REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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At Sydney on Monday 23 June 2008

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The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

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PRESENT

Mr G. Corrigan (Chair)

Legislative Assembly	**Legislative Council**
Mrs D. Fardell	The Hon. R. L. Brown
Mr D. R. Harris	The Hon. R. H. Colless
Mr D. W. Maguire	Mr I. W. West (Deputy Chair)
Dr A. D. McDonald	
The Hon. G. Souris	

RAYMOND FRANKLIN SOAMES JOB, Acting Director, New South Wales Centre for Road Safety, Roads and Traffic Authority, 260 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, affirmed and examined:

DEPUTY CHAIR (The Hon. Ian West): I welcome Dr Soames Job to the inquiry. Thank you, Dr Job, for appearing before the Committee today and providing evidence to the Staysafe inquiry into young driver safety and education programs. I invite Mr Souris to commence the questions.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I would like to ask you some questions in relation to data collection and methodologies for data collection. What is the process involved in gathering data for the RTA's crash statistics? In particular, is the current data able to reflect all the variables required for making informed policy decisions in relation to young driver safety, or are there deficiencies in the information which you feel ought to be addressed?

Dr JOB: The process is that we collect data on all crashes which are reported to the police and involve any of the following: a fatality, an injury to any person, or any one or more vehicles towed away from a crash. The process for that collection is that police complete forms when they visit the crash scene and in the subsequent follow-up. We also follow up for injuries and fatalities. A fatality is defined as any death which arises from injuries received in a crash and occurs up to 30 days after the crash. So anyone who is admitted to hospital and dies up to 30 days later will still be recorded as a fatality from that crash.

Police record those data directly, and they pass them on to the RTA. They are entered into a very large database for us by a consulting firm, and we analyse them from that database, which is actually held within the Centre for Road Safety.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Are multiple causes dealt with, and are they weighted as well?

Dr JOB: Multiple causes are dealt with. We assign a variety of behavioural factors to the crash, as well as other potential factors. So our crash database will include the nature of the crash; and any error which was made, that is, a material error, such as someone crossed to the wrong side of the road and caused a head-on crash, or failed to give way at a give-way sign and thus had a crash. So there is a kind of material manoeuvre which led to the crash. In addition, there are then estimates of the factors that may have contributed to that. So we have the speed limit, whether or not we estimate that the driver was speeding, ultimately from a thorough analysis of blood if it is taken, or breath as to whether or not they had alcohol on board to an illegal level, and whether there is a belief that they were fatigued or went to sleep—all of those behavioural factors are noted.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: And vehicle defects?

Dr JOB: If it is identified by the police as a factor, it will be in our crash database. International research suggests that vehicle factors are very small contributors in terms of the factors that contribute to the cause of the crash. I do not think that means we should not focus on vehicles in road safety, but I think the key focus on vehicles should be about improving their crash-worthiness and the features of them that make them safer, rather than focusing on the extent to which they directly contribute to the causation of that crash.

In terms of whether or not that database is perfect, or whether or not there are things I would like to have in it, there is more information I would like to have. I am not sure that we can get it. If you look at the worst case scenario, it is a single-vehicle off-road crash on a rural road, with no witnesses, and the police turn up to a fatality when the vehicle is found five hours later. Now, someone is going to attempt to estimate whether the driver was speeding and lost control, or whether they were fatigued and went to sleep in the middle of the night, or whether they were distracted and did not notice the curve. There is not any perfect scientific way to retrospectively get that information. So there are things about that database which, in the ideal world, I would want to improve. Though I think, in terms of international best practice, it is a really top-quality database, it is still not perfect.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: When we hear that 40 per cent of road accidents involve speed, and we hear some other percentages, and we add them all up, we can get 300 or 400 per cent. What meaning can one get out of that?

Dr JOB: I understand the question. It is not obvious. If you add up the behavioural factors we give, they will add up to, I think, from recollection, a little over 100 per cent in our case. The reason for that is that the factors are neither exclusive nor inclusive. By that I mean, one crash may have multiple factors; so we

may have a person who is drink-driving and not wearing a seatbelt. Both of those factors would be identified in our list of behavioural factors contributing to the crash or the severity of the crash.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: Do you not assign a principal cause? In that case, surely it would be drink-driving.

Dr JOB: In that case it is evident that the seatbelt did not materially cause the crash; it contributed to the severity of it, potentially. So, in that case, you are right, it is fairly obvious. In other cases, it is not. For example, they may be fatigued and talking on a mobile phone. In that circumstance, it is very difficult to assign the principal cause. What we do is simply identify that we believe speeding was a factor, or we do not believe it was; or we believe fatigue was a factor, or we do not believe fatigue was a factor in the crash. So you will have some cases where there is more than one factor. You will also have some cases where there are no factors. It is even complex at the other end, in that in some cases there is just no way to assign a factor. You have this single-vehicle crash and you simply do not know what the cause was. So some of them will have no factors assigned, and some of them will have one factor assigned, and some of them will have multiple factors assigned.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Are they mostly multiple?

Dr JOB: At a scientific level, I would agree with you that most would be multiple in the ultimate analysis of what causes a crash and its severity, in that if someone goes off-road on a left-hand bend, then one can argue: If we did not have the left-hand bend there at all, even if he was asleep he would not have gone off the road there. So, in a sense, you could assign the road as a factor in many crashes. I think you are right in saying that many crashes will have multiple behavioural factors, but I do not think our crash database would necessarily identify them. So a large number of the crashes will have a single factor assigned to them in our crash database, even if it were the case that more factors were actually involved but we cannot identify them.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Dr Job, you talk about crashes and their after-effects. Is there any work being done on the motor vehicles involved? For example, in regard to older motor vehicles that are not fitted with airbags compared with modern vehicles with updated technology, are you doing any comparisons about the effectiveness of those airbags and whether a life has been saved because of such technologies? We do tend to think that because cars are developing they are far safer now. My local Holden dealer maintains that the more older cars that are put off the road, the lower will be the road fatalities, just because of the improvements in engineering in modern vehicles.

Dr JOB: It is a good question because it is a complex issue. I will go to the last point first. I would agree with your dealer: the more older cars we have got off the road, and the more newer cars we have got on our roads, the more we can potentially reduce the road toll. One of the unfortunate misperceptions in the community is that big old solid cars will actually help in a crash. They won't. You actually want the opposite. For good crash protection, you want a car that will collapse in a safe way, in front of you, not where you are, so that it does not transfer all of the brutal force of that deceleration direct into your body, but spreads it over a distance. So if it concertinas for half a metre, then that G force, instead of stopping you abruptly, is spread over half a metre, and you get a dramatically different injury outcome. So I think in broad terms that observation by your Holden dealer is correct.

