

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

**INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

At Port Macquarie on Tuesday 27 May 2008

The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr G. Corrigan (Chair)

Legislative Council

The Hon. R. L. Brown
The Hon. R. H. Colless
The Hon. I. W. West

Legislative Assembly

Ms D. E. Fardell
Mr D. R. Harris
Mr A. D. McDonald
Mr D. W. Maguire
Mr G. Souris

KAREN THERESA THOMPSON, Road Safety Coordinator, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, P. O. Box 84 Port Macquarie New South Wales 2446, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I draw your attention to the fact that the evidence you give is given under parliamentary privilege. Therefore, you are generally protected against legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee would be a contempt of Parliament and an offence under the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

Mrs THOMPSON: No. I appreciate the Committee giving me the opportunity to give evidence in regard to young drivers and especially in our local government area, where we are going through our statistics with our learner drivers and our P1 and P2 licence holders. Many community organisations are trying to tackle this issue with regard to not just male drivers or young drivers but reducing fatalities, injuries and harm.

CHAIR: I thank you for your submission. Dr McDonald wants to clarify one thing before we go any further.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: When you talk about the crash data from 2002 to 2007, you have one learner, six provisional, and a total of seven deaths?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: In the category of fatal, 17 to 25 years you have 14 deaths. I assume the other seven were aged less than 17 and not on their Ls or Ps yet?

Mrs THOMPSON: That is right, yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I have a question, which is probably a point of clarification also. When you talk about the majority of crashes, 93 per cent, involve provisional licence holders, I presume there you mean 93 per cent of under 25 crashes, is that correct?

Mrs THOMPSON: I am sorry; I do not have a percentage on that.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: That is the total of the Ls and the Ps—93 per cent provisional and 7 per cent learners.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: So it relates to the under 25s, not crashes in total?

Mrs THOMPSON: Under 25s, yes.

CHAIR: I understand you carried out comprehensive community consultation with regard to your submission today?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

CHAIR: Can you provide the Committee with information about your consultation process?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes. We issued a media release from council to go out to the community and to source out what programs have been implemented currently. With me it is a graduated licensing scheme with the RTA workshops that we conduct in the community. There is also the Power of Choice program that we know about. We knew there was a Traffic Offenders Program [TOP], but we did not know of any other programs that might have been implemented. So, we did a media release. We also put a public notice in the paper. We also wrote to stakeholders, our local magistrate, the neighbourhood centres, community groups, the Department of Education and Training and the police to give them the opportunity to provide us with information in regard to any current programs and just to get their point of view on our current situation.

CHAIR: What were the main issues raised by the individuals and groups you consulted?

Mrs THOMPSON: Unfortunately we only received about three letters. One of those was from the Power of Choice program. Another one was from the Traffic Offenders Program and another was from just a community member in general. I am talking about just accidents in general, not just young drivers but for all drivers. The Power of Choice gave us a very comprehensive input into their program as that has been going for the past two to three years. I will have to go back through my notes to clarify that.

CHAIR: They will be talking to us this afternoon.

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes. They can help you further with that. The other one is the RRISK Program. The RRISK is Reduce Risk Increase Student Knowledge. That program has been running on the far North Coast for about nine or 10 years, and we implemented it in Port Macquarie last year for the first time. That one is targeted at year 11 students. It has been a successful program and it has been evaluated from the Motor Accidents Authority back in 2002. Sorry, I am going from one program to another here. With the RRISK Program as well, what I think is really great about that program is that it has peer facilitators, so it is the young people talking to the young people. It is not like, here I am and I am saying you must do this or you must do that, on the road you must drive this way or that way. It is peers talking to peers, and I think that is what we need to do to reduce our fatalities, injuries and accidents.

For me, I am 40 and I am going to listen to someone else who is 40. We listen to each other, not to someone who is higher. I especially think that with young people, they need to engage with and learn from their peers the whole time. The other thing with RRISK is that it has Paul Dillon. He has been very successful in communicating with young people about drugs and alcohol and about safe celebrating. I know when the program was implemented here for the first time last year we just felt we needed more peers doing the program, more so than the stakeholders. You need that stakeholder involvement to guide them in the right direction in regard to safe celebrating.

CHAIR: Did your consultations result in any specific recommendations about any particular programs?

Mrs THOMPSON: Through the consultation, no, there was no actual improvement. It was just basically showing to us what is happening at the moment and what people are doing. I did find though that someone was doing something different here but the other two programs were very similar. There is the dramatic scene they do with RRISK and there might be another one that does the same thing, engaging the students and getting them involved and looking at different areas to deliver those messages. It is probably happening across the whole State, not just for our local government area, but there are a lot of programs out there. I went through the submissions on the Staysafe Committee website. When you delve into it, there are a lot of things the same but there might be that one little thing that is different that may work or may not work, and whether they have been evaluated as well.

CHAIR: How do you feel about the level of support that you as a road safety coordinator get from the Roads and Traffic Authority?

Mrs THOMPSON: In regards to young drivers or generally?

CHAIR: Overall.

Mrs THOMPSON: I think it is quite a good question. You are putting me on the spot here, aren't you? I have been a road safety officer for about seven years now. I was out at West Wyalong. I did Bland Shire Council and Temora and around Cootamundra for a couple of years, and I moved up here and have been here for six years. So, the demographics, even though this is country to me it was like a city, moving from out west and coming out here. The level of support I received out west was greater than the level of support I am receiving up here and when you look at the number of accidents that happened on the Newell Highway, how many pedestrian accidents happen in those small country towns, the RTA really did support our programs, it assisted in our action plans. We had very regular meetings that showcased with other road safety officers from that region what worked and what does

not. I just feel it was a very high level of communication and support of the programs that had been implemented.

When you look at that and the statistics and the number of accidents to happen out there realistically, in comparison with the demographics here on the mid-North Coast, where we have the Pacific Highway, it is just completely different. We have different vehicle movements. We have so many cars using the Pacific Highway, and we have similar regional areas like Coffs Harbour where the Pacific Highway goes straight through the middle of that town and they have a lot of pedestrian accidents. We have a demographic of a lot of senior road users as well, so we have to look at that too.

With regard to the support that happens up here, I just think more communication and more money needs to come into this area if they want us to do our job well and if they want us to identify those target groups and to work with those groups and our community because, at the end of the day, it does come down to money. When I was out west I could get \$20,000. I come up here and I can get, maybe \$5,000, maybe \$10,000, but I have to look after all road users—cyclist, pedestrians, young drivers, senior drivers. So, you really have to rely on community support and then you have to go and source sponsorship to implement those programs. It does happen but it is very disappointing because you know it could be done better.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: How many staff are involved in the road safety side of the council? Just you?

Mrs THOMPSON: Just me.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: You are on your own?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: With regard to funding and your observation that you receive less support here than in the western region, do you have any access to figures that the RTA might have supplied with regard to budgetary funding that we can compare?

Mrs THOMPSON: That I may have or the RTA may have?

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: The amount of funds allocated here, to this local government area?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Could you supply them at some point?

Mrs THOMPSON: It would be from submissions I have done previously in other years to the RTA. That is what I could do.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: And with regard to actual funding, and do you have access to other road safety officers' allocations of funding so we can do a comparison?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, I could do that.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Just on the Traffic Offenders Program, is that funded by the RTA, and do you have any data on those young people who have gone through the program that are reoffending?

Mrs THOMPSON: That was one of my consultation ones. I recently received an email from the Roads and Traffic Authority wanting to know how many road safety officers are involved in the Traffic Offenders Program [TOP]. I am not, although it would not worry me if they wanted me to be, but I have not been approached. I think other road safety coordinators are involved in the program. With the RTA asking that, I assume that they do fund the program; whether it is fully or partly, I am not quite sure. With the evaluation, the neighbourhood centre attached an evaluation with theirs,

which I do not have with me at the moment, in regards to how many offenders, but I can source that information for you.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: From your experience in West Wyalong and Port Macquarie, what were the similarities or differences in the types of crashes and injuries, particularly with under-25s, comparing West Wyalong to Port Macquarie?

Mrs THOMPSON: With the under-25s there were a lot of single-vehicle accidents out west.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: On dirt roads predominantly?

Mrs THOMPSON: On dirt roads, involving trees and, when they happen, unfortunately, they involve a lot of passengers. Out west when there is an accident, there are usually a lot of people in one vehicle and basically there are a lot of fatalities as well. In comparison to up here, a lot of our accidents are again on the rural roads, single-vehicle accidents, which is quite interesting as well. They are early morning, where they have been at the nightclub and they think they are okay to drive but they are still over the limit. Speed is another factor on bends and, previous to the passenger restrictions, there were a lot of passenger accidents as well.

I worked with the Hastings Youth Council three or four years ago and they developed "Be a Survivor: Respect the Driver" campaign. When we looked at the actual statistics for our area, driver distraction was higher than drink driving or speeding in regards to fatalities and injury accidents. The Hastings Youth Council developed this advertising campaign and the script for the actual advertisement. They did the voice-overs for the radio advertisements; they did everything. They even starred in it and did a fantastic job. Going back, I have not filtered the statistics as well as I did back then, but I think it would be interesting to see if there is still that trend.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: With the Reduce Risk Increase Student Knowledge [RRISK] Program, are you aware of who trains the peer tutors?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, the stakeholders are the Mid North Coast Area Health and the Department of Education and Training and they train the peer facilitators. It is ongoing training for them. It gives them an outline of what their job is, the importance of their position in communicating to their peers on that day and an outline of the actual program for that day.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Is it something that could be picked up and moved to other places?

Mrs THOMPSON: Most definitely, yes. It is a whole package. The first one is scary because you are not used to it but as it has been running up at Lismore on the far North Coast for quite a long time, a couple of us—a road safety coordinator from Coffs Harbour and I—went and observed to see how it was actually implemented before we actually implemented it here. It can very easily be picked up and taken somewhere else.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Do the statistics that you supplied relate to local drivers? I imagine you would have a lot of tourists and drivers in that age group or is that a different category?

Mrs THOMPSON: No, we just did the actual age group; we did not filter down to actual postcodes at all. Unfortunately, we could not get the statistics from the police. Well, we could, but it was a just a time frame thing, because what they were going to do for me—which could still be done—is get postcodes from drivers from our area and see if they had been having any accidents or incidents in other areas so that we could do a comparison, even if it is just a speeding ticket, not wearing a seatbelt, or being on a mobile phone. That information would be very beneficial to see what is actually happening when people leave our local government area.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Just to stay with the year 11 people for a bit, I am not particularly aware of the RRISK or the Power of Choice programs other than your submission seems to refer to the North Coast area.

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Are those programs part of the school curriculum in schools on the North Coast?

Mrs THOMPSON: The RRISK Program is part of the personal development, health and physical education [PDHPE] curriculum that has been supported by the Department of Education and Training and Catholic Education Office, so it already has that support.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Does it have accreditation from the Department of Education and Training?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, it is supported. I am not sure about accreditation but I know it is supported as part of that PDHPE program.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: And is that only a local program for the North Coast area?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, the program has been implemented on the far North Coast and the mid North Coast. The other thing, too, is that it is not delivered in the actual school. Students actually go to a venue. In Lismore they go to Southern Cross University. Here we had it at Panthers. They are away from the school environment. The peer facilitators receive a special shirt to identify that they are a peer facilitator. It is really well structured. I was quite impressed to see so many students engaged in discussions and such large student involvement. As I said before, they are on stage, with different scenarios and different schools doing drama pieces and delivering ideas on how those messages can be delivered to them. It is continually evaluated after every program. Even though the big evaluation was done in 2002, after every RRISK seminar is implemented, there is evaluation done.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: It is voluntary, is it not?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: But what is the reach? Would half of year 11 be involved or a quarter?

Mrs THOMPSON: All year 11 students are involved.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Do they hang in there?

Mrs THOMPSON: They stay for the whole day, yes. The teachers come as well. With the peer facilitator training, the teachers also come so they can get an idea and they continue on with that. The planning for RRISK is happening now, even though it is in November-December but there are continually inserts in school newsletters, information for parents and continual media information about the program. It is not like you just set it up for that day. It is continual communication through stakeholders, through the parents, students and teachers, who are the support network. They have to have an understanding of what their child will get out of the seminar and then move on from there.

In regards to the RRISK Program—and I am only going on the information provided to me—but anecdotally I have heard that it is very successful in the community. It is delivered on the school premises in three-hour sessions with different representation from the local magistrate, State emergency services, the Crash Investigation Unit and a driver educator. Even though we are in a small area with two great programs, it would be great if one is delivered halfway through the year and the other one is delivered at the end or something, and to just work together. I have heard great things about both programs.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Do you think it actually changes attitudes on a permanent basis?

Mrs THOMPSON: That is the problem. It is not just, "Okay, here is your seminar. See you later." I think it has to be ongoing. We might do the evaluation at the end of that day. Then we have to keep going and looking at statistics. It is continual education. Honestly, I had a bit of a fear when young drivers were so out there last year or the year before, with all the restrictions and zero alcohol. It just felt like they were being bombarded.

What can happen is that it can be the minority ruining it for the majority. There are some great kids out there. They are just so fantastic. They want to do the right thing and we need to support the ones who are doing the right thing. If they have not had a fine for so many years, give them a reduction on their insurance; give them some incentive to be a safer driver and bring on this information. At the end of the day, we are trying to save them, like for everyone.

My other concern—you have got me going now—especially with parents and carers with their learner drivers, is like me, I have not been for a driving test since I got my licence when I got my Ls. We never have any refresher courses ourselves but then we have our parents and our carers teach our young people and at the end say, "We will send you to a driving instructor" and the driving instructor gets the young driver and everything is wrong, so this poor young driver is totally confused. Mum, dad or the carer says so and so, and then they go to the driving instructor, who says something different. It needs to be consistent. We need to be consistent in what we are teaching our young drivers. Parents of young drivers have to go to a refresher course somewhere before they can teach and they get a little certificate, saying they can teach a young driver. Then we will have consistency. It is too confusing at the moment.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: You said that it is the minority ruining it for the majority. So along the way when you are doing all of these courses and so on, you must easily identify certain young people who perhaps should never be put behind a wheel, who just have a bad attitude?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, you can tell.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Who are going to be unsafe and take every risk in the world. So we have identified a few of them. What do you reckon should happen next?

