW or the Centre for Road Safety to actually providing some costings for what it would cost to provide an upgrade that would allow an augmentation speed limit but without increasing the risk to road users?

Mr CARLON: I think certainly I would take it on notice and that essentially would be a matter for our regional division. We would be happy to work closely with them, but we will take it on notice and get back to the Committee.

Mr ROY BUTLER: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Carlon, where speed is identified as a cause of an accident, does Transport for NSW differentiate between accidents caused by driving at an inappropriate speed for the conditions and those caused by driving over the posted speed limit?

Mr CARLON: The [inaudible] detailed analysis of every crash—fatal crash and every crash, serious injury or injury crash reported to police, we also have matched hospital data in terms of the serious injury crashes where people are admitted to hospital as well. When we say that speed is a contributing factor to a crash and we have literally tens of thousands of advisory signs on our network about the appropriate speed for taking a curve on a road as well, we say that well that crash, one of the contributing factors was somebody travelling too fast to negotiate that corner and they left the road carriageway and potentially hit an object on the side of the road, a tree, and that caused a fatal crash.

Understanding the contribution of speeding which may be above the speed limit or may be too fast for the road conditions or for the vehicle type or the experience of the driver are critical factors in us actually designing a safe system and the mitigations that might lead to prevention of that crash in the future. So there—so there is no apologies in actually us interrogating whether driving too fast, whether it be above the speed limit or for the road condition or vehicle type, actually is critical in our understanding of the sort of mitigations that we need to put in place. Whether that be a speed restriction for a particular type of driver, a novice driver, or a speed restriction for a type of vehicle. A heavy vehicle in a particular location where there has been crashes that have happened as a result of losing control. Clearly there are always multiple factors involved in a crash, speed is but one of those. It is the most prevalent and it is in any crash, it is the determinant as to whether the person lives or dies because it is the physical forces of the crash that are determined by the speed at which you collide with another object.

So, it is key to a safe system and certainly, we take into account in all crashes, not just those that may be travelling too fast, whether or not the impact in the crash could have been prevented in some way by some new technology. By some vehicle or safety feature in order to prevent the death or serious injury of the individual and we know that—we have proven over the last 40 years that we can prevent serious injuries and deaths coming down from 1300 down to less than 300.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Excellent.

Mr CARLON: The investment in the—making sure that we have all the evidence available to make decisions, advise government and engage with the community, is really critically important.

The CHAIR: Yes. No, thank you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Hear, hear.

The CHAIR: Any other questions from members? No. Can I—I might make this maybe the last one, we will get an early mark. [inaudible] I was talking to him about variable speed limits. We have got them here in Sydney and obviously it is usually because there has been an accident there or road conditions and so forth. Is transport looking at rural and regional areas as well. I do not know of any rural or regional areas. Now, I realise that the—obviously there is exorbitant cost in there but are we looking into that? That we have variable speed limits in rural and regional areas? At least around the country areas or the towns. So, depending on road conditions, weather conditions, we can up or down the speed limits.

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: Yes, there is certainly no barrier on that occurring if it is appropriate. Within our regional and outer metro division, we have a wet weather speed limit on the M1 which is either 100 when it is dry or—

The CHAIR: Yes, 90 kilometres if it is wet. Yes.

Ms HIGGINS-WHITTON: Yes, so there are circumstances where this can be applied. Could be applied. So, there is no particular barrier or it not happening in regional areas, and it is certainly something that can be looked at in more detail as part of the review of the speed zoning guidelines.

The CHAIR: Last question for you and how do attitudes to speed differ between drivers in metropolitan areas and those in rural and regional New South Wales?

Mr CARLON: So, the attitudes that we measure, in terms of speeding?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr CARLON: I think that our research is pretty clear about this, that the majority of people actually support the speeds that we currently have in place around New South Wales, other than where there are specific community concerns that get raised. The majority of the community concerns that get raised in regional areas, I think we had about 1100 speed zone reviews which happened in the year before last and we have a website where the community members can actually nominate as well as councils are able to nominate. Police were able to nominate. Generally, those nominations for speeding and speed enforcement as well as speed zone reviews—

The CHAIR: Yes, and look, more the attitudes? How does Transport find the attitudes between your metro—people who live in metropolitan areas versus those that live in the rural and regional areas? Is there a difference there? Do you see a difference to their attitudes?

Mr CARLON: No, not that I have got any research or evidence here. I could go back and on notice, provide you with our survey information about how people respond to speeding.

The CHAIR: Yes, you just get an idea of how city people view it versus the attitudes of the rural and country cousins.

Mr CARLON: Yes. I think that over the last, in particular five years or so, there has been a significant increase in the level of responsiveness and understanding of the trauma on our regional roads and people in our regions, better understand now than they did previously, the reality that local people are dying on local roads. We have had significant campaigns which, you know, I think in the last about eight years, I think it is, we did the first regional-only road safety advertising program around safe speeds, fatigue and safe driving.

I think that the response from regional communities has been quite strong in terms of wanting to have safer roads and wanting to have safety attributes added to their roads. Certainly, the interest from local government in regional areas is very, very strong on road safety. I think that is—clearly comes from the ripple effect that the loss of people within those regional communities, people really do understand how important it is when you lose somebody who is close to you in a local and regional community then it resonates very strongly in those communities. Not that it does not in the metropolitan area, but I think growing up in the regional centre, it does particularly because everybody knows a lot more of the people in that area.

The CHAIR: I understand it is happening.

Mr CARLON: So, my own [inaudible] from an evidence base perspective is that we have seen a really significant increase in the engagement with, in particular, local government in our regional centres around road safety and the desire to do more and provided more resources and more access to better information that would inform their own strategies. Certainly, as part of a new action plan we have just this month launched the formal hub for local government, online resource hub for local government for road safety.

Certainly, in the next 12 months we will be developing an online road safety education centre online to make available a more accessible, all of the work that is done within the Centre for Road Safety and other institutions and organisations that have great resources to share with local government in improving road safety outcomes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Very good.

The CHAIR: Yes, very good. If there are no more questions, we will close off. Well, Bernard, as always, it is a pleasure having you here and thank you for all your insight and everything you do. Thank you for joining us today, Louise and that concludes us for today. So, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections and any questions on notice today will be forwarded to you by Committee staff.

That concludes our public hearing for the inquiry into speed limits and road safety in regional New South Wales. I think all the witnesses who appeared before the Committee and I would also like to thank Committee members, the staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services and Committee staff for their participation and assistance. The Committee will now resume its deliberative meeting.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 16:47.