In terms of what work is going on: There is quite a bit of research going on in this area. There is not research of exactly the form that you might say: Well, in that particular crash I can guarantee you that that person lived because of an airbag. Indeed, that is generally not true of seatbelts either. The reason we know that seatbelts work is that we said, "From this day, seatbelt wearing is compulsory." So we went from a wearing rate, with huge education campaigns, in the low 20s percentage to a wearing rate of 96-odd per cent. So you could see a huge reduction in the road toll from that day. There is no equivalent point for airbags because this car introduced it at one point, and another introduced it at another point, and so on.

Then at different points passenger airbags were introduced as well. So the technology has been gradually introduced to the market, rather than suddenly coming into effect on one day. So there is not an equivalent data source for the airbags. However, there are two very significant data sources, to which the RTA is the major contributor. The first one is the Australian New Car Assessment Program [ANCAP]. That program assesses the overall safety of vehicles. So we directly crash-test in a front-on test and a side-impact test and in some cases a pole test of those vehicles. The ones that have an airbag will come out with better safety ratings than those that do not have airbags, and that is apparent.

There is, however, another very important work going on that is more akin to the direct real-world question you asked: that is, the used car safety ratings. So, in addition to the ANCAP ratings of new cars as

they come out is a ratings system for the performance of existing cars, based on their real crash histories. That is based on getting the crash histories of numerous vehicles, not just in New South Wales but nationally, and examining what was the severity of the outcome of that crash, compared with another crash which we can find which is comparable but in a different vehicle. By collating a huge amount of data on crash injury severity you can rate the safety of used cars, and we publish those data in brochures, and you can find them on various web sites. So those data do indeed exist.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: With young people, speeding is the main cause of motor vehicle accidents, as we read from notes that are coming through. Do you get any data at all from the police on a young person who has been repeatedly picked up for speeding? Is that coming across your way?

Dr JOB: It is. It comes to us directly. Any offence, like speeding or running a red light and a whole variety of other offences, has direct consequences in terms of licensing. So, for example, any speeding for a P1 driver means loss of licence. It is just straightforward; that is it. It is not a demerit points thing; you have just lost your licence. You will have demerit points as well, but you have lost your licence. For any other driver caught speeding or committing a large number of other offences there are demerit points, or there is a licence loss/disqualification by a court, for example, for drink-driving. All of the records against a person's diver's licence are kept by the RTA. All of that information comes to us, and we keep a record of their licence. So we do indeed have all of that information.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: When it comes down to a situation of a graduating licence, when making decisions on P-platers and what you need to do to tighten the system, do you look at all that data?

Dr JOB: Yes, indeed. Our policy group, to give you a broader perspective, is in part based on the crash database; it is in part based on the offence database, which is the database that we generate from those licence records; and it is also based directly on specific research projects that we do, which may be about attitudes and knowledge when they are face-to-face, or questionnaires sent out in the mail, or they may be telephone questionnaires, and we do a lot of behavioural observation on the road of how people drive, or how people cross the road and so on.

In addition, of course, we evaluate specific features of the road, and we collect data for specific features in order to create policy and what we should change, and we scan the research of other organisations around the country and internationally. So we are not re-inventing the wheel. We look at what other people have discovered and see whether we can make use of that. So there are a whole range of sources of research and information that go into the policies that we create—much more than the crash database, although that is obviously a primary factor for us in terms of understanding the extent and the nature of the problem that we face in New South Wales.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Dr Job, I refer you to the data that you presented on page 6 of your report.

Dr JOB: Is this the original submission?

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Yes. I refer to particularly the table that shows the reduction from 2000 to 2006, and the difference in impact as you go up the age scale.

Dr JOB: I must be on a different page.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: It is page 6 of 18.

Mr NORDIN (Senior Committee Officer): These are the answers to supplementary questions.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I am sorry.

Dr JOB: I will just find that.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: While you are looking for that, I will bring that into the question. The general trendline for road fatalities shows a decline over the last ten years. Would you generally accept that?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Is this part of a general trend in comparable jurisdictions? In other words, is what we are seeing in New South Wales just following a national trend, or otherwise? Secondly, if it is showing the effect of something we have done here in New South Wales, to what extent do you attribute this decline to the RTA's policies and programs? I am not asking you to be absolutely definitive, but have you got a gut feel as to what you think are the one or two things that might have made a difference, if in fact New South Wales is standing out? If it is not standing out, if it is just part of a general decline, why is it just a general decline?

Dr JOB: First of all, let me address the general decline issue. I hear it a lot that the road toll in New South Wales is only down because petrol prices have gone up and so people are driving less, or because cars have become safer across the whole community and so we are doing better, or, as some people have said to me, the cost of air travel has gone down so people are driving less than they are flying, as a matter of preference, et cetera. I think all of those are categorically wrong as accounts.

My reasons are, first of all, you do not actually find that the amount of flying is remotely likely to have much impact on the amount of driving. The amount of driving in travel is gigantic. Second, if people do reduce certain kinds of trips, you do not necessarily get a road safety benefit. If we reduce the number of cars in peak hour, I do not think we would see a road safety benefit at all because people would actually be going at faster speeds, with greater gaps between them. You might actually get a worsening of the road toll. So the relationship is not immediately obvious.

But, most importantly, it is very particular to New South Wales. I think that is really the compelling point here. Let me cite you some data. The road toll reduction in New South Wales for the last five years, from 2003 forward, has been a net 17 per cent reduction in the toll of fatalities. Over that same time, the rest of Australia has gone up 8 per cent.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: So it is specific to New South Wales?

Dr JOB: At various times, various other States have gone down and up. So, in any given year, you would find more than one State going down. But, overall, New South Wales has gone down every year for the last five years, and today we are down 41 on the same period last year. So, if we keep that up, we will have gone down for six years in a row. New South Wales has never in history gone down for six years in a row before, and we have kept records since 1908. So, in 100 years, it will be the first time we have gone down for six years in a row. Fingers crossed that we do that for the rest of this year.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: So the real question was the second question: Why?

Dr JOB: Why? I think there are a number of elements to that. First of all, we have a very effective engineering road safety program in terms of black spot treatments and in terms of the highway reviews. I know I have talked about the highway reviews here before, but I think they are sticking to us very strongly in terms of reducing the road toll. We did a large review of the Pacific Highway section from Hexham to the Queensland border. The year we started that review there were 55 fatalities on that road. When we finished the three years of works we saw 25 in the year—more than halving the road toll.

We did the Princes Highway—just in case that seemed like a fluke—and let me recite to you the data there. It went from 24 fatalities a year to 4 fatalities a year. If you look at the total number of fatalities we are reducing, those are a large proportion of that road toll reduction for the given years that they contributed to, but they are not the whole story. I think the pattern of data indicates several other things. Our overall speed management has been extremely effective, so I think we have bitten into speed as a core problem.