Mrs THOMPSON: With that minority?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Yes, so that they do not ruin it for the majority?

Mrs THOMPSON: That is a hard one. Probably engage them and find out why. We need to engage that minority and ask why. We have to ask them questions. At the end of the day, as I said before, it comes down to communication. They are the ones who are going to give us the answers. We can only assume what is going on. It could be family problems or whatever. We do not know. We could be the same. We could go out driving one day and be fine, but another day we are not.

It is the same with our senior drivers. We do a senior driver program here. I go into those workshops and how some of them got their licence, I do not know. I will be honest. It has to be tackled and we have to find out the information from our young drivers. But I feel we should be rewarding them. Even the minority, they might go and do a Traffic Offenders Program or there might be a program that is really targeted at them that they can do, not because they have been caught committing an offence but it might be a program for that minority. We need to target their needs and wants, plus the type of vehicles that they are driving—that is another issue that I have.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: That certainly opens up a whole new area.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I have some questions related to your council's recommendations on the actual driver training attitudinal stuff. I notice that you say, "improvement in the standard of tuition provided by professional trainer drivers is recommended, along with closer monitoring of driving instructors."

Mrs THOMPSON: Sorry, part of that was from our consultancy stage. That was from a driver educator. It was not a comment from me.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I understand that. That was one comment you have had. Was there anything to back up that statement?

Mrs THOMPSON: No, not that I know of.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: The second point is that there should be less reliance on parental supervision on the basis that they "had never been taught correctly to drive themselves". Does that come from the same source?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: At one stage in this inquiry we had representation from an insurance company that offers one free driving lesson for both the student and parent if they both go in the car.

Mrs THOMPSON: That is good.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: With the parent in the back so that the parent sees what the driving instructor teaches the student. What do you think about that?

Mrs THOMPSON: I think that is great. I think it is fantastic. It is a partnership, we must remember that too. Anything that we are going to implement is a partnership, whether it is stakeholders, parents, carers or teachers. We are all partners in this together and it will give them more of an understanding if the parent, carer or supervising driver and the student are with the instructor so the information remains consistent. I think it is a great idea.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: In the consultation process before making the submission, did you only take written submissions or were there any hearings?

Mrs THOMPSON: No, there were only the written ones. If anyone rang or emailed me, they had the opportunity to do that, but, no, they did not do that.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Lastly, there is a list here of about nine things that appear to be the main factors contributing to young drivers' overrepresentation in fatalities: inexperience, attitude, challenging driving conditions, drink driving and drug driving—

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Just anecdotally, from your personal experience having been both here and in the west, do you think there any one or two things stand out the most in all of these?

Mrs THOMPSON: In regard to young drivers?

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Is there one single issue?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, inexperience.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Inexperience?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, inexperience in both areas and too much over confidence. I say again, I do not think they understand having a licence really. It is a real privilege to have a licence. I will tell you a personal story here. Through health I lost my licence for eight months and I live out of town with four kids. I could not drive a car and had no access to a car and all that, so I had to catch the school bus with my kids to school to my children's disgust but it really opened my eyes that it is such a privilege to have a licence. I really feel no-one takes it seriously enough. That is only my personal opinion but I am only one of probably many.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: If inexperience in your opinion is the most contributing factor, what do you think about the current testing and training regime to 120 hours and the requirement of the L-plate, red P, green P? Do you think that could be improved?

Mrs THOMPSON: I think the 120 hours with the night-time driving, different driving conditions et cetera, yes. As we were saying, the only way they are going to get experience is to do it and to do it in all those different conditions. To me the licensing system through the learner, P1, P2 is a time thing. It is not like when I got mine I had three months on my Ls and off I went and then 12

months I think it was. It is like everything, the more experience you have whether it is driving, whether it is sport or whatever you are pursuing, the more you go out and experience it the better you are going to be.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: How long have you worked at Port Macquarie?

Mrs THOMPSON: Six years.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: In your submission you look at the fatal 17-to-25 age group. In 2002 it was two, in 2003 it was three, in 2004 it was three, in 2005 it was three and in 2006 it was three. Do you have figures for 2007 there?

Mrs THOMPSON: I do now, yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Do you know what they are?

Mrs THOMPSON: I have not got them on me.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: You have worked here for six years?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What three things are going to reduce the road toll for the 17-to-25 age group in Port Macquarie?

Mrs THOMPSON: I will say experience again. Further education—as a community we need to work together and have a roll out of a continual education program, not just a one-off, and complement those programs. It is a team thing. Okay we go out and get our experience but we also need the education side of it as well. I know there are a lot of students out there that do not have access to vehicles and things like that and if we could have a driver mentoring program. Like us as a council—it is something that has been in the back of my mind from while—we could train up a couple of driver trainers and get a car through sponsorship and we could roll out a program so that we know that those students are getting consistent driving instruction. So we could look at that type of group as well. That might be a minority group that do not have access to driving instruction because they cannot afford it. With those three factors I think we could achieve it.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: To clarify that, the three things that you think will make the greatest difference are inexperience or getting more experience—

Mrs THOMPSON: Getting more experience, yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Continual education rather than a one-off program?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: And, if possible, a driver mentor program which runs through the council with possibly the high-risk groups?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I apologise I have not read in detail the key improvements in student behaviour from the listing you have on the website but I cannot get any appreciation from this as to any evaluations that have been done by the students? Have you done exit interviews with the students after they have completed the course as to what their evaluation of the course has been?

Mrs THOMPSON: At the end of the actual program, is that what you are saying?

The Hon. IAN WEST: Yes.

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, they do an evaluation after each seminar, then that information is brought back to like a RRISK committee and identified. As for an exit, like a couple of years later, I cannot ascertain whether that has been done. I know with the 2002 evaluation that involved so many students where they had previously done it over so many years, but in regards to a current evaluation from that of 2002 I am not aware of a really full-on evaluation. They are continually evaluated after each program in each area. Port Macquarie has an evaluation, Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Tweed, they have their own evaluations straight after the seminar but there has been no really full-on evaluation since 2002. Does that answer your question?

The Hon. IAN WEST: Partially. I am trying to get my head around what 25 per cent to 29 per cent means in terms of planning a safe return from parties?

Mrs THOMPSON: Okay. I will be honest with you, I got that off the actual RRISK website to see what evaluation they had. It is probably more in depth on the actual website in regards to how they did evaluate it.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do those percentages come from evaluations by the students?

Mrs THOMPSON: From the Motor Accidents Authority, that has interviewed the students.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: As a road safety officer, have you attended the RRISK Program and the Aboriginal Road Safety and Licensing Program and received feedback?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes. I have attended the RRISK Program—council is involved as a stakeholder—last year. In all the councils where RRISK is implemented they become a stakeholder. I was involved with the Aboriginal licensing program in the initial stages when it was being set up a couple of years ago. That was actually indigenous people who had offences and they wanted to pay off their fines because they needed access to transport, so with the Attorney General's Department they were paying their fines off but also getting some driving instruction so they could get their licences back.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: When you say they were paying off their fines, what type of fines are you talking about?

Mrs THOMPSON: Like speeding fines or seat belt fines.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: They were unlicensed drivers?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes and they were not paying their fines so that was the deal, "You come to this program, we will work out a way where you can pay it off weekly or whatever and then you can go back and retain your licence."

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Were they being paid to attend the program?

Mrs THOMPSON: No. It was a free program. They were not being paid to go there or anything like that. It was just a matter of working out with them how they could pay their fines off so they could retain their licence.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: You answered a question by Dr McDonald's by saying the three things that will make the most difference are experience, continual education and a driver mentor program. Would young people in this area agree with that?

Mrs THOMPSON: I think with young people it is access to professional driving instruction as well. A lot of parents cannot afford that and I think young people would like to see that more affordable, especially now since the licensing hours for Ls has increased. That has increased that for young drivers and families from an affordability process. As we were saying before, if we go back and look at educating the young drivers with parent, carer or supervising driver so it is a team-based approach it will probably be more affordable in the long run for them.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: In relation to your statement as to the 120 hours of driver education, do you have any evidence of fraud occurring in that area? Do you have any evidence of documents being fraudulently completed to enable a young driver to complete their test earlier?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes but it has recently been changed. The Roads and Traffic Authority have recently changed the format of the booklet but previous to that I had young people saying, "It is too easy. You can easily do it."

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: It was occurring?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, it was occurring previously.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Since it has been changed do you think the issue has been resolved? Do you think it is now more difficult to fraudulently fill in those booklets?

Mrs THOMPSON: I have not had any evidence back to me, or anyone saying anything to me about defrauding with the current documents, but previously there was.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: In your submission you talk about the Mid-North Coast Night Rider scheme. Regional rural communities have very little in the way of public transport infrastructure and particularly night services for public transport. Can you give us a précis of the scheme? I note it has been an award winner in the IPWEA Road Safety Awards?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Who funds it? In to what communities has it been expanded? Can you give us a general précis?

Mrs THOMPSON: The Night Rider was implemented about five years ago. Its initial funding was from the Roads and Traffic Authority. It was found that especially in the central business district of Port Macquarie there was a high level of crime but also we wanted to look at drink driving and reduce that. We needed an alternate transport scheme and that is when we came up with the Night Rider. The first year it was quite successful. It ran only through December on Friday and Saturday nights and because of funding you could only go for a certain amount of time—like midnight until about 3.00 a.m.—with more buses on New Year's Eve and a security guard on board the bus. I am giving a brief overview here. The year after we received funding from the Ministry of Transport but that was because we found the outer lying areas like Wauchope, Laurieton, Bonny Hills, were missing out. So with the funding we introduced maxi taxis to accommodate those areas. That was also successful. Since then the majority of our funding has come through the Roads and Traffic Authority. In the past two years the Roads and Traffic Authority has provided us \$5,000 and we can only use that on media advertising; that is it. Last year our crime prevention officer was successful in obtaining \$20,000 from the Attorney General's Department—

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: For Night Rider?

Mrs THOMPSON: For Night Rider.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Would you suggest that the funding has not been guaranteed or you are actually obtaining it from different sources?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, exactly right, just to keep it going. Anecdotal evidence I have received is that what the young people want—because the majority of users are young people—is because of passenger restrictions now they have no transport and our buses finish at 7 o'clock and they would like to see this go all year every Friday and Saturday night. I would love to see it go all year but just for it to run throughout December and January on Friday and Saturday's we need about \$30,000.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: And how much are you getting?

Mrs THOMPSON: Last year we were fine, we had about \$25,000. It is \$5.00 per passenger so if you start making it too expensive they are not going to utilise the service. The other one is the

Liquor Accord—I forgot to mention the Liquor Accord. Our Hastings Liquor Accord continually supports the service as well with funding. Initially it was \$3,000 and I think they have gone up to about \$5,000 now. The community wants it and the users want the service and I think that is another measure. As I said in my submission, it is not targeted at educating drivers or anything but it is looking at alternatives to keep our young people safer.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: What is really needed is a permanent source of funding?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: That is guaranteed that you can design the service on and provide it in a reliable fashion?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, a continual service and a consistent service as well, so that keeps going.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: What other towns have taken up the Night Rider?

Mrs THOMPSON: We have heard Wagga Wagga has started the Night Rider.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I knew that. Keep going.

Mrs THOMPSON: The Night Rider has also been implemented in Coffs Harbour. In Lismore they do not actually call it the Night Rider—it is Night something—but it is the same concept. It is another package, like a late night service, that can be picked up and taken somewhere else as well. When we started planning for the Night Rider for five years ago, I said would it not be great if we had Night Riders everywhere, not just for consistency but for tourism as well—Oh, they have a Night Rider here, I can get home—and for all age groups. I think that would be fantastic. I know there are other ones called Pumpkin Bus but, again, consistency needs to be in the brand tagging and the naming—this is what that means, off we go.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I have to admit that was a leading question because Night Rider in Wagga Wagga is proving very successful but, like here, the problem is continuity of funding and being able to provide that service. The community is screaming out for it.

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, they want it.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: It just seems to exist from hand to mouth.

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, exactly.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: To follow up on that, in Dubbo, which I represent, we have what we call the Bat Bus, and that is successful as well. I was saying to Mr Harris before that I have had a lot of representations lately from parents of young people who do not have a licence yet. While we are providing transport for adults, we are not providing transport for our young people who work at McDonald's and their salary is not enough. As a road safety officer you might like to make some representations on that. You have to look at a better transport. I would not like to see a lot of young people getting on a bus with inebriated people but we need better transport.

Mrs THOMPSON: We do, and it is a really good point. We get a lot of information back from the bus drivers; it is continually evaluated. We have passenger numbers, the bus company emails that to us after every weekend. Security guards provide us with information. Over the whole five years that it has been running we have only really had one incident, someone throwing up on the bus, but we had risk measures on the bus to cope with that. Another point is that we have a lot of young people who use it to go to the movies as well. They work at McDonald's, they work at KFC, and it is fantastic for parents as well. They know their child is going to get home safer. It does not take them straight to their door, it is just nearby. They are not allowed to have any alcohol or food or anything on the bus but it is something that can be implemented, the community wants it but it all comes down to money, unfortunately.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Connected to that again, have you had any anecdotal evidence from talking to young people or through visiting some of the courses that you mentioned that the restrictions on passengers after 10 00 p.m. is placing unreasonable strain on young people to return from employment and socialising in a regional area where people are forced to travel to central places?

Mrs THOMPSON: Recently anecdotally no, but when the new measures were going to be implemented there was great concern not only from the young people but from families, parents and carers, as well—especially for your outlying areas like Wauchope, Bonney Hills and Laurieton. They have every right to be presented with the opportunities for work, et cetera, as anyone else who works in Port Macquarie. So, if we are going to be implementing these measures, how are we going to assist them in regard to transport?

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Do you think that has had an effect on the message to the designated driver?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, I do. I was out a few weeks ago and there were some young people and one said, "I am the designated driver." A lot of the hotels around here as well support it. Years ago there was the Drinks Without Dramas Program where the designated driver got free drinks all night. To me, that was a successful program because now they give the designated driver free drinks all night anyway. Okay, here is a change, this is what we have to do, and it has just continued on.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Can I just explore your thoughts on driver training and the source of programs that should be offered in driver training programs? Do you think the professional driver training programs that are being offered are sufficient and, if they are not, what sorts of things would you like to see included in them?

