

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into driver distraction

Melbourne — 27 March 2006

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Witnesses

Superintendent P. Keogh, traffic operations and support department; and

Acting Inspector J. Cole, Victoria Police.

Mr STONEY—Thank you for attending. We have a quorum. I would like to welcome Peter Keogh and Jeff Cole from Victoria Police. I know Peter is well aware of the process because he appeared before us late last year. You are covered by parliamentary privilege and you will receive a transcript, in which you are allowed to correct minor errors—not that there will be any! Peter, could you outline how you would like to do your bit of it.

Supt. KEOGH—Thank you. We would like to start with Jeff's introduction and give an overview, a PowerPoint presentation, of the electronic crash recording system, and then I think if there are any questions about that presentation or of me, they could follow accordingly, if that suits.

Mr STONEY—That is good. I did neglect to say that the reason we asked you back is that we made a decision in the last couple of months to drill down a bit further to try and get to the bottom of why some accidents occur and to see if there is enough data about those sorts of accidents. We suspect there is not, so we would be really interested in the electronic information, and we will just go from there, but that is our quest today.

Supt. KEOGH—All right, we will cover that.

Mr STONEY—Thanks.

Supt. KEOGH—Thanks, Jeff.

Acting Insp. COLE—Thanks, everyone. My name is Jeff Cole. I am the project director of the traffic incident system project. What I intend to do today is to talk about the basic history of accident reporting and where we are at right now—the traffic incident system has only just been implemented and only just been rolled out through the police force—and then to indicate where we could go in terms of future data collection for accidents.

PowerPoint presentation made.

Acting Insp. COLE—Firstly, until about pre-1986 if you heard policemen talk about the green card, that is it. That is literally what accident reporting was about. If somebody was injured, you filled in a two-page card and that was put in a folder. Then we moved to what was called the form 510 and I have copies of that here for anyone who is interested. As you can see, it is a two-part form. That data was collected and went into a large mainframe computer system, and that has been the process for about 20 years.

The key point there is that there are a number of processes relating to the paper forms. The computerised data input, the data from Victoria Police, gets fed to people in the Transport Accident Commission, VicRoads and also to Victoria Police and so forth. WorkCover gets a buy-in as well. The other key thing is that when you talk about fatalities, there is a multiple process there. There are four different places of fatal diary; we are collecting that sort of information as well. There are two in Victoria Police, one in TAC and one in VicRoads.

The whole point of the traffic incident system is to rationalise some of that and have it all come through a central agency. As you can see, it is all coming into a central database and from that place it feeds out to all the agencies that require it. That is just an example of the sort of form the police are required to enter data into now, which is actually direct onto the computer system.

That improves a number of things. Because the police are entering the data in, it means we can do any error corrections we want at the time, and there are those sorts of advantages. One of the impacts, however, of course, is that police have to actually enter the data in and it takes them away from patrol duties—some of them do not like that—but it gets things happening a lot more quickly. In the past, when it could take six weeks for that information to be collected and put

through the system, now literally from the moment they enter the first page in the computer system the data is live and can be accessed.

It is a multi-agency system, which shows you that we have moved towards broadening it out from just Victoria Police. There are a number of parties involved in this and we are looking at producing a whole-of-government type approach. This is probably the key point that leads on to the future.

As well as producing TIS, you will notice that we have a thing in the middle there called an EAI, which is like middleware, a bit like a telephone exchange, and the fact that we installed that means that all of the systems can come into that one point and then feed the data out. What that means, without getting into all the acronyms, is that in the future you will have two options in terms of collecting data: you can collect data into the traffic incident system, which is a database designed to collect this data, or you can take data from other systems and link it through this middleware, this telephone exchange, and use that as a feeder point to pass data through.

For example, the way we have set up TIS, it links through the middleware, it links to VicRoads for licence registration checks, for driver's licence checks, and to our LEAP system for personnel checks, and feeds that back into the traffic incident system as a database. The advantage of this is that, depending on where you want to go in the future, you have the option of connecting things together so that it feeds the data through, so it is a lot more integrated.

Traditionally, we have collected data into silos: 'We'll collect it from this system, then we'll put it over there.' We created Excel spreadsheets; we created little database loads or whatever. The concept behind this is that you can collect things in a more electronic form and pass them through electronically to other systems.