I have very good data to defend that claim. First of all, the percentage of our fatalities last year which were speed related dropped compared with the previous several years. Second, I think it is very logical to expect the programs we have conducted would have produced that effect. We have rolled out more speed cameras in school zones, and that focuses people on speed limits and avoiding speeding, especially in school zones, but more generally as well. We have had a very successful education campaign in the pinkie campaign, the No-one Thinks Big of You campaign. All of our tracking and research on that says that, for the target group, 17- to 24-year-old males, that has been a really effective campaign. We know that speeds have gone down—not just speed-related serious crashes have gone down, but speeds have gone down. We survey all of our roads every year at the same time, so we have numerous sites where we survey people in 60 kilometres an hour zones, 60 kilometres an hour zones and 70 kilometres an hour zones, et cetera, and we know that over those zones speeds dropped by a few kilometres an hour.

A few kilometres an hour in speed may not seem like a large drop, but in real road safety terms the effect is profound. Good international analysis suggests that a 1 kilometre an hour reduction in speed will yield around a 3 or 4 per cent reduction in the road toll. So it is a really profound effect. If people go from travelling at 61 to 60 kilometres an hour in a 60 kilometres an hour zone, that is how much effect you get. So, when you look at our road toll reduction, which last year was around 10 to 11 per cent, then those figures suggest that around 6 or 7 per cent of that was due to a reduction in speeds.

The third factor that I think has contributed is the kind of thing that we have been talking about in recent conversations here, and that is that new processes for P1 and P2 and, I think eventually, L-licences.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: So the graduating licensing system. Is that what you are referring to?

Dr JOB: The graduated licensing system was introduced several years ago, and I think at that time it produced benefits. But what I am referring to now are the changes to the particular requirements: so the zero tolerance of speeding by P1s, the passenger curfew, the total ban on mobile phone use, et cetera. That whole package has produced, I think, a significant reduction. In fact, one of the ancillary questions that Dr McDonald asked was whether that was a statistically significant effect. We went back and examined that. To get more numbers into it, to make it more powerful, when we include the fatalities and the injuries, there is a statistically significant reduction in P1 involvements in that road trauma. I think that it is a pretty powerful argument that we have actually produced a benefit there.

However, I would say that benefit has not been generic. We have not seen a big reduction in P2s. We have seen a big reduction in P1s. So it is quite a specific program effect. I am really hitting the highlights there. However, in road safety you can never just focus on those wins and walk away from your other programs. Lots of other programs are contributing, but because we do not have definitive background data I could not prove it to you as strongly as those ones. I think, for example, we are getting more bite into drug-driving with random drug testing. I base that on the profound logic that it is fear of being caught that affects that kind of behaviour. Because people are so confident, their fear of crashing does not have much effect. The fear of being caught has a significant effect.

A whole heap of other programs maintain the gains that we have had. If we stopped doing random breath testing because we want to focus on these ones where we are winning, we will lose. It is a multi-headed monster, and you have got to keep banging those heads and keep them down on all these fronts for your gains to actually come to fruition, because you are not losing ground everywhere else. So there are a great many activities conducted that actually lead to a reduction in the road toll, but those are the ones where we can clearly identify the reductions.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: You mention three there. When you put those three arguments, did you have them ordered in terms of what you felt was the most effective? You said engineering, speed and then the testing and limiting regime for the P1 drivers. Is it all three of those in combination?

Dr JOB: It is all three in combination. In terms of how much each has contributed, I could not give you a definitive answer.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I would like to touch on a couple of things. You spoke about the reduction in speed brought about by the installation of cameras at school zones et cetera. I would suggest to you that the Council of Australian Governments agreement to introduce 50 kilometres an hour zones all across New South Wales probably has had a desired effect as well, and that you are starting to see the result of that in the reduction of speeding in towns. What statistical information do you have that the introduction of speed cameras in school zones has actually reduced the number of deaths in school zones? Do you have some comparisons for us?

Secondly, I am perplexed today to read that over the weekend that a number of drivers were caught speeding—one, a P-plater under 25 years of age, was doing 217 kilometres an hour on the Hume Highway, and doing 140 kilometres an hour in an 80 kilometres an hour roadworks zone; a 17-year-old male was charged with speeding and failing to display his P-plates; after midday, a 24-year-old learner was caught doing 146 kilometres an hour on the Hume Highway near Mittagong; and a 20-year-old P-plater from Shalvey was caught after she allegedly hit 161 kilometres an hour on the Hume Highway.

You mention mobile phones. Well, every second driver had a mobile phone held to their ear. I drive to work and I observe that and take note. What is your approach to that? Clearly, these people are still ignoring the rules. I acknowledge that you say that the real effect comes from fear of being caught. I would

say those are three examples that have been identified, and there were probably a hell of a lot more that did not get caught. What else are we going to do to try to bring these people into line?

Dr JOB: You certainly have asked me a lot of questions there, Mr Maguire. Let me go back and try to cover them. First of all, I agree with you that the 50 kilometres an hour speed limits have helped. The reason that I did not focus on those for the last few years is that they were introduced prior to the last few years. I do think they have helped. We have done analyses of specific locations where we have introduced them. For example, there was a lot of concern about them in Orange. So we did an analysis around Orange and Bathurst and found a more than one-quarter reduction in crashes with the introduction of a 50 kilometres an hour speed limit. I think the evidence is compelling that you are correct there. I did not single that out because it was several years ago.

The reason that I cannot quote you a whole-of-State analysis is because, while I think you are right in identifying that it was a COAG initiative, it was introduced gradually in New South Wales by virtue of consent with the local councils. So there was a gradual introduction, until around 80 per cent of the population were in areas that had agreed to 50 kilometres an hour speed limits, and then we made it a State standard. So, you are right, the speed limit of 50 kilometres an hour contributed a number of years ago.

In terms of cameras in school zones, I cannot quote you definitive data on deaths in school zones because, fortunately, deaths in school zones are extremely rare events. Since we have had 40 kilometres an hour speed limits in school zones, we have had just a few deaths in school zones caused by drivers hitting child pedestrians in an active school zone. The reason, I would speculate to you, that they have produced a benefit is that cameras have an effect far beyond school zones. I think it is very important to appreciate that.

When we did our first analysis of the first 20-odd cameras we introduced—not in the school zone program, but the 20-odd fixed digital speed cameras—we targeted locations that had a serious crash history and had a record of speeding. We found a 90 per cent reduction in fatals and a 20 per cent reduction in injuries for those locations that were treated with cameras. So the data are very powerful that cameras give us a reduction in serious trauma.

However, I think that underestimates their total effect in that, when you get a few hundred thousand drivers caught speeding you have a few hundred thousand people who clearly are currently speeders but who suddenly have 3 or 6 points on their licence, and they are driving around thinking, "Gee, I only need to get caught once or twice more and I've lost my licence." I believe you get a quite broad spreading of that effect. So, even if all of those additional cameras were in school zones only, I think you would find a large number of drivers, who were probably habitual speeders, suddenly saying, "I've got to be careful here. There is a clear incentive for me not to speed: I'm going to lose my licence." I think that is a quite powerful incentive, and the effect spreads way beyond the location of the particular camera.