Mrs THOMPSON: I have not really been involved. Do you mean when they all come together and learn how to brake and things like that?

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: One of the things I am concerned about is that young drivers do not get enough training in the technical skills of driving. They all learn how to stop at stop signs and to turn left and turn right and put the clutch in and put the clutch out and those sorts of basic things, but they do not really have any skills or they are not taught any skills that teach them how to get out of trouble when they get into trouble. They are skills that most of us who have been driving for some years have acquired by accident or through experience, but you were saying at West Wyalong there were quite a lot of accidents on dirt roads late at night, and those sorts of things, which in part is attributable to the fact that those younger drivers when they get into trouble do not know how to get out of it.

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes. I know that Kempsey runs some driver training courses. It has been identified that we could do that here, but we do not have the facilities to run such a course because there are so many requirements. We thought maybe we could go up to Kempsey because the Kempsey course is apparently very well received by the young people and the parents. It is not only about driving skills but it also taught them about cars, about ABS brakes—what are ABS brakes, what do they do—and they are shown what ABS brakes do, about power steering, cornering, stopping distances. They would physically show the car stopping at 60 kilometres an hour, 80 kilometres an hour and 100 kilometres an hour on wet roads and why you need to slow down. They would get the Rural Fire Service out and show why they have to slow down on wet roads. They go through tyres, the importance of what tyres are.

So, they do that whole message but also do face-to-face teaching for about an hour, like a power point. I cannot remember the name of the company. I know it came from Queensland—it came down to implement that program. It was at Kempsey airport. It had a training room, because the airport is not really used at the moment. I know of other areas—I cannot think off the top of my head—where they have driver training but I do not know of any evaluations from that either. Whether they have come out and said yes, I know how to corner or try to utilise it. That minority we were talking about, they may be the ones who go, "Oh yeah, I know".

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: That is the argument against skills-based training, that if you teach the kids how to get out of a spin, then they are going to deliberately put themselves into one so they can have fun.

Mrs THOMPSON: They give it another go. Especially in this area, there are a lot of rural properties, and with your old ute, off you go.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I have to say how I learned to drive was on a farm and I got myself in and out of trouble, but it was that sort of skills-based training, I believe, that makes me a reasonably good driver. As I was saying, we all tend to pick up those sorts of skills at some stage during our lives but a lot of younger drivers never get the opportunity because as soon as they get into that situation that is the end of them.

Mrs THOMPSON: And you have to think about it—I was just thinking then—they are not going to get the opportunity either because we have placed restrictions, passenger restrictions and time limits, on them, so maybe that is another avenue. We do need to provide them with another avenue of driver training so you have the whole package. Basically you have the driver-training component and you have the education component and you have the partnership with the parent or the supervising driver so it goes through like a staged scenario.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: To follow up on Mr Colless's question, that program at Kempsey was run by whom?

Mrs THOMPSON: Council.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Do you know who funded it or where the funding came from? Was it seeding funding?

Mrs THOMPSON: I do not know, I am sorry. I think council funded it. We can find that out. I think council might have funded it and I know the schools in Kempsey were very appreciative of that driver-training course.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: How many people attended it?

Mrs THOMPSON: I think there was a limit. I think there were about 25 per session, I think. I will find out more information for you. I can do that.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I think you have partially answer this question. The 120 hours—are you aware of any assessment as to why 120 hours? Have you or any of your students any thoughts on why the 120 hours was decided upon? Is there any scientific reason why 120 hours is better than 110 hours or 80 or 150?

Mrs THOMPSON: I had the understanding some study was done by looking at other countries with regard to how many hours a learner driver does. It was shown through those statistics and evaluation that the more experience that a learner driver has, there is a reduction in accidents later on in life or later in their P1 or P2 process. That is why it was implemented here, because it was shown in other countries—I think Sweden might have introduced it—that it reduced the number of fatalities and injuries, not just at that initial period but later on in life as well. That was my understanding.

The Hon. IAN WEST: So you really have not given any thought to why 120 hours and not 160?

Mrs THOMPSON: No. Plus basically I think—I cannot remember what it was before.

CHAIR: Fifty.

Mrs THOMPSON: That is right. So, jumping from 50 to 120 is quite scary for a young person or for a parent or a supervising driver. I think we have to keep it at 120 because it is only a new thing and 120 hours will take some young people a lot longer to do than others with regard to access

or whatever the condition may be. If you were looking at going higher you have to evaluate the effectiveness of the 120 hours in New South Wales and then move on further. I think Victoria has done 120 hours for a while but I am not quite sure again.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: In all the programs that you run in Port Macquarie and you being the sole road safety officer, what sort of cooperation and coordination information do you get from other people in the community, other agencies in the community, concerned with road safety specifically? The police?

Mrs THOMPSON: It is a great partnership. The police are doing their bit. I work with the Highway Patrol mostly in regard to current police operations, whether it is Drink Drive II or whatever operation is happening for school holidays.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Specifically, on a formal basis?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Are there formal meetings?

Mrs THOMPSON: No. We have a road safety steering committee meeting once a year. That is basically for working out our action plan for the next year. The Highway Patrol bring in what programs they are doing, any enhanced enforcement. We look at some statistics and I say what about we target here and here and I will complement your enforcement operation and we will do a joint media release. We kind of work out an action plan of what is going to happen for the next financial year and then I go and pursue the funding.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Can that formal process be improved? In other words, would you like to see those formal meetings more often?

Mrs THOMPSON: I would like to see them more often. Probably we could do one each quarter to see how things are going, because things change, everything changes, priorities change.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: The roadworks?

Mrs THOMPSON: Exactly right. The roadworks in town, getting towards the end of this financial year we have to get this done and we have to get that done, and conditions change.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Does the Department of Education and Training in this region have a road safety officer and are you involved with its work?

Mrs THOMPSON: Yes, it has a road safety consultant. Yes, we continue to consult with our local representative. It is a great relationship. Realistically I think it has a huge job to do because there is only one person. I am only one person from my local government area and they are only one person and they really do have a big area to cover and I feel that more support for them is required to assist them to assist us in all these other local government areas along the way.

(The witness withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

SEAN THOMAS McGRATH, Student, Westport High School, 58 Widderson Street, Port Macquarie,

TALIA WHITE, Student, Retail Certificate II, East Coast Training, Short Street, Port Macquarie, and

HAYLEY SEATON, Student, Retail Certificate II, East Coast Training, 36 Walters Street, Port Macquarie, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Staysafe Committee. I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are generally protected from legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of the Parliament and be an offence under the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901. Thank you the coming here this morning and talking to us about what you feel, as young people, in relation to driver safety. Sean, what school are you from?

Mr McGRATH: Westport High School.

CHAIR: Where is that?

Mr McGRATH: Near the TAFE.

CHAIR: Talia, what about you?

Ms WHITE: Previously I was at Westport High. I am now undertaking a retail certificate II at East Coast Training.

Ms SEATON: I was at Westport High but I am now at East Coast Training doing my retail certificate as well.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Can I ask each of you in turn whether you are currently licensed?

Mr McGRATH: Yes, I am a P-plater.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Green or red?

Mr McGRATH: Red.

Ms WHITE: I have a learners licence.

Ms SEATON: No.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Hayley, are you intending to learn to drive?

Ms SEATON: Yes, I am.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: It may seem like a silly question but I will start by asking, Sean, are you still at school?

Mr McGRATH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: How do you see having a drivers licence and being able to drive? How do you describe it? Is it just an adventure, something all your friends have done or do you feel that you need to be able to do that in order to have the same sorts of opportunities as every other young person has?

Mr McGRATH: Yes, it is an opportunity of freedom to drive. Then you do not have to get your parents to drive you to and from work all the time, so it gives you a sense of responsibility and helps you grow up a bit more.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Talia, you are learning. What do you think you will get out of driving? Will it give you independence?

Ms WHITE: Yes, it will give me independence first off. I will be able to contribute more to my family by helping my mum out because I have three younger sisters so I can take them to school and stuff, so that would be good.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Now I have a question on the actual process of getting a licence. You have gone through it. How recently did you get your licence, Sean?

Mr McGRATH: Last Monday.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: So you did your licence under the regime of 120 hours?

Mr McGRATH: No, just 50 hours.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: So, you were the last of the 50-hour ones?

Mr McGRATH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: What would have been the effect, do you think, if you had had to do another 70 hours training? Do you think you would have been better or not?

Mr McGRATH: Probably not, because the way that I drove when I was learning, I actually drove to Bathurst and back, so dad gave me that experience of night-time driving as well. Doing an extra 70 hours would have just made me more confident and probably too confident to be able to do the test and probably stuck on it a bit more.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Do you know anyone who has been killed in a road accident, or injured?

Mr McGRATH: No.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: When you were driving to Bathurst and back, did you have a chance to drive in the rain, a storm or anything like that?

Mr McGRATH: Yes, on the way back from Bathurst it was raining probably most of the time.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Did you do any professional driver training at a learn-to-drive school?

Mr McGRATH: No, just with my dad.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: How are you going to do yours, Talia?

Ms WHITE: I have got my mum helping me here and there, and my grandparents, as well as the learner driver schools around town.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: We won't tell anybody—is your mum a good driver?

Ms WHITE: Yes, she is a very good driver.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Hayley, when you go to do your licence, how will you be doing it, with mum teaching you?

Ms SEATON: I do not really know because mum and dad do not have a licence so it puts me in a hard position. Probably it will be a mate with a full licence or my partner.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: You are in a difficult position if your parents cannot give you private training and you are not working at the moment. Have you investigated what it will cost to try to get yourself trained?

Ms SEATON: Yes. That is probably what I will do when I go for my licence; I will pay if I cannot get anyone else.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: This is the question: do you think being here today and talking to us will make a difference or do you think we are only wasting your time.

Ms WHITE: I reckon you may be.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: We think so too.

CHAIR: Talia, are you on 50 hours or 120 hours?

Ms WHITE: I am on the 50 hours, but I have a younger sister who is on the 120 hours.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I thank the three of you for coming along. Can you tell the Committee how and where you first drove a car? What I am trying to get at is when and how did you learn to actually drive a car as opposed to getting your licence. Was it on the street, in a car park or in a paddock? Where and how did you first drive a car?

Mr McGRATH: I started just moving the cars around the yard because we had three cars at the time.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: How old would you have been at the time?

Mr McGRATH: I was probably 14 or 15 when I started doing that, and then dad took me out into the bush a couple of times and let me drive. I just moved the car forward a bit and tried to avoid trees and stuff. When I actually got my Ls the first time, because he felt confident with me driving on the road, he actually said, "Drive me to Bunnings", so I had to drive to Bunnings.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: What about you, Talia?

Ms WHITE: I first learned to drive when I was about 14 or 15 because my cousins had a farm and heaps of different cars and we each used to paddy bash, so that was my experience.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: What about you, Hayley?

Ms SEATON: I have not got a licence. I have had turns of driving along a dirt road but because I have not got my licence I would not go out and drive.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: It is a very interesting point, I think, because for young people who live particularly in the cities, they never get the chance to drive other than on a public road and it must be extremely daunting for you, Hayley, where you have never actually driven a car really?

Ms SEATON: Yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: If you were to get your learners permit today, how would you feel about going on to the road and driving straightaway?

Ms SEATON: I would feel nervous because I have never been actually on the road driving, so I would feel nervous.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: In the training programs, do you think there is a need for some basic and fundamental off-road driving—and when I say off-road, I mean private area where you can

feel free that you will not have cars coming at you unexpectedly? Would that help your confidence if you were able to get that sort of training early in your career?

Ms SEATON: To start off with I think it would, just to get me to the next point, to feel confident behind the wheel. You get a bit nervous, your first time on the road and you panic.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Sean, I know you have told us you drove to Bathurst and back—which I think is an admirable thing for somebody in your situation to have done—but do you feel that the training you received was sufficient, in terms of the technical side of driving a car under dangerous conditions?

Mr McGRATH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Do you think most young people get the level of training that they need?

Mr McGRATH: I think that people like us kids have very good driving skills better than the P-platers of Sydney, because they do not know what it is like to go at high speeds. Driving in wet weather and rain and all that stuff at 80 kilometres per hour is challenging in itself but it is very good experience to be able to do it because when I am driving by myself I know I am capable of handling it as well as I can.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I am going to ask the same question of all three of you about school-based education. I will start with Sean. What school-based education have you had and was it of any use?

Mr McGRATH: I have never actually had any school-based education for driving.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: So you have had no training at all at school about learning how to drive?

Mr McGRATH: No.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Talia?

Ms WHITE: We did not have training on actually how to drive, we had the Power of Choice program and that scared me.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Tell us about that Talia?

Ms WHITE: Every time I am in a car now I watch the speedo and if they go over I tell them to slow down. It just stuck with me, that program.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What did the Power of Choice program entail?

Ms WHITE: They had a car that was in an actual accident and they had some of the students of our school put on costumes and they put them in the car and showed us how they would have to cut them out if they were in that position and stuff like that. We met a person who has suffered brain damage due to a car accident—that was very sad.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What changed the way you think you will drive? That program?

Ms WHITE: Yes, that program made me think a lot about it. Probably a week after the program I went driving with my mum's friend and I just started to look at how fast the cars were coming towards you and stuff like that. It made me seem more aware of what is around you and the dangers on the road. Yes, it makes you more aware or that is what it did with me.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The Power of Choice Program, is that right?

Ms WHITE: The Power of Choice.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Hayley?

Ms SEATON: I am the same as Sean. I never did anything like that and I do not think I was there that day, Talia, you were shown about that. So I have never really done anything like that before at school.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Talia, how many hours are you up to?

Ms WHITE: Not many because we have a manual and I cannot drive a manual.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I agree it is incredibly difficult to learn on a manual so how do you get hours up at the moment?

Ms WHITE: Mum's friends who have autos or one of the local businesses around town that do driving—the driving schools.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Because you have a manual it significantly reduces your access to driving, just like Hayley because she has not ever driven a car except one off road?