There are still some change issues that need to be dealt with, of course. There is the funding issue. When you have a multi-agency system, who actually pays for it? Where does the money come from? Communication is always an issue in terms of who is linked in where. Training is an issue. If you are expecting police, for example, to deal with a new system, training always becomes a major issue in terms of how they apply it, how they put it in place. There are employee industrial relations issues. One we have dealt with here, of course, is that we have gone from a database system with people typing stuff in at a centralised location to police officers doing it. That obviously has had an effect on employee tasks.

There are various policy issues: who is responsible for what. A whole set of new memorandums have been written to manage the flow of information between the various organisations: who is responsible, how you deal with privacy legislation and so forth. Then at the bottom of the list there are the simple technical issues: how you get the systems to talk to each other. That has been an interesting exercise and probably will be for the future because technology is moving so quickly. Generally speaking, when we are linking these systems up everyone is working to a different standard, everyone has a different technology, and just overcoming these basic system to system communications issues becomes quite a challenge.

I was told to give you a brief presentation. I am happy to go back and answer questions and deal with any particular issue if you want to. What I have tried to do is hit on what I believe are the points that are of particular interest to you but, as I said, I am happy to explain in greater detail if you would like.

Mr STONEY—Has the depth of the data collection been discussed? At the moment we are interested in distraction, but it has also come up now that lots of things perhaps cause an accident that are not really recorded—'Why did the car cross the road?' et cetera.

Acting Insp. COLE—Yes.

Mr STONEY—What is happening there? How detailed will this new system be?

Acting Insp. COLE—There are basically two issues there. One is that the statisticians have to agree on what they want to collect and agree on the definitions. We have found, for example, just talking with the different agencies, that different statisticians start developing different definitions and even to just understand exactly what the data means becomes an issue. Secondly, if you want to collect different sorts of data you need to train the police in that collection so that they understand what it is you are after.

For instance, one of the factors we count in here is, 'Were you wearing a seatbelt?' If you are involved in a traffic accident and you are conscious and a police officer asks you whether you were wearing a seatbelt, I reckon you would probably say, 'Yes,' because if you said, 'No,' they are likely to give you a ticket. However, if you have been affected by the accident—you are injured or perhaps have died in the accident—then people are in a position to actually investigate and say, 'Were you wearing a seatbelt or not?' There are some practical issues in the type of question you ask and what it actually means.

A key example is also the new question that we have been asking in this new system, which is, 'How far from home were you when the accident occurred?' I know what the statisticians are trying to say. They are trying to investigate the importance of proximity to home and your likelihood of having an accident. The practical issue that is coming back to us, though, is from police members saying, 'Well, if they're over here from London, what do you mean?' 'If they have come down from Sydney, do you mean from Sydney?' Again, I understand the theory, but there is the practical application of what it is we are really trying to get to and how we best answer that question.

An example of how things worked in the past is the issue of airbags being used. The way TAC used to deal with that was that they had Monash University researching it. The research was funded to investigate, with tow truck drivers, accidents where the airbag had been found to have exploded and then following back from that to ask, 'Did it in fact prevent injury or cause injury?' Tow truck drivers were more likely to identify that than perhaps police officers were, because police officers tended to deal with the scene rather than the individual car. I know that with this new TIS we currently ask questions relating to airbags, but I wonder, as with a lot of questions, whether there are alternative ways of asking the same question to explore the information.

Mr STONEY—You said that statisticians will make the decision on what data is to be looked at. Who makes the decision which data is important and which is not?

Acting Insp. COLE—At this stage it is driven essentially through the traffic and transport department, Victoria Police. The traffic accident information steering committee, which has representatives from TAC, VicRoads, Victoria Police and WorkCover on board—at this stage it is chaired by Superintendent Harry Hayes—meets on a regular basis and they discuss any issues that are contentious. Statisticians may well suggest that data is then fed back into the melting pot for traffic and transport, to discuss the operational impacts and the practicalities. The TAI steering committee will generally come to an agreement as to what is acceptable. There is feedback from other committees such as this committee and, essentially, the agreement is by consensus.

You need to realise that with these forms, nothing could change for 20 years. Those forms were printed, the mainframe was set up, and they were unable to do anything about it during the last 20 years. Whatever was there was there; whatever was not there—well, shucks to that. We created a few extra forms over time. There was a form 512 to collect additional data; there were a couple of other bits of paper and so forth.