You asked me about mobile phones. For the last year that I had the data, which was I think 2007, the police recorded over 20,000 tickets issued to people for mobile phone use. First, those data say: Yes, there is a significant amount of mobile phone use out there, because the police are catching a lot of people. Secondly, however, the data say that the limit is genuinely enforced by the police. Of course, the police cannot be on every corner and everywhere we would like to see them. But the infringement is happening. What can we do about it? It is a difficult question in that we are promoting the fact that it is dangerous. I think we have probably had an effect on P1s by virtue of having a zero tolerance on all of it.

In terms of what is going on there, the answer, in a sense, is similar to the answer to those several young drivers you have identified caught driving at these very extreme speeds. That is that the core motivator for many people to drive within the rules and drive appropriately is not the risk of crashing; it is the risk of being caught. They are very confident and over-confident about their capacity to drive safely, and so they believe they can safely drive at such excessive speeds on the Hume Highway. I think the fact that they were caught is really, in a sense, the answer.

In terms of more extreme measures, I think we need to target drivers who have those kinds of records. Indeed, our policies introduced over the past few years do target them much more severely in that all of those drivers would lose their licence. Once you drive at more than 45 kilometres an hour over the speed limit, you are out, you have lost your licence—regardless of your previous history, and regardless of how many demerit points you have. You get the demerit points and you get a licence suspension. If you already have demerit points, then they are going to be added up. So that, if you have gone over 12 demerit points, that three-month suspension will be added to the suspension that you got for driving at a speed that exceeds the limit by 45 kilometres an hour. So those people, if they have a bad driving record and are close to 12 points, actually will be without their licence for nine months, as I understand it.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: What work is done to drill down into that individual's mind? Do you get the opportunity to ask why they had a brain snap and hurtled down the road at 215 kilometres an hour? Is any work being done to assess the state of mind of the individual who takes a motor vehicle, uses it as a lethal weapon, and puts in danger other people who are passengers or motorists on the road? Is there any work being done to try to get more answers to these acts of sheer madness?

Dr JOB: There is—not in virtue of going out to those particular offenders, but in virtue of collecting attitudinal data and research on young drivers, their recorded speeding, and examining their speeding and their other behaviour. For example, the research that we have done over the past decade or so shows that young drivers are much more likely to perceive the risk as being worth taking. It is an odd effect in that we do focus on over-confidence, and over-confidence is a factor, but over-confidence seems to be a factor in almost everyone's driving, not just in the driving of young people. In fact, the most over-confident drivers in New South Wales are 40- to 49-year-old males. The difference is that a 40- to 49-year-old male may believe he can speed because he is confident of his own ability, but does not think it is worth doing, whereas a 17- or 18-year-old male, first, believes he can do it, and, second, believes it is worth doing. The thrill is worth it. Impressing their friends is worth it.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: The go-for-it mentality.

Dr JOB: I think that is it. Our research shows that they are more likely to tailgate. They are more likely to retaliate. If they feel someone did something unreasonable, they are more likely to take risks to impress their friends. That compares with the attitude of older drivers or female drivers. Those, in the main, are the core elements. Bear in mind, however, that there are other complex elements that contribute.

If we look at the fatal crash victims of very extreme behaviour like that, and go back and look at the previous six months, they are much more likely than average to have attempted suicide, for example. In some cases we will actually be able to demonstrate that people killed in those circumstances were committing suicide. They have left a suicide note, but in many cases they have not left one because they do not want to leave behind the guilt that they committed suicide. But in some cases it is a suicide.

I also think that, from a psychological perspective, that is not a dichotomy. It is not as simple as saying: These people are desperate to live, and these other people are going to kill themselves. There is also a group of people in the middle who really do not care much whether they live or die. Their life is not that valuable to them; they are not quite at the point of wanting to kill themselves, but they are at the point where they do not care whether they live or die. It is very difficult to motivate a person in that state to drive carefully. I think that is part of the problem: that we have that grey area of people whose motivation for their life is not very strong. There are psychological tests which will reveal that, not just in terms of depression but in terms of, for example, the concept of a life horizon, people who can see their life into the next ten years and give you a plan.

Take the 17-year-old who says, "I'm going to get a good mark, and I am going to go to university," or, "I am going to go into this trade, and I have already got an apprenticeship organised, and I am going to do this, this and this, and I am going to marry my girlfriend, and this is where I am heading." He is a very unlikely suicide victim, and is very unlikely to lack motivation about his life. But other people that you talk to cannot give you a horizon for their life past two weeks. They can tell you what they are going to do on Saturday, and that's about it. That person is in much more danger. So you have those kinds of complex issues to deal with.

But, for the people that we can get to, because they do have a plan for life, they do have a potential future, and to lose them is tragic, it has got to be more about the perception and the reality that you will get caught. If those people that Mr Maguire referred to believed they were about to be pulled over, I do not think they would have been doing those speeds. They believed there was not a policeman on the road. They believed there was not a camera set up. They believed they were not going to get caught. If we can change that perception, then I think we are on a good track.

I also think we are on a good track in terms of the issue of impressing your friends and taking the risk because it is worth it. Part of what pinkie is about—the No-one Thinks Big of You campaign—is directly addressing that motivation by saying: Well, you might think you're impressing them, but in fact your friends are sitting in the back going, "Oh, gee, this guy's a bit of a loser," and so you are not impressing your friends with your speeding and your stupid driving. That kind of targeted social message is actually going to help us with this problem.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: We got confirmation of that at Port Macquarie, only of one instance, where young people who spoke directly to the Committee of being stunned by some of the things that one of the young ladies was saying. They had actually ostracised a particular member of their group in exactly that circumstance, and no-one would drive with him in his car.

Dr JOB: We do see more of that. It is good to see that. A few weeks ago there was considerable coverage on talk-back radio of the issue of cameras and speeding. A surprising number of people called in and said: Okay, I got caught. I admit it. I think I was behaving stupidly, and I've improved since. I think it is really good to hear of people in the community with that level of awareness, even directly about themselves. Two years ago we would not have seen that. I think that is a really good sign.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: They were not young persons ringing in though, were they?

Dr JOB: Some of them were.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: How many licensed drivers are there in New South Wales?

Dr JOB: Could I take that on notice. I do not have the answer to that in my head. It is four million-odd.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: There were 20,000 infringements issued last year for people using mobile phones.

Dr JOB: It was in excess of 20,000.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: If I had a dollar for every one I saw this morning texting SMS messages and on the mobile phone as I drove, I would have needed a wheelbarrow to take the money to the bank this morning.