Ms WHITE: Yes.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Thank you for coming. It is wonderful that we are seeing some young people making a real contribution. First of all, Sean, what type of car do you drive?

Mr McGRATH: A Holden Commodore—an ex-police car.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Is it your own personal car?

Mr McGRATH: It is basically my car but it is in my mum's name. Dad uses it but I drive it most times.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Do you have any friends who have their licence that you feel uncomfortable with when they are driving?

Mr McGRATH: None of my friends have their licence at the moment.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: I am an old dinosaur from the days when you had your Ls and you went straight on to your full licence. Your licence is new but do you feel these new restrictions of you have to get your Ls, then your reds, greens, extending the hours and so forth, is that annoying to young people or do you just accept that?

Mr McGRATH: It is just what you have to do to be able to succeed to get your licence and stuff. It is just precautions that the Government has put in place for us to be safe behind the wheel.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Talia, are you learning to drive on the Pacific Highway at all or are you just learning to drive around town?

Ms WHITE: I have been driving from like Wauchope and back. When I am with my mum in the manual we just hang around home in a little area. I will not go out to where there is busy traffic and stuff like that until I am confident.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: You come over here to school. Where is Westport? Is that near Wauchope?

Ms WHITE: No. I have friends that live in Wauchope and that is where I used to drive.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: At school in PDHPE there is a road safety program that operates from kindergarten to year 10. Do you have any recollection of doing that road safety training and was it effective in teaching you anything?

Ms WHITE: I do not think I actually remember any.

Ms SEATON: Have we ever done it?

Ms WHITE: No.

Ms SEATON: We did not ever do it at school, did we?

Ms WHITE: Yes, we did not have any driver training or anything at school.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: That is actually good hearing it from you guys because it gets reported to us in different ways.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Talia, it appears the Power of Choice program had an impact on you. How many of your fellow students were in your class when you did that?

Ms WHITE: We had our whole entire year there—which would have been five or six classes—there were three sections and we broke into groups and moved around.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Were you asked to do an evaluation of that course?

Ms WHITE: I think we were asked to fill out a sheet at the end of it as to what stood out to us, what would change our opinion on things, yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Did any of your peers at the course have similar reactions to yourself?

Ms WHITE: No, not many had the same reaction as I did.

The Hon. IAN WEST: What were their reactions?

Ms WHITE: Most of the people there just really did not pay attention when they actually cut our fellow students out of the car. It was a really hot day that day and we had to sit out in the heat and I sat there and watched but everyone else mostly just mucked around.

The Hon. IAN WEST: So they really were not—

Ms WHITE: They really were not that interested, no. But when it came to the other, when we spoke to the young girl who had brain damage from an accident, everyone became interested in that and that was just very sad.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Did you notice a different reaction between the boys and the girls?

Ms WHITE: Yes. The girls were more like "Oh, my God" and the guys were like "Oh, that's cool".

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Sean, I have a question in regard to your driver training. Did you sit down with your parents and work through a program to give you experience at night driving and I guess when you drove to Bathurst it was good luck that it rained to give you that experience. But did you structure it in that way and could you stick to it or was it a bit of a hit and miss?

Mr McGRATH: No, if we had to go a long distance I drove. A couple of times when it was raining here dad was just like, "Let's go for a drive." But the other times it was just driving whenever.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: What about you, Talia?

Ms WHITE: I do not do much driving because when we come in to town I am not game enough to come in to town in a manual yet. I will not even come out on to the highway to come in to town. If my mum needs to go round the corner to a friend's house, I will drive.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Sean, I note that you drive an ex-police car. Is it a V6 Holden Commodore?

Mr McGRATH: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: It is not a Highway Patrol pursuit car but a standard patrol vehicle?

Mr McGRATH: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I would suggest that temptation might occur at some point when your peers are in the car with you. Have you thought about how you are going to deal with peer pressure?

Mr McGRATH: I actually told all my mates before I got my Ps that if they say for me to do anything stupid while I am driving I would pull over and tell them to get out so they can walk.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: What about you, Talia? Have you thought about peer pressure, things that can happen when you are giving your mates a lift in your car and how you are going to deal with it?

Ms WHITE: Probably the same way as Sean, yes. It is my car and if they do not like my rules they can walk.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: If you were a passenger with Sean and he was driving in an inappropriate manner that you felt was putting you at danger, what would you do?

Ms WHITE: I would let him know immediately to slow down to the limit.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: If he did not and a policeman pulled you up do you think there is a good case for the responsibility to be shared? What I mean by that is, if a driver is driving irresponsibly and the passenger has not taken action to make he or she drive safely to the road rules, do you think the passenger should receive a fine as well?

Ms WHITE: If the passenger has not stepped in and told that person to slow down or change what they are doing well then, yes, I suppose. If they are saying go faster then they deserve the fine as well.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Apparently now if you are not wearing a seat belt the passenger and the driver can be fined. I think there is a good case for some shared responsibility. You are all going from A to B and you all have a responsibility to get there safely. I think you owe that to your parents but also to bring the driver into line if they are driving irresponsibly. Would you agree with that?

Ms WHITE: Yes.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I think from the answers I have heard you are going to be fabulous citizens of this State and really responsible drivers. Thank you and congratulations for the things you have said. However, we have got to focus on the minority that cause all the problems, and perhaps even get young people generally a bad name. I want to ask you about attitudes. This question does not apply to you personally but what observations you can help us with as to behaviour, attitude, out look on life et cetera that you have noticed amongst young persons the same age as you getting their licences? Do you identify who is going to be a problem and what the problem is that they are probably going to have for life?

Ms SEATON: Phones, mobile phones, are a problem.

Ms WHITE: Yes, a big problem.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: What about attitude to life, and so on? You must know who you would never get it in a car with?

Mr McGRATH: Yes.

Ms WHITE: Yes.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Okay, what is it about them?

Mr McGRATH: One of my mates I will never get in a car with because some of the things—he has lost his Ls—he is a hotty-head. The way he talks about driving and his mates' driving and everything else indicates to me that he is going to be doing the same thing.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: What are we going to do about that person? You are not the one; it is that person I am looking for.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: He is the person who kills other people too; takes more with him.

Mr McGRATH: Yes.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Mark him never to receive a licence?

Mr McGRATH: As I say, he got his licence taken off him for two years. He is now 18.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Is that person likely to drive without a licence anyway?

Mr McGRATH: What he did was drive without his dad in the car. His dad was at the pub so he went and picked him up from the pub.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: On L-plates?

Mr McGRATH: Yes, he was only on his Ls. The cops pulled him up around the corner from the pub and said, "We have seen you drive from your house to the pub." So, he lost his licence for two years or something.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: The Government spends a lot of money on advertising campaigns, and so on. Do any of them work? Can you think of something that really made an impact?

Ms WHITE: I really like the Little Pinkie ad. Every time I see someone speeding I do that.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: If I were to ask a young man what he thought about that, would it be the same?

Mr McGRATH: Yes, probably. I think it would be the same, yes. The ad with the Ford Falcon XR6 going around that truck and getting hit by the other car.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: The guy in the ute?

Mr McGRATH: Yes. Me going around corners now beside trucks, if it is on a double lane, it scares me, because I don't know what is oncoming to me. It just scares me so I back off and stay behind the truck until I can see a clear view of what's going on.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Do you think less money on ads and more money on the sorts of programs you are doing or is it pretty well right as it is?

Mr McGRATH: It's pretty well right.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: You do not think the ads are a waste of money?

Ms SEATON: I do—some of them.

Mr McGRATH: Some of them are.

Ms SEATON: Because people just look at them and say F-ing ad, and just don't pay attention to it. Sitting here and talking like this is getting through somewhat, I reckon.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: You are three young people who have had or are having different opportunities to learn to drive and, Hayley, you would probably be seen as the most disadvantaged.

Ms SEATON: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Would you see any benefit of programs run by either the council or some community organisations that would allow you to get some driving experience at very low cost? Your answer would obviously be yes, but do you feel, perhaps, there is some benefit in doing that?

Ms SEATON: Yes, I think so, yes. It is really the only opportunity to do that so I can learn to drive.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Do you live out of Port Macquarie?

Ms SEATON: No.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: In Port Macquarie?

Ms SEATON: Yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Have any of you been touched by deaths on the road?

Ms SEATON: I have had one person in a motorbike accident, not in a car.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: A friend of yours?

Ms SEATON: He was my friend's brother, so kind of.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: That was a single motorbike accident?

Ms SEATON: Yes.

Ms WHITE: One of my mum's friends was a pedestrian and he was hit just walking along on a wide strait.

CHAIR: You mentioned that mobile phones are a problem for young drivers. Is that texting or talking?

Ms WHITE: Both.

Ms SEATON: Yes, both. I have had an experience with someone being on the phone and she has gone straight through a red light. Me and Talia were saying, "Red light, red light, red light."

Ms WHITE: And she couldn't hear us telling her.

Ms SEATON: Just talking on the phone, texting, just went straight through the red light. Next minute she said, "I just went through a red light" and slammed the brakes on—

Ms WHITE: In the middle of the intersection.

Ms SEATON: And then just kept going. It is not the first time. I was in the car with her before and it was a double lane and we were on the left lane. She wanted to turn into the right lane and there was a median strip in the middle of the road. She did not look behind her, just tick tock, tick tock, and went to turn into the next lane and made the other car go up on to the median strip.

Ms WHITE: That was in Gordon Street too, where the island goes out like that without a roundabout. It is very dangerous.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Was she a P-plate driver?

Ms SEATON: Yes, a P-plate.

Ms WHITE: I don't know how she got them.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: And you still get in the car with her?

Ms SEATON: No, not now. She can't drive. She has lost her licence—

Ms WHITE: Again

Ms SEATON: So many times it ain't funny.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: You can see why. Thank goodness.

Ms SEATON: I don't feel safe. I seriously feel if I get in that car something is going to happen. If I know I am going to get into that car, I say, "I Love you mum, I love you dad," just in case I never see them again.

(The witnesses withdrew)

GRAHAM CRAIG ORR, Projects Officer, Traffic and Road Safety, Port Stephens Council, PO Box 42, Raymond Terrace 2324, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: I draw your attention to the fact that the evidence you give is given under parliamentary privilege and you are generally protected against legal and administrative action that might otherwise result from the information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may be seen as contempt of Parliament and an offence under the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

Mr ORR: Yes, I would. I thank the Committee for allowing Port Stephens to represent our program before this Committee. Port Stephens Council has supported our young driver programs since 2001 and we would like to thank the Committee for looking into the issue of young driver training and education in the State. I would like to add some information on me personally. It might help the Committee to form questions as we go through. I have worked with council for four years and was road safety officer in that time through to now being projects officer. Before that I was a driving instructor. I am still a licensed driving instructor and have been through many forms of driving instruction, from advanced to the defensive to working for a large driving school to an owner operator of my own driving school in the regional area. That may help the Committee in forming its questions as we go through. I also have some written information to give to the Committee that was alluded to in our submission. We were waiting on more evidence from the police to do with the evaluation of our program.

CHAIR: You are an accredited, professional driving instructor. Is the system in place for driving accreditation sufficient? As a professional driving instructor, is it sufficient?

Mr ORR: It has been an unusual chain of events for me. I started being a driving instructor in 1992, when they brought in the system for accreditation of driving instructors. That was the very year I started in that. So, I went through the new process of TAFE and 50 hours and police checks and all the system changes. So, I was not in the older system, in some respects. Through that period I know that driving instructors—in that period in particular—did sort out a lot of instructors who were still in there on a part-time or non-professional basis, if I can put it that way. From my experience, from that point people who did wish to be driving instructors were more committed. I have not been involved in the system as much in recent years because I basically left that to become road safety officer at council.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I noticed in your submission you talk about the program having been delivered for 400 young drivers since its inception in 2001?

Mr ORR: That is correct.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Just flicking through a number of other presentations that are going to be made or have been made, this one here in Port Macquarie, Power of Choice, presents to a whole year, year 11, in all of the local government area, which is 2,000 students every year.

Mr ORR: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Is the program you have described capable of being ramped up to that scale?

Mr ORR: There would be logistical problems with that, I must admit.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Logistical or money?

Mr ORR: Both. In that way we also support RYDA in our own community as well, because it does have a large capture. But, being a one-day program as opposed to an eight-week program, we try to support both and we helped You Turn the Wheel—as it was, which became RYDA this year—commence its programs in Port Stephens, initially, from the assistance of our mayor, now the member for Port Stephens, Craig Baumann. And he has supported our programs tirelessly since he has been

there. So, we supported You Turn the Wheel to start with, the first two years, and this year it has changed its relevance to RYDA—I am not sure of the internal workings with Rotary over that transition, but it is basically the same program.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Has the Roads and Traffic Authority been involved in or consulted on the planning or implementation of your scheme?

Mr ORR: As far as the component where we do the graduated licensing scheme workshops, the GLS workshops, that are part of our program. There are also some components you will see there on the crash avoidance space and the beyond test routes. They are all RTA initiatives that we have incorporated in our program. Just introduced in this last program is also a peer influence session, which is from Youth Safe, which is also supported by the RTA

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: If it does, how does the program tie in with the road safety training and education programs conducted within schools as part of the PDHPE curriculum?

Mr ORR: Our particular program is not associated with the school curriculum, but the RYDA program is because they are part of it and they support the two local high schools in Nelson Bay. We have four high schools in our local government area but we are only running the RYDA program on the peninsula side, Tomaree and Nelson Bay. We have the State high school and St Philip's college involved in those.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: And you just tabled some results on the feedback from the police on recidivism from the 2005 and 2006 programs. I note that in the 2006 program it appears there were only 12 drivers involved. Just looking at those figures, how would you describe the programs effectiveness? Do you think it is effective or becoming more effective?

Mr ORR: The most difficult part of our whole process is evaluation and how you work out whether you are being successful, making a difference, or is it just a feelgood. This is the part that is most difficult. We have implemented this evaluation method since the start of 2005, where we started to gain permission to look at licensing into the future. So, as far as how we evaluate these numbers we are starting to get to a difficult point because we have these drivers internally in the program but we are not comparing it against a control group outside the program.

