

**Submission
No 1**

**INQUIRY INTO THE EXERCISE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF
THE MOTOR ACCIDENTS AUTHORITY AND MOTOR
ACCIDENTS COUNCIL - TENTH REVIEW**

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Date received: 21/04/2010



21 April 2010

The Hon Christine Robertson MLC

Chair, Standing Committee on Law and Justice

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Robertson,

**Re: Tenth review of the MAA and the MAC and third review of the LTCSA and
LTCSAC.**

Thank you for inviting Youthsafe to make a submission to the Standing
Committee on Law and Justice in respect of the tenth review of the MAA and
the MAC required under section 210 of the *Motor Accidents Compensation*

Act 1999 and the third review of the LTCSA and LTCSAC required under section 68 of the *Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006*.

As you would be aware, Youthsafe is a not for profit organisation and the peak body in NSW for prevention of serious injury in young people (aged 15 to 25 years). Consequently Youthsafe's interest in the review primarily relates to the MAA's stated role of '*delivering and supporting injury prevention initiatives*', particularly for young road users.

Youthsafe acknowledges the wide ranging responsibilities of the MAA and the LTCSA and the respective advisory councils, as well as the significant past efforts of the MAA in supporting road safety and injury management initiatives and in establishing the Lifetime Care and Support Authority, an important development in managing serious injury due to road trauma.

Nevertheless data on injuries and fatalities due to road trauma continue to reflect the over representation of young people compared to other age

groups. It is also evident that road trauma remains a major cause of death and disability amongst young people, particularly young males.

Youthsafe would therefore advocate that injury prevention for young road users should be an ongoing priority for the MAA and that effective strategies that assist in preventing road trauma in the first instance are an invaluable investment addressing both the financial and social impact of death and injury on the roads.

It is noted that the Committee will in part be basing the reviews on the 2007/08 and 2008/09 annual reports of the MAA and the 2008/09 annual report of the LTCSA.

In the 2008/09 annual report of the MAA the *'Injury Prevention Strategy'* was noted to be as follows:

The MAA has an injury prevention strategy to:

- *Meet the MAA's road safety legislative responsibilities in a strategic and coordinated way.*
- *Give direction and priority to MAA road safety activities.*

- *Disseminate information about those activities.*

The strategy focuses on decreasing serious injury and gives priority to areas including those which have greatest cost impact on the CTP Scheme.

Key target groups:

- *Children 0–16*
- *Youth 17–25*
- *Pedestrians*
- *Motorcyclists*

It was therefore surprising that in the ‘*Year Ahead*’ section of this report there was no mention of any major works related to road safety or prevention strategies.

We are aware of the ‘*Arrive Alive*’ program, including support for Youth Week and YouthRock activities and presentations by sports people and wheelchair basketball players in schools. However it is unclear from any publically available information as to the directions the MAA intends to take in the area of road safety and injury prevention. Youthsafe would be very interested in the Committee exploring this with the MAA.

Achieving change in young road user safety is complex, particularly given the range of risk factors that come with being young. Research into adolescent brain development in recent years is also giving some insights into risk perception and risk management in young people, as well as approaches to learning relevant to the adolescent brain. This necessitates a multi-strategic and co-ordinated approach to road safety for young people. It would seem that current MAA road safety programs for young people that focus on one off events and sponsorship of sports people to present to young people at schools about road safety do not adequately take into account the complexities nor take full advantage of the potential for MAA to influence road safety for young people.

Youthsafe would encourage the MAA to consider a broader range of activities to address road safety for this age group and would be happy to discuss this further with the MAA.

Youthsafe has identified in the past particular factors that increase the risk of injury in young people in general and specifically on the roads as follows:

- The still developing adolescent brain, which is not fully mature until the mid twenties, particularly the prefrontal cortex responsible for reasoning, self control and making better judgements.
- Attitudes and patterns of behaviour related to safety established through parental/family and local community influences from an early age.
- Belief structures about inability to control risk, particularly amongst lower socio-economic groups.
- The strong significance of peers and their influence during adolescent years.
- Societal expectations that young people take risks and are not responsible for the outcomes of risk taking behaviour.
- Propensity to experiment and a desire for thrill seeking, evident in activities such as speeding.
- New levels of independence that come with adolescence.
- Fatigue – often associated with the busy lifestyles of young people which can include a combination of study, work and socialisation activities.

- Inexperience with activities that may impact on the safety of young people on the roads eg use of alcohol or drugs.

For young drivers specifically, risk factors also include:

- New levels of responsibility associated with driving.
- Inexperience with driving – this is more than just a matter of vehicle handling skills, it also relates to inexperience in a multi-task activity and learning to identify hazards and make decisions.
- Exposure on the roads including the overall amount of time spent driving as well as exposure to hazardous conditions such as night time driving, rain etc.
- Youth motivation for driving – often it is considered a form of entertainment.
- The significance of driving – a sense of identity can be linked to a vehicle in some youth sub-cultures.

Other potential societal and cultural influences may include:

- A greater propensity for young people to use older vehicles with fewer safety features.

- A motor vehicle centric society where this is the preferred mode of transport.
- A highly mobile youth population with limited alternative transport options.
- Busier parental lifestyles where there may be a reduced willingness or ability to assist in transporting young people.

Youthsafe would reiterate the view that appropriate funding should continue to be directed to the high priority area of injury prevention in young people on the roads. Further, it is important that the funding be used to support a multi-strategic approach which is co-ordinated with other stakeholders and incorporates 'whole of community' principles to comprehensively address the range of risk factors for young people on the roads and the complexity of road safety for this age group. Intervention strategies should also be evidence based and considered, taking into account up to date research in the field and issues associated with practical application.

I look forward to the outcome of the review. Please contact me if you would like to discuss the issues raised or require further information. Contact details are as follows:

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Yours sincerely

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