CHAIR: I also hear talk-back quite often about the lack of police on the road. I was coming up from Cootamundra on Saturday night and one of those clowns that drove past me in a ute with a green P-plate was probably one of those that got booked, because 2 kilometres up the road the police had pulled him to the side of the road. There was very heavy police presence on the Hume Highway last Saturday night and Sunday from Mittagong up to Camden. All the speeding vehicles were single occupant; there was no-one in the back seat or beside the driver in the three that overtook me. The professional drivers, all the truckdrivers and so on, were no problem at all, despite people saying they have problems with trucks. So my personal experience last Saturday was that the police were terrific, the speed signs let you know exactly what speed you were supposed to be doing, everything was crystal clear, and it was a good, well engineered road, but there are still people who, no matter what you do, will speed like the people that Mr Maguire spoke about and that we have all got email about this morning.

I would like to come back to our inquiry and ask you a couple of questions. We have had it put to the Committee at various places that there is a need for accredited professional driver trainers—those who have been through the TAFE course—to be tested periodically, say every five years. I am talking about the people who teach others to drive. Do you have any view on that?

Dr JOB: I do have a broad perspective which yields a view on this. First of all, let me cite the evidence here. The evidence is that there is no detectable significant difference between the driving record of novice drivers taught by parents and family versus professional driving instructors. I think it is worth noting that from the beginning—that we should not be treating this group as though they are the answer to the road toll problem. Second, I do not believe that the core failures of young drivers are largely due to skill problems. I believe they are largely motivational problems. Let us take the examples that Mr Maguire raised.

It is plain to us all that a driver doing 217 kilometres an hour is not doing so through lack of skill. He or she is doing so for quite the opposite reason: because they believe they have profoundly good skill and can afford to take this risk. I think the core elements of what we need are not to do with the particular detail of how you handle a car, or how you break in an emergency. They are to do with driving in a manner which does not get you into an emergency in the first place, and that is to do with your motivation for driving: a commitment to drive within the rules, with the speed limits, for the purpose of safety, rather than for the purpose of the thrill, creating an impression, testing the limits, proving you are a man, and all those other motivations that can contribute to risk-taking.

On that basis, I think we need to focus on those kinds of elements. However, there are a few important exceptions to that. But, again, they are not the high-level handling type of skills; they are the more cognitive skills of recognising a hazard and reacting appropriately to a hazard. That is why our testing regime for the graduating licensing scheme has focussed more and more on knowing those things and having the cognitive awareness to find those hazards and respond appropriately to them.

CHAIR: You have probably answered the second part of my question. It has also been put to us that there should be a credit under graduated licensing. Say you do an hour with a professional driving instructor, that should be worth two hours as opposed to mum and dad.

Dr JOB: As I said, I know of no evidence to support a view that that hour is worth two hours for mum and dad.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: Could the reverse apply?

Dr JOB: There is no evidence of that either.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: If dad is driving his son around town for two hours while he is texting on his mobile, talking to his girlfriend or whatever, then he is not concentrating on what the son, the student, is doing.

Dr JOB: Mr Colless, I agree with you: there will no doubt be variability in how this process occurs. What we know from the research reported by the OECD report is that 120 hours of on-road, supervised driver training reduces the subsequent crash rate of young drivers. Somewhere or other, within all of that variability, it is nonetheless the case that 120 hours gives us that benefit. If I base it on the research, even though I might agree with your speculation that such cases will exist, then the research says that 120 hours gives us that direct benefit. It may be that within those 120 hours many people will have a few hours of the type that you describe, but they will still have many hours not of the type that you describe, and I think that is where we get the benefit.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Dr Job, I put to you that you are wrong about the driving instructors. I think you are wrong because I do not think it is possible to show a statistically significant difference. If you look at somebody who has had 50 hours, whether they have five hours with a driving instructor or not, as these people have a low crash rate, because most drivers do not have accidents, trying to show a difference between a low crash rate and an infinitesimal crash rate is not statistically significant. Going back to human behaviour, the human pattern match: All of us have taught one or two children to drive. These people who have done six months at TAFE and professional driving trainers must certainly be better at pattern matching than your average parent who will be demonstrating to a young person how to do it.

Dr JOB: I still come back to the evidence, and the evidence is not that there is a bit of a hint of a benefit there but it does not assume significance; the evidence is that there is no detectable difference whatsoever. I would suggest to you that, even if you are right about the pattern matching—and there is a logic to what you are saying—I do not think that is where the benefit is. I think the benefit is in terms of the motivations and the habitual factors that are not skills. If you drive around town with someone whose opinion matters to you because you live with them, because they are part of your family, because they are one of the many cores of your social network, like your father or your mother, and they encourage you to stick to the speed limit, I suspect that will have more effect on the probability that you will do so than if a complete stranger, who may admittedly be good at the skills of driving, tells you to do the same.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: So it is swings and roundabouts?

Dr JOB: Perhaps it is swings and roundabouts. I am speculating to offer an account of why it is that we do not see a difference. I think the core thing here is that we do not find a difference. The reason I raised the 120 hours was in response to the suggestion of a discount in effect. The evidence is that 120 hours produces these benefits. If you allow that every hour with a driving instructor is worth two, then potentially you are halving those 120 hours.

CHAIR: Within the limit.

Dr JOB: Yes, within the limit. To whatever extent that limit exists, you are then reducing the 120. I would suggest, given that the evidence is that the benefit accrues at 120 hours, reductions are going to reduce the benefit.

CHAIR: Where was that study done? There was one study in Sweden for 120 hours, was it not?

Dr JOB: It was a Scandinavian study, reported in an OECD report.

CHAIR: So one study is all that we are basing our evidence on for 120 hours?

Dr JOB: One very large study. I think it would be unfair to say it is based on one study. The reason we focussed on that one is because of many, many other studies that failed to show a benefit of many other enterprises. So it is based on a breadth of research, and this one singles out as having produced a benefit, whereas so many others have failed.

CHAIR: Did you read AAMI's evidence about giving people a discount where they go and do the driving with them?

Dr JOB: I am very much aware of it. I have spoken to them, and I have seen presentations on it. Let me give you a different view. If you got me a large subgroup of people insured with AAMI who were so committed to road safety that they are prepared to go out and spend hours and hours of their time for the sake of it, and I waved a magic wand over them, I would wager that group would be better—not because of the magic wand or anything that we did to them, but because they selected themselves to be that interested in road safety. I think, given the selected group, the difference that AAMI finds is disappointingly small.

CHAIR: They found increasing crash rates initially.

Dr JOB: Yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Educationalists teach various ways of learning—visual learning, oral learning, practical and theory. Surely the 4 hours of AAMI has some benefit out of 120 hours. The difference between 4 hours of motivational, approved driving, plus 116 hours of practical driving, must be virtually equivalent to, if not better than, 120 hours of practical driving.

Dr JOB: Again I would come back to the evidence. I think that their evidence does not compel me to believe, given the selected group that they have, that there is a benefit here. I would be very interested to see them conducted on a randomised sample, or conducted with a weight list control, that is, where of all the people who volunteer to do it, you only let half of them do it and see if there is a difference between the group that volunteered but did not do the course and the group that volunteered and did do the course. If they could show me that, then I would be prepared to take notice of the study. Until they do that, I think there are serious confounds in the study.