We are starting to look at how to evaluate this properly. I received this from a police officer last week. Acting Sergeant David Collier has been involved in it for four years now—as long as I have. Obviously, speed is the major issue. We use it more internally in the program as well, because we present these figures to the next group all the time. It is not just for ours; it is actually incorporated in the program to make them aware of where the issues are, not just with outside the program but actually people who have attended the program that they are attending now.

Speed is a major factor, negligent driving, P-plates, disobey traffic control lights. One comment that came from Acting Sergeant David Collier was that drink driving did not appear in those statistics, which was very pleasing to us. That was probably the main thing. These are traffic infringement notices, not events, so we do not know if they were involved in crashes. Disobeying a traffic control light might have contributed to a crash, so we are looking at how do we evaluate that and how do we look at events, which is a much bigger field. We are still assessing how to assess the program properly.

Previous to this form of evaluation we had evaluations where we asked permission to phone the students up to two years after the program but since I took the program over, I dropped that part of it because it is very hard to locate people to get proper evaluation to be able to get some comments. We do have a lot of evaluation forms, as you may have read in the submission, after each program and they feel over-evaluated sometimes or effectively evaluated.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: The program targeted the ages 17- to 25-year-olds, is that correct?

Mr ORR: That is correct.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Are they ready to become learners, to get their licence and be P-plates and did they already have their licence? Who are you targeting?

Mr ORR: We are actually targeting learners, that is the main area, while we are in the phase of learning. We do get some P-platers who want to come along to the program. It is open to any P-plater who wants to come along. We also provide three driving lessons as part of the program. Those three lessons we term as free but they do pay a \$50 nominal fee to actually do the whole program. It is an incentive to be able to do the program. We have always used the lessons basically as a bit of an incentive to do the program in the first place. When we are targeting the group, we are looking at learners and they are attracted by the driving lessons in that learning phase.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: That is an incentive?

Mr ORR: Yes.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: As someone involved in the program, many of the programs are excellent and anecdotally have good results but they can be very hit and miss. We heard from some young people about the Power of Choice Program. Sean had not done it, Talia had done it and Hayley was away on that day. That is how all the programs work. Do you see any future for tying participation of the programs into getting the licence process, whether it is a discount on the number of hours a person puts into training or it becomes a dual thing and a person does the on-road driver training plus an attitudinal type course. Is that a positive way to go?

Mr ORR: I would not be here otherwise. It is a benefit to young drivers to be able to put it into perspective with respect to their responsibilities. Our program operates outside school hours rather than inside of school. We try to treat them like young adults, a lot of time with their parents—which I will get on to a little bit later—but their participation in the program is a major benefit. However, how it works in reality is difficult to look at and the framework of the program and the sheer numbers of qualified presenters, different circumstances, country, outer metropolitan, and many other issues have to be covered without saying that it should be part of the program.

As I said, I would not be here otherwise, unless I felt that we were going down a track that was of benefit to the community. As you would realise from the submissions, many of the presentations are very similar, although they vary in delivery and timing, part of the day, full day, or eight weeks like ours, but many of the programs have the same components. But the important thing, in my mind, is how interchangeable they are or how they can be tailored to a community or need. We have started to do that with our surrounding councils.

There was a comment earlier about how our young drivers go to the next local government area, and ours is Newcastle city. That is where they are going. We border Newcastle, Maitland, Dungog and Great Lakes, and we are helping those local government areas, using our program as a basis, so that they can take, or interchange components, and experiment off that or have access to presenters. We do whatever we can to help. Our last young fatality in Port Stephens was not a local resident. It was from a neighbouring council.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: You have provided a graph of 17 to 25-year-olds from 1996 to 2005?

Mr ORR: Yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: You have figures for 2004 and 2005. You should have figures for 2006 and 2007.

Mr ORR: I had that graph when it went in as 2005, I apologise for that. I can forward that to the Committee.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Can you tell us off the top of your head whether they have gone up to 50 or they are back down?

Mr ORR: We had a spike—and I think everyone did—in 2006 that went back up. They are not deaths; they are actually casualties. We do not have that many deaths in there. We had a spike that went back up towards the 50 area, as far as I know, in 2006.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My next question relates to recidivism. You have figures for 2005-06. You have two people who exceeded the speed limit by over 30 kilometres an hour and one driver who did four of the offences?

Mr ORR: Yes, that was a surprise.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Some things cause problems. Do you have any ideas what to do about those types of people because despite being through a good program, there is clearly a need?

Mr ORR: A lot of people ask us about the motivation to do the program. I can go through that with you. A lot of people believe that with these programs you are always talking to the people who would have been safety minded in the first place, or the parents would have been safety minded, so you have all this to cope with. In my experience with the program, it is not as clear-cut as that. A lot of the time it is the parents who are the ones who want them to do the program. They will bring them to the program, stay there and make sure they are in the program. You will see these people come in and you experience what they are feeling. You can see that anything that is said in that program is not getting in. You can see by the evaluation sometimes.

One young man in one of the programs mid-last year started to make smart comments on our evaluation forms and the next time there was no comment on the evaluation form. During the program we could isolate that person a little and help him out with a little bit more attention. Some of the presenters are very good at the process and asking them to volunteer more information or ask them to participate a little further. By the end of it, the evaluation process did change a little bit and we saw a little bit of a gain and more comment. But that does not happen all the time.

We do not keep the records and this is a stipulation that we have when we ask for volunteers to be part of the program. We do not have a record of who the person was. The police do and we may have a look at that in the future to see if there is anything we can do. When we do get someone like this, I am not sure if we can influence everybody who comes through the system. In some respects it is the system that has to catch those people, the police, and the systems after. We can only educate so far. Then there has to be a process of enforcement. We have education, engineering and enforcement, which we work with all the time and there is a traffic offenders intervention program after that in our area as well. It needs to be a whole-of-system approach. We can only do a certain amount.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: You have had extensive experience: There are three things to reduce the casualty rate in the Port Stephens local government area over the five years. What would be the most important?

Mr ORR: It is the area that we are heading down now, which is peer influence and driver distraction, or putting those two things together as peer influence. It is a major one. What we are looking at also is speed, and really looking at speed. We are doing it on a wider community basis, and how we tailor through to a specific speed issue through to young drivers. We can also put together speed and antisocial behaviour. Our figures show speed as a major cause of crashes for young drivers in the local government area.

Our second rated contributing factor is fatigue, which showed up in our statistics more than alcohol. Late night transport was mentioned earlier. We are in the same situation. If we are looking at harder laws for young drivers to be able to become part of the system, we are looking at alternative transport options as well. So if we look at those three, I would probably go for peer influence, speed and alternative methods of transport.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: My question is exactly the same as Dr McDonald's, and it has been sufficiently answered.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In those three basic categories of peer influence, distraction and antisocial behaviour, can I ask you about mobile phones? In the current environment, drivers in this

category are very much influenced by this technology, as indeed we all. Has this area been honed in on?

Mr ORR: There have been significant real changes. As far as being honed in on, where we fit in within council, I am manager of the road safety program, not the road safety officer. The basic idea from the Roads and Traffic Authority standpoint is that we support State government initiatives on a local level. We have the laws that come in now and how do we influence the young drivers about these issues? We have just implemented the program as part of ours, and what is good about having a program that is running is that we can change core components, depending on issues. There was good support for the young drivers in the Youth Safe Program, where they role-play as far as driver distraction.

You may have seen a program where they have someone standing out the front, saying, "Red light, green light" and there is all this interaction and good participation. That is the first program we have tried through that process and there seemed to be good feedback through that program. Another thing that can be a bit of a frustration is whether mobile phones cause crashes. We would like to ask the RTA or police about collection of statistics to find out whether a mobile phone was a contributing factor towards a crash and whether that can be isolated. It is difficult for police at the scene of a crash to stipulate that, but we are looking at that with police at our local interagency meetings.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: You are probably aware of the driving program where they put the goggles on?

Mr ORR: Yes, I have experienced that.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: And that tells whether they have been drinking or not?

Mr ORR: Yes.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I suppose they could do a similar sort of thing by simulating using the phone and getting them to drive?

Mr ORR: Quite possibly. What we would like to look at is implementing a program into ours that has actually been tried and tested somewhere else, rather than us implementing something that is "hit and miss", I think was a term that you used before. We like to look at proven things to go into the program, things that have been researched and that we can rely on. The fatal vision glasses you are referring to I experimented with at Armidale several years ago in a program we were running with the combined high schools, using them in the community when you were driving around. In a lot of cases when you have large groups of the size of 20 to 25—

Mr DAVID HARRIS: They think it is funny and treat it as a joke?

Mr ORR: Yes. Trying to get the seriousness of that training through is the most difficult part in a school environment or a day-out-of-school environment.

CHAIR: We just heard from some young people but what is your opinion or thinking about the pinkie add?

Mr ORR: It was actually made in our local area at Carrington and when our local people see it they recognise where it is, so when it first came out I was unsure. Our task is to promote State initiatives but my first initiative was how to promote locally and I was not too sure how. We have started to evaluate our current program, taking more of a sample before they start the program, and one of the questions we ask is about the effectiveness of advertising and we get quite a positive comment about the pinkie add. It seems to have resonated with them. They can use it in some respects or they feel they can be more a part of it. I think it has been more effective than we assumed in the first place.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What do you think about the difference between 50 hours and 120 hours?

Mr ORR: I think it is necessary and even as a driving instructor myself the additional hours was always a very important component. When 50 hours was the minimum the encouragement was to try and do more to try and use the 50 hours as a base. The thing that was not clarified this morning in relation to the 120 hours, was that research did show 100 hours but it is actually 100 hours plus 20 hours for night driving and that is how it became 120 hours. So it is basically a doubling of the 50 hours and adding on night driving, which a lot of people were not doing. A lot of parents were not doing it. In summer with the darker hours beginning at 9 o'clock there was just no night driving. It is mandatory now. There was also a question asked this morning as to whether there are accurate records in logbooks. I have seen some issues over the years as far as logbooks are concerned, that is for sure, at 50 hours let alone 120 hours.

(The witness withdrew)

ANNE SHEARER, Road Safety and Transport Officer, Coffs Harbour City Council, Locked Bag 155, Coffs Harbour, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Ms Shearer, I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under Parliamentary privilege and you are generally protected from legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of the Parliament and an offence under the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

Ms SHEARER: No.

CHAIR: According to your submission, almost a third of the drivers in crashes in the local area are aged 25 or less and the majority are not P-plate drivers. In crash statistics, 12 per cent of drivers in crashes held provisional licences while the majority of 70 per cent held standard licences. How would you explain the significance of your statistics in relation to the state-wide trend, where crash rates for unrestricted younger drivers are lower than for provisional licence holders?

Ms SHEARER: It is hard to say really. I think that people tend to put people into categories but there is certainly more confidence once they get on to a full licence. This was only statistics from one year; it is not generally a trend.

CHAIR: It could be an aberration?

Ms SHEARER: Yes.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: You have talked about the Graduated Licensing System and the cost and problematic nature of the system for groups, especially in view of the statement that Coffs Harbour is the second poorest city in New South Wales. Can you enlarge on the difficulties of the group?

Ms SHEARER: I think we have some anecdotal evidence in the area that people find it an insurmountable obstacle to get their licence. 120 hours seems an awful lot, particularly if you do not have a relative with a car or a person willing to supervise for that amount of time, plus the cost. It has often been mentioned to me that they are finding it an expensive process to go through. There is some evidence that they have said that they would not bother with a licence and they would just drive a car anyway, which is a bit of a concern in our area. People do need a licence in regional cities like Coffs Harbour to get to work and to education—it is quite hard to get around and the public transport system is pretty limited. School children tend to also see it as a bit of a status thing to get their licence.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: In 2006 no fatalities in the 17-to-25 age group but what about the other years?

Ms SHEARER: I do not have the number of fatalities but I did look up the first six months of 2007, which we have recently received, and there was one fatality in the six months.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I notice in your submission you seem to be honed in on the idea that the various programs that operate in the Cost Harbour area are a bit disjointed, perhaps not properly evaluated, and inconsistent. If I read that correctly, is that what you are saying?

Ms SHEARER: I think there is a kind of vacuum there and all these bodies are trying to fill that vacuum. They are very concerned about the crash statistics for that age group and they want something to be done.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: What would you suggest is done in your area? What would you like to see done if you had the power to do it?

Ms SHEARER: I would like to see one accredited program that has been thoroughly researched, evaluated and linked to the education system. But I would like it to be available for all teenagers who are just learning to drive, not just the ones who are attending school.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: So you support the idea of early driver education at schools but you feel there needs to be one single broader community program—

Ms SHEARER: I am not sure how effective the education program is in schools. I think a lot of students are missing out on it somehow. Not a sheep dip approach—I think that is the problem. When you get a one-off program it is kind of like a sheep dip and I do not think that is very effective. I think there needs to be some consistent approach to driver education.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Of all the programs you describe in your submission are there any that stand out as being more consistent or better evaluated?

Ms SHEARER: I have to say that I have not had a big involvement with all the programs I mentioned in my submission. I had some involvement with the Young Driver Expo in Coffs Harbour in 2006, which involved the NRMA, the Police and Community Youth Clubs [PCYC], and Rotary. That program did not run last year because the RRISK Program took over. Comparing the two, I would say RRISK is based on best practice and better research and I would go in that direction rather than the Young Driver Expo, which I believe is very similar to the Rotary Youth Driver Awareness [RYDA] Program and the NRMA programs that are run in Sydney.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: You have made suggestions in your submission about the driver mentor program. I have two questions for you. Firstly, I am interested to know how much you suggest it will cost to fund it, how it would be funded and any associated costs with it? Secondly, I understand the Night Rider bus system has come to Coffs Harbour, as it is in Wagga Wagga and Port Macquarie. Can you give us a précis of how it is working in the Coffs Harbour area?

Ms SHEARER: The driver mentor program is not overly expensive. We run it with a car that was donated from a car sales yard and I have a grant that pays for the fuel. There is the cost of the insurance but it is not as high as people think. It does rely on a lot of volunteer help.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Where does the volunteer help come from?

