

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

### **Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users**

Shepparton—Wednesday 13 September 2023

#### **MEMBERS**

Alison Marchant—Chair

Kim O’Keeffe—Deputy Chair

Anthony Cianflone

Wayne Farnham

John Mullahy

Dylan Wight

Jess Wilson

#### **WITNESSES**

Ben Devening,

Karen Parr, and

Brad McGillivray, ConnectGV.

**The CHAIR:** Welcome to this forum for the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users.

Thank you for your participation today. It helps the Committee make recommendations to make our roads safer for everyone. We will run this session informally, and we will just have a conversation and some questions.

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I will introduce the Committee if that is okay, and then we will ask you to introduce yourselves. I am Alison. I am the Member for Bellarine.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** I am Kim, but I do know some of your faces. Welcome, and thank you for coming.

**John MULLAHY:** I am John. I am the Member for Glen Waverley.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** I am Anthony, the Member for Pascoe Vale.

**Jess WILSON:** I am Jess, the Member for Kew.

**The CHAIR:** We are obviously hearing about road safety, and we really would appreciate hearing your thoughts on what you think we could do to improve our road safety. If you want to talk about something like that, or are you happy for us to ask questions? We are in your hands. Maybe, Karen, you could introduce yourself.

**Karen PARR:** My name is Karen Parr.

**The CHAIR:** And maybe, where do you live and how do you get around?

**Karen PARR:** I live in [inaudible] Crescent, and I work at ConnectGV.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you, Karen.

**Ben DEVENING:** My name is Ben. I work at the Billabong Garden Complex. I mostly travel around by car and sometimes public transport, if I go to Melbourne.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Thank you.

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** I am Bradley, and I work in Woolies. I drive as well. That is all.

**The CHAIR:** Great.

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** Thanks for that.

**The CHAIR:** Do you catch a bus or do anything like that?

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** I drive.

**The CHAIR:** You just drive—you do not do any public transport then?

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** That is it.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Fantastic. Well, we might ask you some questions, if that is okay. Kim, we might start with you.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Yes, it is great to see you. I think you have been 10 years out at the nursery, haven't you? Is that right?

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes, I have.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** I was out there recently. Well done. So, Karen, I am going to ask you how you feel moving around in your wheelchair. When you are in town, how do you feel you get around? Is it adequate? Is it safe?

**Karen PARR:** No, it is not safe at all.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Okay, so it is good to hear your feedback today.

**Karen PARR:** It is not safe at all.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Okay. So what do you find is not safe?

**Karen PARR:** Just the dip in the road and the potholes; people in cars going past and not stopping.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** So what do you think is needed that would make you feel safer?

**Karen PARR:** Getting the potholes fixed.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** The holes fixed, yes.

**Karen PARR:** And the roads.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Okay. So the condition of the roads is a big one?

**Karen PARR:** The condition, yes.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** In the city itself?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Yes, okay. But there are adequate crossings for you.

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Yes. Do you remember I was on my scooter for a while? I broke my ankle, so I did notice it myself, being in a different position, from being on two legs to having to have to get around—and it is challenging, isn't it? I know there have been a few more crossings since that few years ago.

**Karen PARR:** Yes, there is.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** But other than that, do you feel like you could fall—like, that it could tip?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Okay. All right. Thank you for that. Do you want to add anything? Ben, do you feel safe driving around the community?

**Ben DEVENING:** Sometimes, depending on the day, I guess.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Is there anything that makes you not feel safe?

**Ben DEVENING:** If I am driving and I see people on their phones.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Okay. Yes, good. You can tell us about that. So you can see they are being distracted.

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes, I see they are being distracted.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** And that could impact on you driving—they could hit you or hit someone else?

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** And you are noticing that quite a bit?

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes, most of the time.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Thank you for that.

**Ben DEVENING:** Especially when they drive past, I know that they are—

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** You can see. Sometimes they move their car, don't they, and you are like, 'They're on the phone.'

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes. I can tell, because I am looking at them and the road as I am driving, and I can tell—

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** But they are not looking at you.