I agree with you that there are various factors of eduction which normally work. But, when you are educating someone about history or geography or maths, and then you give them an examination that they want to pass, then the skill you are giving them and their motivation line up. The skill is to do better, and the motivation is to do better. Road safety is not of that form, and I think that is why the parallel does not work well. Road safety is of a form where the skill you are giving them gives them more over-confidence. The motivation is not to drive safely; the motivation is to take risks and impress and find out what their limits are. So the skill is leading them to the wrong kinds of behaviour. That is why I think the model does not work well.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I was more talking about the preventative driving rather than the skills.

Dr JOB: I think, ultimately, the same thing applies. If you believe you can prevent something, you are more likely to put yourself in a situation where you have to do that. I think that is what it comes down to: you give confidence that they can prevent and they are more likely to take the risk to put themselves in that situation.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Throughout this inquiry we have heard lots of comments and ideas from people about further restrictions and tightening things up and saying that some things have gone too far. Given, as you were saying earlier, that a percentage of the population will for a variety of reasons either make a mistake or make a conscious decision to do the wrong thing—and I think a certain percentage of any population will end up in jail, or be in trouble at school and all that sort of thing—can we go too far, where we make things so onerous that restrictions on rules impact on people who do the right thing? I am sorry I missed the first part of this inquiry because I was at the broadband inquiry. With the passenger restrictions on P-plate drivers after 10 o'clock, we know that if they have not got those passengers and they have a crash that

at least passengers will not be affected. But, in terms of the designated driver program and others, can we go too far and actually hurt the majority of people who do the right thing?

Dr JOB: I understand the point. I think that road safety policy is a balancing act between making things safer and allowing an appropriate level of mobility to as many people as one can. Have we gone too far? I suppose that will always come down to a judgment. In my judgment, we have not gone too far. If you compare us with other States, we have balanced it much more in the middle. For example, Victoria is about to introduce a ban for passengers 24 hours a day for P1 drivers—and their P1 drivers are a year older than ours. You have to be a year older to get a licence in Victoria. If you take that as a comparison, ours is considerably more balanced in terms of social equity and mobility issues. That was an opinion.

Let me focus on one other particular issue that you raise, Mr Harris: the designated driver program. I think this is a misperception. For young drivers, the designated driver as a solution to drink-driving is not a wise move. The RTA has for quite a few years not promoted a designated driver as a solution to drink-driving. The reason is that we believe that if you get a sober young male driver with four drunk friends in the car, that young male is going to drive in a much more dangerous way because his or her friends are in the car. That is what a designated driver program amounts to.

I know that when we first introduced this policy a number of organisations came out and a number of people came out and suggested we would increase the road toll by virtue of increasing drink-driving. But that is not what has happened. If we look at this financial year to date, compared with the previous few years for P1 drivers, to whom that applies, there is a 47 per cent reduction in fatal involvements from July 1 last year, when we introduced this measure. That says to me, taking it all on balance, we have a huge winner here for road safety.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: For drink-driving offences.

Dr JOB: For all fatals.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: All fatals?

Dr JOB: Yes. Overall, we have a 41 per cent reduction in fatalities.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: A lot more young people are now going to establishments and then walking home, and we are seeing an increase in malicious damage of property. I know that is not your department, but the fact that they are not being driven means that they are now on foot and causing other problems. Is there any correlation between fixing one problem in one area and creating a problem in another?

Dr JOB: I do not know of a correlation to defend what you are suggesting. I know that, taken from a road safety perspective—and that is my perspective—what we ideally want is no drink-driving, and we also do not want drunk pedestrians being run down because of their inappropriate road crossing behaviour. We are working in a couple of directions to address that more broadly. Indeed, it would address the other behaviours of young inebriated pedestrians.

The RTA runs a program of seed funding for community transport options. We run them in Wollongong and the Hunter and numerous other rural towns and locations. I think that is the kind of thing we need to be doing. We are actually offering a bus route that goes around several hotels and drops people at appropriate locations, so that they have a way not to drive but not even to walk home inebriated. The other direction that is appropriate is more targeting of the licensed venues and responsible service of alcohol. I think those are appropriate directions which would more effectively address the full gamut of the alcohol-related problem.

CHAIR: You spoke about a 40 per cent decrease. The year before last was there not an abnormal spike in the number of deaths of young people, particularly one north of Ballina.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Murwillumbah.

Dr JOB: There were four killed near Port Macquarie.

CHAIR: Yes. But the year before was a very bad year, from memory, and then last year was a good year. Having had three boys and all their mates coming home from the city in a Festiva with a designated driver I always felt was quite safe. I was happy that they were able to get home safely—particularly in outlying areas, such as where we are, 70 kilometres from the centre of the city. Also, in regional areas it is a

concern not to allow people to get home where it is difficult to get taxis. While there is a net benefit at the moment, down the line there may be not so great a benefit.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Chairman, can I ask for some clarification on that point?

CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: What evidence is there behind your assertion that the sober driver program has actually increased crashes because of peer pressure? In other words, do you have evidence that suggests that the number of crashes involving designated drivers has increased?

Dr JOB: No. The number of crashes, I expect, would have decreased because they cannot have passengers. But, in terms of the broader question, what evidence is there? There is only international research. We do not have research directly on those questions in New South Wales.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Thank you, Chairman.

Dr JOB: I am sorry, but I did not get to your question, Mr Corrigan.

CHAIR: It was more of an observation.

Dr JOB: The difficulty with all of this—and there are people doing the right thing, as you identified, and indeed as Mr Harris identified—for road safety is that it has to be a preventative thing in road safety. Prevention means that you have to prevent various people from doing things, and sometimes those are people who are going to do the right thing anyway. But you cannot magically find the people who were not going to do the right thing and single them out and restrict them. So there is an extent to which all of us have various restrictions placed on for the total good of not having those serious and fatal crashes.

Bearing in mind, on the other side of things, that we all pay for them, even if we are not the direct victims. The cost of speed-related crashes in New South Wales runs at around $800 million a year. That is how much it costs the community for those crashes. So, even though we may not ever be a direct victim, we are still paying for those crashes, and so we do have a right to demand action by virtue of the fact that we are paying for the consequences.

CHAIR: There should be some deprivation of liberty, so that when you have a car you undertake to get a licence and accept that records and information will be collected about you that no-one else can collect, and recognition that there are certain things that you have got to do. I have no problem with that.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Dr Job, two weeks ago, on a Friday, the school captains came in from the rural schools, and there was a question time in the theatrette. The members of the Committee all introduced themselves, but all the questions from there on in were directed at me. They were from young people who had their licence or were about to get a licence. They see things a lot differently than we do and the RTA does. I think it would be beneficial for an official of the RTA, such as yourself, to be included in one of these gatherings of say 100 students, particularly from a rural perspective. I know that your base is rural as well. It would be beneficial for them to know what they are up against and what they face, particularly regarding rules about no passengers. Some of these young people wanted to talk about designated drivers, and others were just worried about getting home from their workplaces. They had a profound effect on me. They are very much affected by all these new onuses that have been put on them. I found it very interesting. But that is said by way of a statement.