Ms SHEARER: We advertise for it and we run them through a training program—so general community volunteers. We auspice it through Anglicare, so there is a coordinator. The biggest issue is it does take quite a lot of coordination so I would say we would need a coordinator's salary to run the program properly in Coffs Harbour because you are relying on volunteers to show up every day and it can be quite problematic.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: So the program revolves around a number of volunteers who have to complete a driver-training program?

Ms SHEARER: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I guess with all driver training, how are we assured that those people actually have the skill set to be able to mentor properly?

Ms SHEARER: It is not just driver training. It is also communication because they are dealing with refugees mostly in that particular program. So we are talking about multicultural awareness. We try and view them as replacements for parents, so they need a skill set similar to a parent's skill set, and we do a similar program to the learner driver workshops.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Do any volunteers fail the basic skills test?

Ms SHEARER: We do not actually put them through a test. We just hope that once they have gone through the program and they have been assessed—we get a driving instructor to assess them—that they will pick up enough.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Have any failed the assessment?

Ms SHEARER: No-one has failed the assessment but there is quite a high dropout rate of volunteers.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Because the demand on their time is onerous?

Ms SHEARER: Yes, and I think if they feel not confident enough they drop out pretty quickly.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: The other part to my question was the Night Rider bus system.

Ms SHEARER: There is obviously demand for a Night Rider but it is very expensive and we are trying to find ways to fund it. We did not get funding like Port Macquarie did from the crime prevention plan so we are exploring that option. Last year the Roads and Traffic Authority funded the promotion of it but we had two buses so it was quite expensive. Because of the shape of Coffs Harbour being very linear two bus companies were involved. Plus you have to have security. The Liquor Accord was not happy about the cost of the buses. We are looking at how we can make it more cost-effective. We are looking at maybe taxis or small buses instead of a 50-seater roaming around at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Why did you not receive funding like Port Macquarie? Did you not make a submission?

Ms SHEARER: This comes from the community services part of council. I believe that the crime prevention plan had to be submitted over a period of a year or so. It is just ready now and they are now looking at applying for the funding. So it is to do with the process of applying for the funding.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: You said it was quite expensive to provide the service in Coffs Harbour?

Ms SHEARER: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: How expensive?

Ms SHEARER: We ran it for six nights the year before last and it was up to \$20,000.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: For six nights?

Ms SHEARER: Yes, for two buses. Because you are looking at public holidays, you were looking at the cost of a security guard. Last year the cost of a security guard was \$4,000 for one night. So, it is very expensive. That is why we are looking at other options.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: What other options are you looking at?

Ms SHEARER: I have been trying to talk to the Liquor Accord about the venues that open late at night, because we are basically taking the patrons to their venues and we are ferrying them home for them at very little cost to the venues. So, I think there is some onus on the venues to pay for the transport.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: And there is a charge to the people using the Night Rider?

Ms SHEARER: Not everyone does it the same, but we have charged regular fares, because that is the way the bus companies wanted to run it. That generally has been accepted by the community. They get concession rates as well. No-one has complained about paying \$5 to get home.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Is there a 3 o'clock lockout here in the accord? What time is the lockout?

Ms SHEARER: Generally about 1 o'clock.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: And the members of the accord are not contributing at all?

Ms SHEARER: What they do is take it out of their membership. It depends. It is not compulsory to be in the Liquor Accord. They say they are contributing how many thousands of dollars to run the bus, but there are the bottle shops and restaurants and other venues that do not contribute. So, there is a bit of a tussle going on between all the different venues.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I asked a similar question to Mr Orr about the hit and miss of programs. It seems that most of the programs are targeted at year 11 students, whereas that is the time they are probably going for their licence and we have a number of students who leave school at year 10.

Ms SHEARER: Yes.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: What we know about that group of students is—and this is a generalisation—that they tend to be those most at risk in that group.

Ms SHEARER: Yes.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Would you offer an opinion to us as to whether you think there should be some compulsory tie in with these programs to getting your licence so you capture all of the people? But I take on board Mr Orr's comment earlier that when you make things compulsory you get a different level of intervention in the program. If people are interested in being there they voluntarily go into it and if they are forced to go the level of interest drops. Do you see any advantages in having a compulsory model?

Ms SHEARER: I am aware that sometimes we are missing out on this strata of 17-year-olds. I do not think there is any advantage in doing it earlier, because what they found in the evaluations is that a lot of the people who attended the RRISK Program, for instance, have started to drive, and they are very interested in the information given. If you try to do it earlier it does not mean so much to them. I hesitate to say I agree with you that there should be a graduated licensing scheme but, if it is, you are going to cover the whole of the demographic, but then it becomes another obstacle to getting your licence. So, that can be problematic too.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Sorry to take you back a couple of questions to the mentoring program. The high dropout rate really interested me, and you said yes to Mr Maguire's suggestion that it may be onerous. Can I have some more detail there? If the dropout rate is high, that is a major concern. Obviously the ones dropping out are the ones you least want to see dropout?

Ms SHEARER: I was talking about the volunteers. Is that what you understood?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: The mentors, you mean?

Ms SHEARER: Yes. We do not get a dropout rate with the people learning. They are very keen to get their licences. It is because the volunteers tend to be retired and they get sick or they get other things to do.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: You were discussing the different programs. Is it because all these different programs are funded by different bodies for a short term rather than all being together? Would they be more effective if they were all together?

Ms SHEARER: I think the RRISK Program is more effective because we have a mix of health and education and other agencies all working together, so I think that would be a distinct advantage. I think people have quite set views about educating young people, not always based on good research. But it is important to include them and I think the format of the programs is generally getting there but they need to look at the research a bit more.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Over the next five years what three things do you think will most effectively reduce the 17 to 25 accident rate in your local government area?

Ms SHEARER: I think we have yet to see the effect of the restrictions that were imposed last year. They might have a beneficial effect. I think the price of petrol will have an interesting effect, and I think if we could get some educational programs—I do not know quite how you do it.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Take the petrol out, you have one more?

Ms SHEARER: More funding for public transport and alternative programs—I guess, driver mentor programs.

CHAIR: We had some young people talking to us earlier. One was very forthright in her view that mobile phones are a menace to young people driving. As a father, I feel the same thing, but have you struck that?

Ms SHEARER: I do not think we have enough data on distractions in cars—mobile phones and Ipods and things like that. There are too many distractions in a car and young people think they can handle all that and they cannot.

CHAIR: Thank you for your submission and for being here today.

Ms SHEARER: Thank you for the opportunity. Mrs Thompson told me you wanted this year's evaluation of the RRISK report. I have a copy if you would like that.

(The witness withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

BEDE MARTIN SPANNAGLE, Director Technical Services, Upper Hunter Shire Council, 130 Liverpool Street, Scone, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I welcome you here today. I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are generally protected from legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of the Parliament and be an offence under the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901. Do you wish to make a brief opening statement before proceeding to questions?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Yes. I do not have anything specific to add to our submission, but in summary, the Upper Hunter Shire Council believes that there are a number of streams to resolving the problems that we have. They include road infrastructure improvements, targeting areas that are particularly dangerous or hazardous such as the Black Spot Program and the Road to Recovery Program, the safety of vehicles and occupant protection, the improvement over time of technology such as ABS, airbags and electronic stability control [ESC], and also, as I have heard a lot about this morning, driver attitude, particularly young driver attitude and the education and development of their skills as young drivers.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: You are director of technical services. Do you have a full-time road safety officer employed at the council?

Mr SPANNAGLE: No, we do not.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I noticed that a lot of the submission concentrated on engineering solutions. You have heard this morning people talk about road safety. In your submission you refer to the need for behavioural education but you do not provide details of available programs in the area. What programs are available in your area and what can be done in your area to improve that? Who delivers most programs in your area?

Mr SPANNAGLE: The Roads and Traffic Authority.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Themselves?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Who should be responsible, the RTA?

Mr SPANNAGLE: I think it is always going to be a joint issue. Council obtains funding for specific programs, such as senior driving, pedestrian issues and things like that. We try to partner with the RTA for things like young driver education programs. The one recently held was aimed at parents and getting their parents to influence the way that they learn and teach their children. From our council's point of view, we are a fairly small council, particularly before all the amalgamations, so we do not have resources available for a specific road safety officer. Now that we are a larger council we are looking to partner with Muswellbrook and Singleton councils for a joint road safety officer, but obviously funding is a necessity and we will look to the RTA for that funding.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: To whom would that person report?

Mr SPANNAGLE: That person would report to me in technical services.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Would a follow-up be for those three councils to put together some sort of evaluation process of what is available? It appears there is a lot available out there from volunteer organisations, partly funded by local government and the RTA, for Scone and the other two to avail themselves of?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Absolutely. It is probably an area that our council can improve and communities like Muswellbrook and Singleton have similar issues to us so pooling resources in that way will certainly give us much more impact.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Did I hear a suggestion that the three councils would appoint a road safety officer?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Yes, a combined one.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: A shared one.

Mr SPANNAGLE: Yes, we have had some preliminary discussions with Singleton. The three councils do a number of other professionals jointly, so this is another area that we are looking at to expand our role.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: What sort of job would that be? What would be the terms of reference for the job?

Mr SPANNAGLE: A specific road safety officer.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: But would it be to conduct programs and have a road show of programs going throughout the towns?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Certainly to coordinate that process, obtain funding and look for appropriate programs, yes.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: That is good.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What is your view about recent changes to the Graduated Licensing Scheme requiring 120 hours of driving for learner drivers?

Mr SPANNAGLE: I think it is a good thing. Across the board young people need more exposure to varying driving conditions. One of council's concerns is that that may discriminate against some country youth because we do not have access to public transport the way metropolitan areas do and our council itself employs a number of apprentices who need to travel to Newcastle, Tamworth and places like that and do not have access to public transport for that. That is part of their career; it is part of their way of life.

They are generally good drivers. They have generally been driving long before they legally can, not on roads but on their own farms, but their parents certainly have a much more relaxed attitude, I think, towards training them in the actual art of driving, but they still need a certain amount of time amongst traffic in varying conditions because a lot of kids from our area do not experience high-speed freeway driving. We do not have traffic lights in Scone, for example, so there are a number of things that they need to develop skills for.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Has the mortality between 17 and 25 been a big issue for your shire council area?

Mr SPANNAGLE: It has been over the last 10 years, not so much fatalities in that age range but certainly we have had a number of fatalities where a person of that range was driving and the passenger was killed.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Less over the last three to four compared to the last 10 years?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Certainly less over the last three—probably 5 to 10 years ago we had a number of fatalities and whether the Black Spot Program has fixed those, I do not know. You can never really measure that, but certainly two of the areas where we had those fatalities we received black spot funding and they have been addressed. Both of those were on unsealed roads.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: This may be a Dorothy Dixier. The Upper Hunter is an area with lots of small towns as opposed to Dubbo, Wagga Wagga or Tamworth. What sorts of problems will come to the fore as a result of the recent changes for young drivers because of the geography of the

Upper Hunter area and the lack of public transport, that maybe would not come to the fore in, say Maitland, it being a major regional city?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Certainly the instruction of kids is probably more predominantly done by parents whereas in more regional centres you have access to driving schools and professional driver training. If I use myself as an example, I am no longer a youth, but certainly my parents had a strong view that their teaching alone was not adequate because everyone has bad habits when they drive and they were fearful that I would pick up their bad habits, so they made sure I had professional driver training lessons and also had exposure to other drivers, be it friends or other family, just to broaden my experience and watch how other people drive and things like that. There is certainly less access to that professional driver training in the Upper Hunter. You would have to go to probably Singleton to access that training.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: What about TAFE colleges and young students having to travel? Pretty well everyone has to travel unless you are lucky enough to have the course in the town?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Certainly.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: And things like curfews, and the limit on passengers?

Mr SPANNAGLE: I have not personally experienced the curfew as a problem but a lot of our staff and young staff travel to Scone from west of Merriwa so they are travelling upwards of 100 kilometres each way to work. That may in itself be a good thing because they are quickly gaining a lot of road time under non-threatening conditions, but certainly the distances that have to be driven are much larger. For a young person in a country town, the car is their form of independence in a lot of ways and they are keen to get their licence straightaway and they are keen to explore their independence.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I have been quietly reading and underlining your submission. There is a very strong focus on road engineering. You have identified numerous reasons for young driver involvement in crashes. Can you expand on that because your submission is full of observations and it appears you are in need of funding to deal with some of those engineering issues?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Certainly. I do not want to push the funding issue too hard because it is a fact of life that councils are never going to have enough money. But certainly programs like the Black Spot Program and the Roads to Recovery Program allow us to target specific hazardous and problem areas, and rather than just improving our network, we are focusing on protection of vehicles in a crash incident. It is not just about keeping the car on the road, but if it does leave the road, then it is protecting the occupants from fatality or injury if possible, so the engineering side is an important side of it. There will always be crashes and if you can protect them from a fatality when that crash does occur, that is one step in the process.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: There is emphasis on the lack of overtaking opportunity on rural roads and any place where is reasonably rugged or geographically challenged terrain this problem is reasonably common. I know that in Tumut, Batlow, Tumbarumba and places like that we have the same problem. The Gocup Road is a great example—it has log trucks travelling on it, increasing investment in industry—of a desperate need to have government invest in road infrastructure because the overtaking opportunities are limited. Perhaps road conditions will encourage young drivers to take risks that they would not normally take on a well-engineered road.

Mr SPANNAGLE: Absolutely. Young drivers have a greater tolerance to risk.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: How do you prioritise removing those risks with the limited income that councils have? Considering there are all sorts of pressures on councils now with unfunded mandates?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Council itself undertakes road safety audits. On our regional road network and our major local road network we have undertaken safety audits that identify problems, like tightening horizontal curves and specific areas that have a high accident history. The Black Spot Program—there is both Federal and State funded Black Spot funding—works on a benefit-cost ratio

relating to traffic numbers as well as accidents and injuries. So you are addressing a known problem. We also try to be proactive in identifying potential problems and eliminate those with the Roads to Recovery funding or our own general funds.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Did you find the Roads to Recovery program beneficial in addressing these priorities?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Absolutely. It is now invaluable to us.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Is there any indication that it is going to continue or be discontinued?