**Ben DEVENING:** They are not looking at me, no, or they are not looking at the road.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** It is a big problem, isn't it? Brad, did you have anything you wanted to add? When you are driving, do you notice anything? Do you notice people driving dangerously?

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** Sometimes it is a bit dangerous because of my hearing. Plus I am a runner as well.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** Yes, I know that—Parkrun.

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** Yes. And there are dangerous things when I take my hearing aids off, and that is how I do not feel safe. That is all.

**Kim O'KEEFFE:** No, that is okay. Thank you for sharing that.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. John.

**John MULLAHY:** Thank you all for being here today, and thanks for giving us some really good evidence. What are some of the challenges that you find when you are driving around Shepparton on the country roads, and what could we do to make it safer for you?

**Ben DEVENING:** Can I start, because I think I have got some notes down here? It is very busy and fast-paced, Sheppers, and the country roads, most of them—well, where I am—do not have any shoulders at all. So there is the line of the side of the road, and then if you go off that line, you basically hit—

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** You are straight in the dirt.

**Ben DEVENING:** Dirt road. Maybe to fix it would be to improve the crossings a bit, maybe having stoplights at some of the crossings. Or maybe even like, as Jacinta said, how in Melbourne they have lights on the ground themselves that change from green to red when you are going across the road so you can have that visual as well. And maybe improving the shoulders on the country roads.

**John MULLAHY:** The shoulders—okay. Excellent.

**The CHAIR:** Great idea.

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** Same. The deaf people look at the lights as well, and I can see what is happening. That is all.

**Karen PARR:** Just stopping and not going quick—as fast.

**John MULLAHY:** Reduce the speed limits?

**Karen PARR:** Reduce it, yes.

**John MULLAHY:** In and around Shepparton?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**John MULLAHY:** Thanks, Karen.

**The CHAIR:** Karen, do you have to be on the road a lot? If there is no footpath and things like that, are you having to be on the road quite a lot?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. And so you are obviously then dealing with traffic coming at you.

**Karen PARR:** Yes, traffic and stuff like that. And like going to Aquamoves, and the pets.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Do you notice people are more aggressive to you, or are they not mindful that you are there?

**Karen PARR:** They are just not mindful. They do not stop. They just, yes, go quick.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. And quite close to you?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Do they come close to you when they are passing?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** It must be very frustrating.

**Karen PARR:** It is.

**The CHAIR:** And make you feel very unsafe.

**Karen PARR:** It does.

**The CHAIR:** Jess.

**Jess WILSON:** Yes, thanks. I was going to ask, Karen, about the cars when you are on the roads or even when you are on the footpaths. Do they slow down enough? Is the speed limit a big problem in the city centre?

**Karen PARR:** The speed limit, yes, the speed limit.

**Jess WILSON:** And so they are speeding up, and then you are about to cross a road or whatever.

**Karen PARR:** They are speeding up, and then I am about to go across the road and they just look at their phones and they just go.

**Jess WILSON:** And do you notice that drivers are distracted with their phones?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Jess WILSON:** I mean, are they distracted with watches or whatever it might be?

**Karen PARR:** Phones and their watches and stuff like that.

**Jess WILSON:** Yes. And driver distraction is a big issue.

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Jess WILSON:** You have spoken about driving, but no doubt you are sometimes a pedestrian in the city and walking around and running. What do you notice from that perspective? Do you notice that cars are slowing down enough when it comes to pedestrians in the city, or do you feel threatened by the movement of cars? Do you think there is more that can be done to support pedestrians moving around, or runners?

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** That is a good question for me. Drivers need to have a look at the deaf person. I cannot see what is going on. That is all.

**Jess WILSON:** Sort of more awareness?

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** Yes.

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes. I think the same, because sometimes they do not know you are there when you are walking out, or sometimes if you go across a crossing they do not stop or they keep going.

**Jess WILSON:** Terrific. Thanks, Ben.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Thank you. I wanted to ask: do any of you catch any public transport?

**Karen PARR:** Yes, I do.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Do you catch a bus or—?

**Karen PARR:** Taxi.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Taxi? Okay. And how do you find that experience? Is it accommodating? Is it comfortable to travel with a taxi?