On the issue of training courses, as part of this inquiry there always seem to be programs so that someone has a nest egg here, in that they are publicly funded or privately funded, but no-one could give a clear indication that their program was successful. They had no follow-up, no assessment at all. Are we just wasting resources giving some feel-good group some money to train a few people? Would it not be better funding one particular organisation that comes under the auspices of the RTA? I do not know how we would go with that thinking. There seems to be a lot of money thrown all round the place, with no assessment of the success or failure of the programs that it is spent on. That concerned me.

Another issue was the limit when young people go for their licences and are driving. There was the case of a chap in the Scone area, I think it was, in the electorate of Mr Souris. At Port Macquarie I asked the question, "Is there a driving school in Scone?" The answer was, no; they would probably have to go to Singleton. Of course, they would have to go down the New England Highway to get there. Do they just drive

around the streets of Singleton, for example, when they are going for a licence? Then, when they go to Scone, they have got to hit the highway and experience different conditions.

My daughter, who recently learned to drive in Dubbo, is now at university here in Sydney. She took me to a funeral at Wollongong. I nearly died a thousand deaths going down Mount Ousley with her! I think there should be more variety in their licence driving, not just around the streets that they know. That is the effect we have had on senior drivers; they are all right round the area they know, but off the beaten track problems occur. Perhaps we should be looking at more variety in the driving tests, under different conditions and on different roads.

Dr JOB: Perhaps I could comment on both of those matters. I share your concern that there are lots of programs out there that have no evaluation. When it comes to our policies for funding various programs, first of all, we fund programs on a deeply logical basis. We are not talking about a private, money-making enterprise. So, for example, all of our school education materials, right through schools, are funded on the basis that there is good research to show that teachers who understand cognitive development, awareness and backgrounds of their students are the best people to present road safety, and that is why we fund the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Schools Commission and the Association of Independent Schools to deliver those programs.

Having said that however, given that students are in those programs for 12 years, it is not easy to get an evaluation that says: What we were doing 12 years ago is now giving us a benefit, given all of the other changes, such as changes to vehicles and speeds and dozens of other things. So it really is a forlorn hope to think we will get a definitive evaluation of those. So we need to base them on world's best practice and the logic of doing it the best it can be done.

We do fund other programs. We fund them, however, on various principles. First of all, many people come to us wanting funding for a private enterprise which is going to make them a profit. We resist that strongly. It is not appropriate to expend public funds helping someone prove a product that they are going to make money out of. If they are going to make the money out of it, then they have got to prove it themselves. And when they have proven it, great, we will have a look at it.

But we do fund other organisations that are not profit-making organisations, on various bases. First, we may fund them because we believe there is some potential in it, and we will fund it on the basis that we are going to get an evaluation by starting it. Second, we will fund various ones on the basis of that evaluation. Let me give you an example.

What often comes back to us—and, I am sure, comes to this Committee—is: Why don't we fund the TOPS programs. These are the traffic offender programs that exist in many locations. We did an evaluation of those, and our best estimate is that there is around a 25 per cent reduction in reoffending for those who attend a TOPS program, compared with simile people who do not.

On the other hand, we developed the Sober Driver program. That program is delivered by the Department of Corrective Services, Probation and Parole. It is inherently a stronger program because it is uniform. It has a set process, it has a set order. You cannot just turn up halfway through and do numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, then 1, 2. 3. You have got to do it in order. It has more of a logic in terms of its education principles. It is actually addressing a more difficult core group to shift. To get into that program you have got to be a difficult drink-drive offender. They are one of the most difficult groups to shift. But our evaluation showed that the Sober Driver program produces a 45 per cent reduction in reoffending compared with equivalent people who would be eligible but did not do the program.

If I am then looking at 25 per cent with uncertain content, which varies from location to location and occasion to occasion, versus a well regimented, properly directed, educationally logical program which gives me a 45 per cent reduction, that is why I fund the Sober Driver program every year. So there are examples out there of cases where we do the evaluation and where we select the best course for the money in terms so that it gives us a bigger bang for our buck, it gives us more road safety benefit. I agree with you that there are many out there, and many are being hawked around, that do not have the evaluation. Nor should we be requiring an evaluation of them. But when we get the evaluation, we select on that basis.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Has the RTA ever identified fraud in any logbook?

Dr JOB: Yes, we have identified it. If it is identified, and indeed it is identified, then we refuse to give that person the test to go on to the P1. They have to go back and do all of the hours required. There are various consequences of logbook offences like that.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My impression is that it is actually quite common, judging from talking to many young people. Does the RTA keep any statistics on it? Now that it is being increased to 120, I suspect there will be an increase in logbook fraud.

Dr JOB: We did an examination of it and found that it did occur occasionally. It is something where if someone really aims to do it, it would be very difficult to detect. But, nonetheless, we did detect that it was occurring. So I agree with you that it is a problem. When we did that analysis, however, when we introduced the 50 hours, we found that the average person turning up had actually done a lot more than 50 hours. I think the average was 59 hours. That says to me that while there are some people who will defraud the logbook, there are many people who took it seriously—not just took the hours seriously, but took the process of assessing whether or not that student was ready to drive. Those people said: Well, you have done the 50 hours, but I am not convinced I can yet put a tick in this box and say you can do this, or you are safe doing that, et cetera. So they went past the 50 hours.

When people are going beyond the hours required, that says to me that there is a lot of sincere attempts to evaluate the genuine safety and capacity of that driver. I think we will see the same with 120 hours. I think we will see people going beyond those hours, with people trying to ensure that the person really has all of the skills that are articulated. I think it is important to appreciate that the supervisor is not just signing that they have done the hours; they are signing that this person can do this, has reached this point, can do this safely, et cetera. I think that is a really important element of this total training package which has not been as much appreciated as the focus on the hours, and I think that will give us benefits. That is not to say that we will never get fraud with the 120 hours. I think we will. But if people do 110 and fudge 10, we will still get a benefit.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I understand other States, such as the ACT, have a 60-minute licence test. The New South Wales test is for about 20 minutes. What is the position with driving examinations in other States?

Dr JOB: They vary considerably. We are in the process of changing ours, so that it will be longer than the current 30 minutes. So that is a direction that we are taking—to extend it to 45 minutes, instead of 30 minutes. I will double check that I am right in saying that. We have headed in that direction I think because it is not just about the old-school: Can you turn the vehicle, can you do these things? It is about the traffic craft, and it is about anticipation, et cetera. I think you are right: a longer test gives more opportunity to identify those things.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: On the issue of testing, one of the things that came up at Port Macquarie was the issue of some sort of accreditation for instructors, even if it is the young person's father. Do you believe there is a case for him to be required to go along to the RTA and have somebody check him to see whether he is qualified to teach someone else to drive?