Mr SPANNAGLE: No indication either way.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: What about the AusLink Program? Did you manage to obtain funds from AusLink? Did you qualify?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Not us directly. We put in a number of submissions. One submission we put in jointly with the Roads and Traffic Authority on the New England Highway at Holcombe Hill, which has had a number of fatalities over the past five years—George Souris certainly helped us with that. It was not specifically young driver problems; it was just an engineering fault in the road. We were successful in obtaining money to fix that jointly with the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Federal Government. With all these programs there is 10 times as many submissions as there is money, so we were not successful in the other two submissions we put in.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Did you try and access any other forms of funding apart from the ones we have mentioned? Were regional partnerships or something like that with some innovative projects an option before it was discontinued?

Mr SPANNAGLE: We basically try everything. The submission that we put to the AusLink Program that was not funded, we diverted some of the Roads to Recovery funding not to fix the problem completely but certainly ease the problem that we saw there. We will try and access any funding we can but it is always put the money where your highest priorities are.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: How much does the Roads to Recovery Program provide to council?

Mr SPANNAGLE: The Upper Hunter Shire Council?

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Yes.

Mr SPANNAGLE: About \$700,000 per year.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: So it has been set at about \$700,000 per year?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Yes.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Do you have driving schools in some of your marginal areas such as Scone?

Mr SPANNAGLE: No, we do not.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Where do young people usually go to learn to drive besides their parents?

Mr SPANNAGLE: To get a driving lesson from a driving school I think they would have to go to Singleton, which is about 50 minutes away.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Do they normally have their lessons around the urban part or on the highway? I am concerned about smaller areas and young people learning to drive?

Mr SPANNAGLE: I would think it would be in the urban area. That is where the bulk of the test is aimed. Driving on unsealed roads, for example, would be done under the supervision of their parent or some other person.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: It must be very daunting for them to get their licence and then go on to the highway?

Mr SPANNAGLE: I would imagine it would be very daunting, yes. Certainly for them to learn in Scone and then travel to Sydney, for example, would be quite frightening.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Talking about the question of attracting funding and the Black Spot Program, you mentioned that program in particular is evaluated not only on the fatalities issue but the benefit-cost ratio and so on. I take it roads with a higher usage would attract more attention, is that correct?

Mr SPANNAGLE: That is correct.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: That may not necessarily be the road or roads that have the highest fatalities?

Mr SPANNAGLE: That is also correct.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: As part of that program does the council measure vehicles driven on certain roads? Do you have a program for doing analysis there?

Mr SPANNAGLE: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Is there any way that rural councils can bias their arguments for getting funding on the basis that there may only be 10 people who use a road daily but it is deadly?

Mr SPANNAGLE: No. It is an analytical formula. It does not take in subjectivity, no. We certainly try and use it as best we can. If we know there is a problem with a low number of vehicles we will put together a project that is of a lesser cost—therefore the ratio being higher. It will not permanently eliminate the hazard but it may provide signage warning of it or take part of the bend out or something like that. We can get the benefit-cost ratio number up by having a lesser-priced project.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: But that may not necessarily fix the problem?

Mr SPANNAGLE: It will not eliminate it but it will certainly mitigate the hazard.

(The witness withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

WAYNE HENRY EVANS, Power of Choice presenter and local magistrate, courthouse, 22 Murray Street Port Macquarie, and

JASON SCOTT BENTLEY, Power of Choice committee member and senior constable of police, Port Macquarie police station, 2 Hay Street Port Macquarie, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I draw your attention to the fact that your evidence is given under parliamentary privilege and you are generally protected against legal or administrative action that might otherwise result in relation to the information you provide. I should also point out that any deliberate misleading of the Committee may constitute a contempt of Parliament and an offence under the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901. Would either of you like to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

Mr BENTLEY: No.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: To both of you, over the next five years what three things do you think will be the most effective way of reducing the road toll of 17s to 25s?

Mr BENTLEY: Firstly, driver attitude and passenger attitude. That is a change of attitude amongst young people. Driver education, that is the actual physical quality of driver education that students, people in that age group, receive. The third is it just community support to ensure the road toll is driven down through those achievements. The change in attitude, the first one, cannot occur unless there is community support. The community has to reflect the standards we expect of the young people.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Community support for policing or what?

Mr BENTLEY: Driver education and changes in relation to risk taking and attitude of young people, the attitude that the car is there to be used for what it is meant for, not as an extension of their social life, an extension of what they do for recreation. It is not a recreational tool; it is a work tool.

Mr EVANS: I agree with Jason and emphasise education, not driver training. I believe that is the wrong approach. I believe it is fraught with danger, but education, a change in attitude of young people to try to get them to mature as the law requires them to be mature. It penalises them as adults but treats them like children. I do not have any other issues. I think it will flow on from that.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: When you say education does not amount to driver training, you mean the technical skills of driving a car?

Mr EVANS: Yes. I think that is the worst thing they can do.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: You mean the skid stuff?

Mr EVANS: Exactly that point. You show them how to beat a skid pan and they come down to our parking lot and put oil down and show their mates what they have learned that day, and show them how to do doughnuts properly. If you get them to use what is between their ears and not what is under their right foot, I think you will get somewhere, and we do that through this program. We do it also through the traffic offenders program. When young people come back with their parents it is interesting to note in the first instance the parents are not impressed and they sit on the other side of the courtroom. When they come back and there has been a change in attitude and you ask the parents what they have noticed, they emphasise maturity.

Mr BENTLEY: I endorse that as well. Advanced driver training is a long step forward from where they need to begin, which is the change of attitude in relation to driving education. It is the quality of the education they are provided during that 120 hours and the quality of the person who was providing that training and education.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: That brings me to the TOP program. Do you have any experience with TOP, and what do you think of it?

Mr EVANS: It depends on who is running it, how genuine it is and what the reason for the person going there is. A large number of people go there to get a discount. There were errors made by judicial officers—I do not apologise. There was a disproportionate number of section 10 discharges, which brought discredit on the law and on the judiciary because some of us magistrates and, more importantly, the appellate jurisdiction of the District Court judges, who correct our errors, could not understand that the law is that it is unusual to get a section 10 discharge and generally it is not just because you need your licence. But we have a program up here that is health oriented as opposed to police oriented—and I do not mean that disrespectfully to Jason or the other police, but I have a problem with the Police Citizens Youth Club running it, where the police bust of them. They go in there and the first thing they do is confront the police as though it is the fault of the police that they are there, whereas there is another way of introducing the police when the person realises they are there because of their own problem.

But, it depends on who is running the traffic offenders program, and I have great concern about what I heard today and have heard recently that there is going to be a blanket rolling out of the Police Citizens Youth Club to conduct the traffic offenders program when I have heard from officers who are conducting it and have been conducting it their main concern is the fundraising. It is the golden egg. The traffic offenders program can work if it is fair dinkum, the people go there with the right attitude and the magistrates look at it as a factor, if it is appropriate, for reducing accidents. If a person goes there, turns up eight times and does not do anything, they do not get a discount. They have not changed their attitude.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Senior Constable, I noticed in your presentation you talked about the assessment of the program and I notice you say it is difficult to measure the efficacy of the program and you made the statement:

Since the programme start in 2005, there have been no fatalities involving any of the past students.

Do you have a similar idea as to whether any of those past students have been involved in offences or been in trouble in the TOP program?

Mr BENTLEY: No, I cannot gather that sort of information. The difficult thing about trying to track past attendees in relation to traffic offences or crashes they have been involved in, postcodes are generally how the statistics are gathered. As soon as the young person moves from here to Newcastle University or up to Armidale, their postcode changes. You cannot do an historical check on where did that person live in 2005. So to try it to measure it that way is literally impossible.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: This Committee has taken evidence from traffic education and safety providers from all over the place and maybe 10 or 12 programs. The number of throughput from your program is pretty impressive—2,000 a year.

Mr BENTLEY: No, 2,000 to date. We do 500 per annum, and that is every school other than one small non-government school.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: That brings it closer back to the field, shall we say.

Mr BENTLEY: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: If it is difficult to assess a program, how would people like Staysafe try to evaluate the effectiveness of all the different programs, because one common theme seems to have been that there are too many programs, they are disconnected and none is evaluated to the same extent. There are little bits of money flowing here, there and everywhere without overall coordination. How do you see your program in relation to the other programs that you know about?

Mr BENTLEY: The programs I know about specifically are RRISK and RYDA. RYDA is very similar to our program except that it operates away from the schools and has one other element, which is a driver experience element. RRISK is a bit more health oriented, so to speak, rather than just driving, and again that is away from the schools. I think they all share the same problem of how do you measure the results? I say to the students the challenge is not what you think today or at the end of today when you are lying home in bed thinking what you are going to do the next time you are out.

The challenge is 2½ years from now on a Friday night: How am I going to get home, how am I going to get where I am going, what am I going to say to somebody if I do not feel safe. That is the true meaningful test, not what the kids think after they have done it, after they are walking out of the session or a week later, it is that long term, and they emphasise that to them as well. This is the start of the rest of their lives. Anybody is affected and is vulnerable to being involved in a crash. I see the measurement system equally typical for every single program.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Do you see any weaknesses in the Power of Choice Program?

Mr BENTLEY: No, we would just like it to be longer. We would like everyone who has a vested interest in their own pet projects—people in health wish they had access to the school students as well. The only weakness is that we miss people who leave school before year 11. TAFE is trying to pick up the ball but because of the way it is structured, it is really difficult to capture those. I do not know what programs Juvenile Justice has running inside its centres. Obviously they are the highest risk I would say, to some extent. They need a lot more work but you have them in that literally captured environment. That gives you an opportunity to really work hard on those kids but, again, with so many interest groups out there all trying to grab a small piece at that time it is so difficult in year 11.

Mr EVANS: With respect, I think you are going to have to change the way you assess and evaluate, because you are looking at a negative statistic. I was confronted by this when I spoke to a lady who was presenting a certain government program, a government-funded program. I said we have not had a death in five years. She said that really cannot be analysed. I said no, but that is what we are trying to achieve. I said, "You are trying to get us some more so we fail and then we can show we are proving better by reducing it." I said that is not the way we work.

It has to be assessed in relation to the area and a number of other factors, not statistical analysis, because you cannot evaluate how many you have saved, but I can tell you how many have been through the program that have appeared in court—two. I ask everyone and I check. I do not have to ask them when they are about 40 years of age because I am only looking at the persons who would reasonably be 17 at the time and up to about 22 or 24 and there have been two who have been through—one for a manner dangerous and one for a drink driving.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Two out of how many?

Mr EVANS: Two thousand.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Two out of how many people who have been before you aged 17 to 22?

Mr EVANS: I suppose 1,300.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Young people?

Mr EVANS: That is what I am looking at; five per Monday, 52 Mondays a year, to this day and there would be five young people on a list day, males and females.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: And only two of those were from the program?

Mr EVANS: The best evaluation comes from the State Emergency Service, who now have to take ambulance officers to show the State Emergency Services around this area what a tragic accident is because there is no practical training and most of the young people have not been to a serious accident scene. It is going through the community. It is not just the kids; we have had feedback from parents, who say, "What made you bring that "B" program in?" They are driving along the street, did something wrong, and the young fellow or the young girl said, "What about the Power of Choice?" Sometimes parents are embarrassed about making errors, but that is the educational extension of it in the community.

Mr BENTLEY: The numbers that Mr Evans told us about shows how many were missing outside the school system. We are just concerned with the school system because that is what we have to work with. We have been through the invitation of the schools. It is how do we capture all those other people and they are obviously at risk because so many are being missed.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Mr Evans, I think you said that the driver-training component should be left to the supervisor who is doing the 120 hours with them?

Mr EVANS: Yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Is it a problem that there are no controls or standards for those supervisors? You could have a very good supervisor or a supervisor who is a very bad driver.

Mr EVANS: Yes. That may be a problem but my concern is that until they use what is between their ears, they really do not get the message. Some young people are fantastic drivers but they do stupid things. They will always be much better than their grandparents ever had the chance of being but it is maturing a person who has now got a six or eight under their bonnet. I did a high-speed driver training program at 19 years of age and I was a useless driver until I was about 25 years of age. I would have been terrible chasing people around the streets at 150 kilometres an hour. It is the maturity and I am honest enough to say that about myself.

I use myself as an example. You can have terrific trainers but they have to have the people who are matured to that standard and once they get the message and once they see what they can do to themselves and others, then they can start to learn how to control the motor vehicle, but if they learn the wrong way, even though they are taught by an expert, it does not sink in. They are more pressurised by their peers at 10 or 11 o'clock on a Saturday night at the parking lot.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Do you think there should be some sort of accreditation for supervisors?

Mr EVANS: Oh, no doubt. I have spoken to one of our members, a presenter who is in the room at the moment, who is experienced. He has been pushing for all supervisors and all trainers to be accredited regularly, the same as they would in any other occupation, let alone a life-saving occupation. Surf lifesavers have to be re-accredited every 12 months. When does a driving instructor have to be re-accredited, I ask?

Mr BENTLEY: The fact that professional driving instructors do not get reaccredited is crazy.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: The question related to the fact that parents teach young people to drive and there is confusion about the suggestion that drivers need driver-training enhancement. Some people use the terminology "advanced" driver courses, et cetera, but it is actually driver skills enhancement. There is a line and the argument is that if you talk about advanced driver courses, it encourages young people to do burnouts and to demonstrate to their friends the skills that they have learned. The suggestion is, to augment the teaching process that parents embark upon, that there be some form of driver skills enhancement to teach them those skills that perhaps parents do not even know?

Mr EVANS: I had a situation at Hornsby where a young fellow was being taught by his brother, who was on parole for culpable driving.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I rest my case.

Mr EVANS: I made a recommendation to Soames Job of the RTA, and I respect him immensely, that people should not be allowed to teach anyone to drive unless they have had at least 10 years driving, and the last at least five years without a conviction or an offence proven for a major offence, otherwise they are just passing on bad habits.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: That is my argument all the time.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Senior Constable Bentley, in your role as crash investigator, when you are called to the scene of an accident or you are aware of a young person, is it always driver attitude or is there any evidence of alcohol in that 17- to 25-year-old?