What we have tried to do with TIS is condense that into one system. It has the flexibility to be more adaptable, but you need to be careful that you do not change it so quickly that the operational members cannot keep up with it and you start to lose the value. It has the potential to be modified or to be more flexible, but again you need to think about those change factors before you do that.

Mr BISHOP—Seeing we are on distraction, Jeff, have you got a box in there for distraction?

Acting Insp. COLE—No.

Mr BISHOP—What do you think are the most important boxes to have in there to give us a decent track on what causes accidents?

Acting Insp. COLE—It is a question of how you define distraction and, more importantly, how a police member who is making this report defines distraction. For example, in your mind distraction may be using a mobile phone. We have a question about were they using a mobile phone illegally. We are probably going to modify that slightly, because the concept of 'illegal' as against using a mobile phone creates a question in people's minds. But if that is what you mean by distraction, then you simply ask were they using a mobile phone, and you may or may not get a sensible answer to that, because we are dealing with things that happen after the accident.

Mr BISHOP—But it is possible to check if they were, isn't it?

Acting Insp. COLE—To some extent. If you have some evidence or if you find the phone there and it is live, you can make an assumption. Whether you can say that to the standard of evidence is another question. When you say 'distraction', you probably need to be very clear about exactly what it is you are asking for and that the answer can be clearly understood by the police officer. The second point for the police officer, of course, is can they actually determine the answer you want. They are dealing with a minor emergency. Their priority is the safety of the people there. The perception of data collection is very much a secondary task, more a by-product of the process rather than the primary aim. That is the only qualification I would make.

Supt. KEOGH—To qualify that comment about the police's ability to check to see whether the phone was being used at the time of the crash, it would only occur if the accident was of such a serious nature, involving fatal or life-threatening injuries, that a person was likely to be charged with culpable driving, and then we would have to get a warrant to access the telephone provider and check that way.

Mr STONEY—Is that something that perhaps our legislators should look at, to make it easier to get telephone records?

Supt. KEOGH—It would certainly assist police, but in practice I cannot see that occurring.

Mr LANGDON—Obviously, if there is one person in the car and the provider indicates that the phone was in use, that is one thing, but what if there is a passenger? For example, my daughter might answer my mobile phone for me while I am driving. How do you deal with that?

Supt. KEOGH—Unless there were admissions by the driver or other people in the car, it would be difficult to prove and get a conviction at court.

Mr EREN—Jeff, in this form it says 'breath testing' and 'preliminary breath testing'. Is that done at every accident scene where there is injury?

Acting Insp. COLE—Whenever a police officer pulls over a driver, they should conduct a preliminary breath test, particularly with accidents. There should be a preliminary breath test taken if possible. A case where obviously that would not apply is where somebody comes to the police station to report an accident. We have a number of cases where, even some time after the event—two years, sometimes three, four, five years—people turn up to the police station to report the accident for various reasons and obviously in that case it is impractical. But, generally, when police attend the scene they would be looking for a preliminary breath test.

Mr EREN—When you do a breath test, does it involve a drug test or just the alcohol content?

Acting Insp. COLE—In general terms, it would normally be alcohol content.

Supt. KEOGH—I will just take it one step further. Jeff is right. Initially, the preliminary breath test is just alcohol. The only time police would require a person to have a drug sample would be if the person was taken to hospital, and then it is not mandatory for doctors or other people at the hospital to take blood from a person who has been brought to the hospital for treatment. We used to think it was mandatory, but in fact it is not. We currently work under a memorandum of understanding with the medicos. A lot of hospitals do preliminary breath tests. They will often give a crash victim a preliminary breath test if the person is capable and then not take a blood sample if the alcohol reading is negative. It is only if major crash investigation unit members ask the doctors particularly for a blood sample—and that is in serious cases—that we then test that blood sample for drugs. Normally, in a routine crash, if a blood sample is taken from a crash victim it goes out and is tested for alcohol. It is not tested for drugs unless major crash victims ask for it to be tested for drugs.

Mr STONEY—Would it be fair to say that at the moment Victoria Police do not see distraction as an important issue?

Supt. KEOGH—No. I think any major cause of crash is important. It is an important road safety factor and I think people need to be more aware of it, and Victoria Police would support a really strong education and awareness program. But I think it has to start when someone gets their learner's permit. There is so much for them to learn and understand about driving a car. They probably do not see distraction as being important because in their minds it does not carry the same importance as their ability to drive a car, as such. I think, as well as driving the car, there are a whole range of factors that young people in particular need to understand about being safe on the road, which include distraction.

