

**NINTH REVIEW OF THE EXERCISE OF THE FUNCTIONS  
OF THE  
MOTOR ACCIDENTS AUTHORITY  
AND THE  
MOTOR ACCIDENTS COUNCIL**

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This submission addresses both the Ninth Review of the MAA and MAC and the First Review of the LTCSA and LTCSAC. A duplicate submission has been processed as received by the LTCSA/LTCSAC Review and is available for download from that inquiry web page.



28 April 2008

The Hon Christine Robertson MLC

Chair, Standing Committee on Law and Justice

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Robertson,

**Re: Ninth review of the exercise of the functions of the Motor Accidents**

**Authority and the Motor Accidents Council and first review of the exercise of**

**the functions of the Lifetime Care and Support Authority and Lifetime Care**

**and Support Advisory Council**

Thank you for inviting Youthsafe to make a submission to the Standing

Committee on Law and Justice in relation to the 'Ninth review of the exercise

of the functions of the MAA and the MAC' under section 210 of the *Motor Accidents Compensation Act 1999* and the 'First review of the LTCSA and LTCSAC' under section 68 of the *Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006*.

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).

Therefore Youthsafe's submission is in relation to the ninth review of the MAA and MAC, specifically the road safety and injury management functions of the MAA with a particular focus on young road users.

In recent years there has been an overall improvement in road safety and a substantial increase in available literature on this issue. Yet young people continue to be over represented in road trauma statistics and road trauma remains a major cause of death and disability amongst young people, particularly young males.

Youthsafe is therefore of the view that evidence based and co-ordinated initiatives, with appropriate funding, should continue to be directed to this important priority area of injury prevention in young people on the roads. An identified responsibility of the MAA is *'research and education projects that prevent and reduce injuries and their consequences'*. This has achieved some worthwhile outcomes in the past and is an appropriate mechanism for further advancements in managing road trauma amongst young people.

In the last few years substantial efforts have gone into the establishment of the Lifetime Care and Support Authority, which is a commendable and important development in managing serious injury due to road trauma.

However effective strategies that assist in preventing road trauma in the first instance are an invaluable investment, particularly for young people who represent a significant proportion of those seriously injured on the roads requiring lifelong care and support.

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

- The still maturing adolescent brain – recent neuroscience research has identified that the adolescent brain is still developing and not fully mature until young people reach their twenties. The prefrontal cortex is a late maturing part of the brain 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 very 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.

And for young drivers 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 – this includes the overall amount of time spent driving and also 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 potentially 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.

Effecting change in young road user safety is complex, particularly given the range of risk factors that come with being young. This necessitates a multi-strategic and co-ordinated approach.

In the MAA 2007 annual report a key focus of road safety targeting young people appeared to be sponsorship of sports teams involving athletes presenting to young people at schools about road safety. 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 would reiterate that the following points are vital to the MAA's ongoing role in road safety for young people:

- Young road users must continue to be recognised as a high priority group for injury prevention.
- MAA's approach should be multi-strategic, co-ordinated with other stakeholders and incorporate '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 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 further information or discussion about the issues raised. My contact details are as follows:

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Yours sincerely

Anne Deans

Executive Officer

Youthsafe