Mr BENTLEY: Yes, both, except in the last three years—that is locally speaking—when we have not had a local person involved, but we have had other crashes involving other young people involved in fatal crashes in the last three years in this area; primarily people travelling through. Those crashes have been as a result of fatigue and distraction-type things. Then for areas outside the Power of Choice, it would be half and half. Half would be alcohol-related. Where there is alcohol there is always speed or some sort of dangerous driving. The other half of the crashes involves distraction or falling asleep. It is about half and half. The incidence of alcohol is greater amongst young people when there is a fatality involved.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: So the designated driver system is not working that well at the moment?

Mr BENTLEY: I would not say that it is not working because the people involved in the crash are at a party somewhere and say, "Let's all pile into a car and drive off". That is against the current legislation in relation to car pooling. It comes back to what I say to the kids, "I don't care what your attitude is, sitting here in your school uniform in the classroom. It is what you are going to do on a Saturday night at half past 12." That is where the breakdown is and when the safety net needs to come in. It is extremely difficult for every single education program to break through that.

The Hon. IAN WEST: But unless you come to grips with that vexed issue, the attitude and the longitudinal assessment, we have no way of being able to assess things like Power of Choice. When you look at participants' assessment of the course, as we have heard, the strike rate is probably 10 per cent as to their feelings when they leave the course on that particular day. If there is to be any sort of longitudinal assessment, we need your expertise as to how to do that, because of attitude and the maturing issue that you say comes possibly two years down the track—unless we have some evaluation of the participants.

Mr EVANS: If you really wanted to follow it through you could have contact with that person and follow it up in five years time but, as Jason said, geographics are a problem in the country because they move on. But we know in this area if one of our youth is killed in another area. You hear about it. It is in the local paper. No-one can miss it. They cannot disappear. That is our only way of evaluating it. We know what we are faced with but we do not have all the answers, of course. That is the only way to follow it up.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Have you had any inquiries or discussions with the RTA? You obviously have access to the database and to the licensing system to provide you with the information as a long-term goal to reinforce what you are doing in the program. Second, I asked you about the numbers of young offenders you are seeing through the courts. Will you take on notice the question of the numbers and provide to the Committee at some point in the future the exact number of offenders that the courts are dealing with, so that we can look at that statistic and measure the success of your program?

Mr EVANS: You have the total number of people we deal with, with respect, because that is on the statistics that are available to you.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Through the courts?

Mr EVANS: Yes. You probably have a breakdown in ages, but if not, I will get on to Don Weatherburn or someone and try to get that done. I will certainly keep a record of anyone I find who has been through the program before and Jason and I can get a message back through the commander here, who will give a direction that we get those statistics. That is not an issue.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Thank you.

CHAIR: We had a couple of young community members and the young woman spoke glowingly of the program, how impressed she was and the impact it had on her. She did not think that

it had the same impact on her male school colleagues. We have heard a lot of evidence about young males maturing later than females; it is something to do with the brain. Anecdotally, does that have more of an impact on young women than men?

Mr BENTLEY: Definitely. When we are at schools where there are mixed classes it is always the girls who are up at the front and they are the ones with the tears running down their faces during the presentation of the girl with a head injury. They have the capacity to empathise. The girls do not have the risk-taking element. The young men are at the back and some of them are okay and then there is a small element at the back who switch their brain off. But as soon as Mr Evans talks about what they can be fined, the girls switch off because their attitude is that they will not do the wrong thing, so it does not apply. The young blokes at the back go, "Five hundred bucks for doing essentially nothing! That really matters. I'm not going to die in a car accident but I might lose \$500".

Mr EVANS: They do not want to lose their car.

Mr BENTLEY: The boys do not want to lose their car, their licence or their money. But for the girls it is very emotional.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What do you think about the 120 hours compared to the 50 hours?

Mr BENTLEY: My view is that it is a default way of extending the period that they apply for their licence. Rather than it being at 17, it is going to take longer. Personally, I am not at the stage of teaching my children to drive yet, but that will be a difficult feat to achieve, but so be it. The alternative is that they do not learn properly and they become bad drivers and they die in a car accident.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Can I just follow up on that? Getting back to the quality of the supervisor for those hours? Would it be feasible to get that student driver to a level in less than 120 hours if there was a better accreditation system?

Mr BENTLEY: I would assume you would because you have 120 hours with dad in the seat next to you on a laptop doing his business work and saying, "Take it easy". Literally people are almost getting to that stage where they are doing work on the phone while driving around. Not so much here but certainly in the metropolitan areas if you go out in a traffic jam from 5.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. and follow the traffic and you will see it—that is two hours of nothing.

Mr EVANS: If they have 120 hours under supervision of the wrong person they are just going to learn more bad habits. If they learn from someone who starts to point at the pigeons and swear at people that might make a mistake or not show the appropriate consideration for other drivers, it is not going to help them. Most people can get through a test in this day and age on computers— young people can. They will pass it but it does not mean to say they are really qualified.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: What is your opinion about the 120 hours?

Mr EVANS: I would agree with Mr Bentley that extra hours, if not under the right circumstances, is only going to be a burden. I taught our daughter and she drove on Ls from Forster back to Sydney in rain over the Bulahdelah Mountains. That was in the daytime and she is a good driver—I am not saying that because of me because she has had tuition from her mother too. It depends on the attitude. My daughter did not need the 120 hours. Some young people who come from properties have been driving since they were nine years of age but they might have been driving the wrong way. It all depends on who is tutoring them. I do not agree necessarily with the 120 hours. It is a burden for single parents and it is a burden for people who really have to work very hard in their working life to try and help their child, or more than one child, get their licence.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Expanding on what Mr Colless was asking, what would you feel, now that we have got 120 hours, if credits could be given for them doing other things like education? So if you have done the Power of Choice course you could get 10 hours off. That would then be attractive not just to the schoolchildren that you have talked to but the people you have

missed. If you did two lessons with a driving instructor you would get another five hours off. What do you think about that concept?

Mr BENTLEY: I think that is a great idea because the parents who are going to take advantage of it are the parents who do not have the time and the parents who do not have the interest.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: So the parents would then push—

Mr BENTLEY: Pushing it our way. We would then be getting the children of the parents who do not have the interest to educate their children and hopefully we will change their attitude a little bit, as opposed to them doing 10 hours with a disinterested parent.

Mr EVANS: And you have got the parent who might be eager to assist and guide but the young person will not want to listen, "I can do it better than you. You are an old so and so."

Mr BENTLEY: That is like a reward to the parents who are interested. To the parents who care it is a reward to them and saves them coming out. To the parents who do not care we have 10 hours of trying to instil something into them they are not going to get from somewhere else.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: You have got the DVD as part of the package for your course. Is your course portable? A lot of these courses are reliant on the people who have the enthusiasm in driving them. We have found a lot of courses have a good group of people driving the programs. What sort of portability would you see this type of program having to be offered in other parts of the State?

Mr BENTLEY: Portability exists because every town has ambulance officers, people like chaplains, police and driving educators. In areas where they have, for example, people like myself in crash investigations, there is somebody who can interact in that role. We have found that making local people makes a difference, even if you have someone from a health background like a drug and alcohol councillor. Not in our program but in another program run for young people who are caught underage drinking and they come to the police station and have an information session there instead of getting an infringement notice. One of the presenters there is a local drug and alcohol councillor who is local and he picks up a lot of referrals because people know who he is. RRISK relies on a presenter from Sydney, who is a fantastic drug and alcohol presenter but he then gets on a plane and goes away. Keeping it with local presenters is really essential because you are talking about something in your street that means something to the kids.

With our program we had two people who presented. One was the mother of a 16-year-old who took her car without her knowledge and killed his mate. So the mother of the driver was the presenter with the sister of the young fellow who died. The mother was actually a schoolteacher. They related to her because she was a schoolteacher and he was 16 when it happened—same age group. Then the sister is saying, "Four years ago I was sitting where you are now. Two years ago my brother was sitting where you are now. This is where it is. It is how fast it is." Even for the boys it is unbelievably empowering and really shocks them into asking what are the chances that it will happen to one of them.

Mr EVANS: Mind you, the seating was in a classroom and not in a presentation. It was one of the reasons or statistics as to why we got this going. Just in case there is any misunderstanding, that DVD you have got is not the program: it is a promo. We are looking locally—no need to worry about it ladies and gentlemen—to try and get the funding to put it on a DVD so it can be presented. But the attraction is that it is completely portable to any town that has high school. As Mr Bentley said, they all have the backup services and it is better. When I say to the young people, "You might think you are a protected group and because you are going to school you will not be killing someone", I then talk about a cross that is five kilometres north of the bridge on the highway and identify how that occurred. That can have an impact. If you tell them about something that occurred down in Albury or Perth it has no relevance to these young people: it is here and now.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: My first question is directed to Senior Constable Bentley. How much does this program cost per annum to deliver? Where have you received funding from? If it were to be an ongoing program what are your needs? My second question is directed to Mr Evans. In the submissions made previously today reference was made to a young driver that none of them would get

in a car with because they regard the person as dangerous and putting them at risk. What would you do with such a person? How would you treat that?

Mr EVANS: You mean if they came before me?

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: No, I mean a young person who disregards the road rules, who takes risks and is prepared to put the other young people in the car with him at risk. How do you address that?

Mr EVANS: Firstly, I think we have achieved something by those other young people identifying that the person is a goose and they should not get in the car with them. I think that is a positive in the community. Secondly in relation to the person, if they commit an offence they come before me when I give them an offer they cannot refuse. I get them through some program and I get them back. If the person is an adult, it is through the Parole and Probation Service. If it is alcohol-related for a second offence, I put them through the Traffic Offenders Program. They invariably come back with a different attitude. One of the problems that we face is that there has been a reluctance to show young people—and I do not know what the definition of young people is because normally it is under 18 but it does not relate to drivers because at law they are not young people—graphic videos.

We are going on like it does not happen in the real world. We have these people who are driving big cars not realising that they could finish up in a wheelchair and that if they were in a wheelchair they cannot wipe their backsides or shower themselves. This is the real world they have to see. I am not talking about blood and guts on the street or something like that but being confronted by the reality of what they can do to themselves and others. That is a worry because they are being protected from that. People are saying a study overseas in Venezuela or somewhere said they should not confront people because it will traumatise them. We have counsellors there, the school has counsellors and we have the support of people from religious organisations. I think it has to be looked at in that light.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Do you ever contemplate a lifetime ban from driving—

Mr EVANS: No.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: —for real idiots who have come back to you for the third, fourth and fifth time?

Mr EVANS: No, and I would like to have the law changed so we can get them their licences back. We have a program that is going through the new jail that you saw opened yesterday. We have people going up there being taught how to drive forklifts and they cannot drive for 40 years. Now these are Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Change the law so that you disqualify them when they commit an offence but change it so that if they go for three or four years and they have not driven again and committed an offence, and they can establish to the magistrate or the Roads and Traffic Authority that they have changed their attitude, then give them a work licence back.

I know it is hard to police. I was dealing with them when I was a prosecutor. But give them some light at the end of the tunnel otherwise you go out there and you have got disqualified drivers. Look at your statistics: they become high-speed pursuits. Give them something to work with. I have young people that say, "Why should I do it?" Okay, the first time you give them a suspended sentence, the second time they go into custody and they get two more years, they get nine more years or habitual offenders. I do not agree with lifetime bans but I agree with keeping them off the road until they have woken up to themselves.

Mr BENTLEY: In relation to the cost: there is no cost to the student. Sometimes I attend in work time and sometimes I attend on my days off. Mr Evans attends. Some are volunteers or self-employed people that attend at their own expense. There is no charge to the schools. The State Emergency Service [SES] does not charge anything to attend. They are all volunteers that attend. A car is donated. When we run them at a particular school the neighbouring school will travel to that high school and it is then reciprocated the next year. The schools have told us that they have money set aside for what they call the PDHPE—which is their health program—and they use part of that money to pay for the bus, to ensure that the students do not have an excuse not to be there.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Overall it is very low cost?

Mr BENTLEY: Yes.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: But it does take the time of volunteers. There must be costs in stationery, phones, your time et cetera. There must be a monetary value?

Mr BENTLEY: Yes, to roll it out like the RYDA Program. The RYDA Program has become very formalised and they have a central area that takes care of all the coordination. That is partly what we have done by producing the DVD so if they somehow do not have access to RYDA the DVD is there to guide them. But again it comes back to people being committed to provide on a voluntary basis, which is always going to be an issue.

Mr EVANS: We found that the students wanted to do something. When you talk about costing, the students came up with the idea to donate a gold coin, for those who could afford it, to the SES. We thought that was a positive. We do not ask them to do that but they do it through the schools on their own volition. We think that is meritorious.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Mr Evans, about four months ago the police apprehended a young P-plater at 255 kilometres per hour in western Sydney. I know what your answer is probably going to be, but does that person deserve a light at the end of the tunnel?

Mr EVANS: Yes, after they get out. I would certainly suggest that person should be disqualified immediately. I do and I am criticised. When a person comes before me and pleads guilty they are disqualified and then I will work out how long it will be before they get some credit points.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: With this person's psychological makeup and attitude are they ever redeemable?

Mr EVANS: Yes. It could be a snap of the brain. It could be that they have lost a brother. It could be they were trying to commit suicide. I was at Hornsby and we had a number of those on the freeway. I do not have an expertise in it but I would certainly say if in five years time they have proved that they were not, then they do not get their licence back. If they have changed and say, "I was an idiot. I have done my time. I have settled down." I would consider it.

Mr BENTLEY: I agree that they should be treated the same way as medical conditions are treated: they are off the road for a period of time and then they are assessed. The onus is still on them to prove that they are fit to hold a licence. They are not just given the opportunity to undergo a knowledge test but they need a professional assessment of their attitude.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: What would be your response to the prospect of speedometers in cars not going beyond 130 kilometres, 140 kilometres or maybe 150 kilometres—the needle stops there?

Mr BENTLEY: Your global positioning system [GPS] or satellite navigation will tell you how fast you are going.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: So my 255-kilometre person would put his GPS on and gain satisfaction anyway?

Mr EVANS: They did that with trucks and what did they use—foam. The trucks went faster and the ticker stopped but the truck did not. It was supposed to have an automatic cut out.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 2.45 p.m.)