Dr JOB: Again, I think this will be one of those balancing acts where you are talking about the social equity. If the father is prepared to do it, can they afford to pay someone else? I do not have a definitive answer to that balancing act. But what I would say is that we are very aware of the need to try to help parents do a better job of this. We are trying to do that in two ways. The first is by virtue of having a logbook which, as I have outlined, does not just require that you sign off the hours, but actually sets out each of the skills so that you should be able to say, yes, they can do this, before you move on to the next stage and say, yes, they can do this. That is so there is a staged program of assessments by the supervising driver for the learner to go through that stage, and I think that is really important directing information. I have done that for my now 20-year-old son and my now 17-year-old daughter, who is on her L's and starting the process. I found that helpful. Indeed, my son went through when it was 50 hours, and he ended up doing dramatically more than 50 hours before I was satisfied that he had each of those skills. I do not think he is a slow learner; I suppose I was just more demanding. That is one very important element.

The other important element is that we regularly run, largely through the Road Safety Office, a program in councils but also we pay consultants to run, where the council does not have a road safety officer, a workshop for parents. We run over 200 of those each year around the State to help parents. So, if you are facing up to this task, then you can go along to one of our workshops and get some guidance on how to do it. I think that is a good approach because the people who have that concern can come along and get some guidance.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: How do you promote that?

Dr JOB: I know they are very popular. Can I take that question on notice? I will come back to you with the detail. They are actually promoted by the councils and by the road safety officers. So I will come back to you with some examples of how that is done.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: I was interested to hear about your children, because probably most of us here have trained our children in driving. I have got to say though that in particular boys aged 16 to 18 years old are probably in what I might loosely term their rebellious years, very often with their parents, and do not get on with their parents. Certainly, the children may not get on with parents well enough to take detailed instructions from them when they are driving, because kids at that age tend to have a mindset that they will not take detailed instructions, but particularly from their parents. Have you got any thoughts on that?

Dr JOB: Fortunately, I did not have that experience.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: I did not either, but a lot of parents do.

Dr JOB: I think you are right: we do have a difficulty there. That rebellious stage is a critical stage for road safety. Not everyone goes through it, but certainly some people do. What is more, our research, which I started when I was at the University of Sydney prior to taking this job, and which I finally have completed in the last year or so, shows that if you get a good psychological scale of the level of rebellion, then that will correlate with various problematic risk-taking driving behaviour. So I think the research supports the view that, not only does this stage exist for some people, but that the people who actually go through are more problematic in their attitude to authority.

I do not think that necessarily means that a driving instructor is a better solution. It may be quite difficult for parents in that situation, but the generality of the rebellious attitude probably produces problematic road safety behaviour because it does not just apply to the parents; it applies to their attitude to authority generally, to the police in particular, to road rules, to driving instructors. So I do not think you will solve it by getting a driving instructor.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: That was going to be the core of my next question. If there is that rebelliousness in a certain sector of the younger generation, should we be doing some more thorough site testing before people are allowed to drive? Two of my daughters recently applied for new jobs, and they both had to do quite an intensive site test as part of their interview program to get the job. Why would we not be looking at some sort of more intensive site testing before we let young people who are in that rebellious frame of mind on the road with a highly lethal weapon?

Dr JOB: I see the logic behind what you are saying, and I agree with that logic on the surface of it. However, I would counsel two significant reservations, one on a social basis and one on a logistic basis. First of all, on the social basis, we are then putting ourselves in a situation where we are selecting some individuals who may, as Mrs Fardell identified, be living in remote areas, where they have to drive, and by virtue of their never having had a crash, and never having had the opportunity to drive, and determining that they cannot drive. I think that is a very onerous thing to place on someone.

Probably more importantly, on a logistic basis, the problem with such testing is that you cannot develop 40,000 versions of it and keep it reliable. A consequence is that what happens with all of these tests is, if they become critical—for example, for entry to university—when various American universities started this process for entry and Indians and various others from other countries started trying to get in, they would send 40 people along with regimented answers and say: You put (a), then (d), then (e) and work out what score you get, and you put this and that and worked out what all the correct answers were very quickly by virtue of everyone having regimented their answers and getting the results. So, if you put (a), then (d) and then (f) then you will get the highest score. That is what will happen really quickly with hundreds of thousands of people trying to get a licence each year. I think it would be almost impossible to get it to actually work and stay working.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: I ask this question seriously. What sort of psychological testing do pilots have to go through before they take on air training? I do not know if there is any such testing. Does anybody know if there is?

Dr JOB: I do not know what the nature of the testing is.

The Hon. RICHARD COLLESS: The mental training that pilots do of course is much, much higher than motor vehicle driving instructors.

CHAIR: I think we will move on to Dr McDonald's question.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What do the other States do if New South Wales stipulates 120 hours?

Dr JOB: I would have to take that question on notice and come back to you.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Yes, please do.

CHAIR: Mr Harris, as a former school principal, has asked virtually every young person who has appeared before this inquiry did they remember their PDHPE lessons and what they thought about driver safety, and I do not think one of them could remember it. So, if you are funding that, it is not working. My final question for now is: Do you fear, as I fear, that the 120 hours will lead to an increase in the number of unlicensed drivers as young people in socially disadvantaged areas find that they cannot do their 120 hours?

Dr JOB: There is always a risk with any such regulation. The more demand you put on it, the more risk you face. Overall, I believe we will see a road safety benefit from it because we will see the large majority of people adhering to it, and that will give us a road safety benefit. I acknowledge that for some people this will be much harder than it will be for others, and we will see some kinds of difficulties. We are also trying to address that. For example, we have some people working with Aboriginal communities in some areas to try to help them get licensing, and that is the kind of direction that we need to take to address that matter.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Could I clarify the matter. The curriculum that is being developed for schools is excellent, and the material is very good. What happens though in a busy curriculum, when things need to get cut that tends to be one of the first things cut? Whilst you will get the road safety consultants from the department who go into schools and helping to develop policy say that it is very effective, the reality on the ground is that it is very hit and miss. Some teachers do it well, some teachers do not do it at all, some teachers do it once a year, and some do it every week. It might be interesting, from your perspective, to have your own people review how effective the implementation of that curriculum is. I repeat, the curriculum itself is very good, but the implementation is a bit of a concern.

Dr JOB: Thank you for that feedback. I can tell you that we have an evaluation of this program planned for the coming financial year. So we are doing exactly that. We are going to do a comprehensive evaluation of how it is working and what we can do to refine it. We will take that on board.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I hope that evaluation will involve talking to the people who are the recipients of the delivery, the young people.

Dr JOB: It will.

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. We appreciate your time, and as always your candid answers and responses. We have a series of questions that we will provide to you. We would appreciate it if you could take those on notice. The Committee will consider your responses before it makes its recommendations.

Dr JOB: Thank you for that.

(The witness withdrew.)

(The hearing adjourned at 3.50 p.m.)