**Karen PARR:** Well, sometimes they have to pick you up on the road and there are cars going past and they do not stop.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Yes. Would it be helpful if there were better designated areas for taxis or Ubers to pick up people at specific spots—

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** like at the front of Kmart or the supermarket or what have you?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** So it would be safer, more convenient.

**Karen PARR:** More convenient.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Yes. What about you, Ben? Do you catch a bus, or do you catch taxis or any other public transport—any trains?

**Ben DEVENING:** Maybe trams if I am in Melbourne, most of the time, but other than that—I mostly drive.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** How do you find that experience on the tram? Is it comfortable to travel with a tram? Do you feel safe getting on and off a tram?

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes, unless I have to stop and get off on onto the road, when there is no

**Jess WILSON:** Superstop.

**Ben DEVENING:** I know it is not thinkable here, but when you have to get off onto the road it can be a bit daunting to step down onto there, but other rather that it is safe.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** That is good.

**Ben DEVENING:** And buses—I think I feel safe on those most of the time.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Do you catch any here in Shepparton?

**Ben DEVENING:** No, not really. I mostly drive, most of the time, or walk when I am in town sometimes. When I park, I walk and stuff.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Yes. What about you, Brad, any buses or—

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** I catch the train—it is safe for me—down to Melbourne, and I am also driving safely here. Does that make sense?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Okay.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Can I ask about COVID—do you think people changed in COVID? Do you think their behaviours have changed now?

**Karen PARR:** A lot.

**The CHAIR:** What do you think, Karen? What have you seen, or what do you think has changed?

**Karen PARR:** They are just impatient. Impatient people do not care about the people behind them, and they just go to their destination.

**The CHAIR:** We are hearing a lot of that, yes.

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What do you think, Ben?

**Ben DEVENING:** I do get people pulling out in front of me most of the time because they do not look and do not know that I am there, so they pull out in front. I do live on MacArthur Road, which is off Labuan Road, and there have been a few fatalities in the past 18 months on that road.

**The CHAIR:** Right. So it is just really dangerous driving behaviour that you are seeing?

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes, sometimes. Mostly it is distraction or people just not stopping at stop signs or give-way signs.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, going straight through. Brad, what do you think: did COVID change people's behaviour?

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** They have got no patience at all. That is all I am asking—no patience at all.

**The CHAIR:** You run, Brad—you do some running. What would you like to see? Would you like to see a path that you feel safe on? What would you like to see?

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** I want to see a lot of signs—deafness signs that a deaf person can see so they can see what is going on. That is about it for me.

**The CHAIR:** Ben, do you have something that you would like to see in Shepparton or something that could be improved?

**Ben DEVENING:** Maybe, I do not know—I am from New Zealand, so there we have speed-limit signs on the actual road itself as well as on the signs, so maybe those as well could be implemented.

**The CHAIR:** That is a good one. Karen, do you have anything that you would like to see improved?

**Karen PARR:** I would just like to see that when someone goes across the road they stop and look who is coming across the road.

**The CHAIR:** We also talked to some students and some other people today that said there needs to be more education for people to teach people how to be a bit more respectful when they use the road. Would you be comfortable sharing your experiences?

**Karen PARR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** It is great that you are here and you have shared your experiences—it is really a wonderful thing. Are you involved in talking to other people about your experiences? Have you ever been asked to be involved things?

**Ben DEVENING:** I have gone to Cool Heads once, I think. It was not last year; it might have been the year before that.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Did they ask you to speak or were you there to learn?

**Ben DEVENING:** I was just there to learn.

**The CHAIR:** Okay.

**Ben DEVENING:** It was good to watch, I guess—good, but yeah.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it educated you with a bit of knowledge of things.

**Ben DEVENING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** We had them earlier today, and they were very good too. Are there any other questions? Thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate it. I hope it was not too painful, Brad—we told you we would be very kind to you.

**Brad McGILLIVRAY:** Thank you very much for that.

**The CHAIR:** You did a great job, all of you. Thank you so much. It is really important we hear from a whole range of different people from this community, and it is really great to hear from you directly. Thank you.

**Witnesses withdrew.**