Mr STONEY—Do you think the police would support having to do more work, if you like, to drill down into what distraction caused the accident rather than just that the car crossed the double lines or something; that there might have been another reason? At the moment the driver crossed double lines, he had the accident, that is the charge, but the real reason was something else, whatever it was—a billboard or a mobile phone or the kids in the back or something.

Supt. KEOGH—I think that is important, and I think, as Jeff said before, there is a significant training requirement for members to be able to get to the truth of the cause of the crash, and sometimes that is difficult if people are suffering injuries or if they are less likely to be honest when they are answering the questions from the police. The police may be misled and falsely record data or, heaven forbid, they might just tick the wrong boxes because it is easier.

Mr STONEY—Would resources also play a part; that there are a lot of pressures on attending, police time, and they need to get this one tidied up because of the others? Should there be more resources?

Supt. KEOGH—If you do a job, you need to do it properly, and if you need to spend another 15 or 20 minutes asking additional questions for the sake of not only identifying the cause of that crash but to help other people, through research and that type of thing, I think that is important.

Acting Insp. COLE—From a practical perspective, just from some of the feedback I have had lately, it is not just a question of resources. It is also a question of understanding the priority and importance of road safety. We have operational police out there who have a lot of pressure upon them—particularly, for instance, the van crew. They are the immediate response unit. They are going out there, taking reports of burglaries, responding to immediate local emergencies and so forth, rushing around dealing with the everyday business. They are usually fairly junior members, and to spend that bit of extra time at an accident scene—it is 'only' a traffic accident—they need to understand the importance of that and why. They are police officers. They are there to catch crooks. Why are they collecting this data? They are not census people. So we need to understand that that is part of the training that needs to be organised. People need to understand that collecting the data is just as important as processing the crooks. It is leading towards the overall goal, and that is part of the challenge we have.

Mr STONEY—How do we change the culture? It has to come from the top, I suppose.

Supt. KEOGH—I think it does. We also have a priority of sending traffic management unit members to crashes. Although Jeff made a comment about members on the divisional van and them being young and inexperienced, the traffic guys as a priority would get the job. If they are not available, then the other members on div vans would get it. I think it goes both ways: it has to come from the top, and it involves training for police members at a very early stage.

Mr STONEY—This might be a good time for you to tell us about the accident appreciation project.

Mr BISHOP—I have a couple of questions. The first one is to Jeff. In some of the other hearings we have held, whilst I think cell phones are overrepresented in the research in relation to distraction—I can think of other things there—the capacity of the police to fully investigate that is crucial to the timing of the report of the accident. If it is a bad one, it might be 10 minutes either side in relation to the precise timing. We have heard that quite often the phone is used a quarter of an hour before the accident; therefore, the question is whether they are thinking about what they said on the phone or whether in fact, due to a set of circumstances, the timing of the accident is not precisely accurate. I suspect what you firstly reported to us, that would hone down the time substantially, wouldn't it, on the report?

Acting Insp. COLE—The timing issue I was talking about was the time to actually get the data into the system so that it is available to be used. The question of the time when the accident actually occurred really depends upon how quickly the police can attend the scene and therefore how recent it is to the accident occurring, or, if a person reports to the counter, how long it takes. It is really a question of response time, I think, and I do not think what we have talked about here is necessarily going to fix that. That is really an issue of having people in a position to respond quickly and get that information up-front.

Mr BISHOP—And the second one I cannot risk is to Peter. The issue of getting this data is absolutely crucial, but, unless I misunderstood you, you were saying that one of the better ways to do it is to make people aware through an educational program and an awareness program that distraction is dangerous, which has not been done much, to my knowledge anyway.

Supt. KEOGH—No.

Mr BISHOP—So at the risk of beating the drum on education—as you know, I am an enthusiastic advocate—could you expand on that.

Supt. KEOGH—Yes. I think both issues are important, but I think that people who go for their learner's licence do not get enough information about the other things that safe driving involves, besides just learning to drive and passing the test. There are a whole range of associated issues that they need to know about and understand and embrace to be a safe driver, and that includes distraction, and then they learn it from a young age. Hopefully they will carry it through. But it is not just young people that we hear about and see who are involved in distraction. It goes through a whole range of people.

Mr BISHOP—Do you think that could align in some way to the seatbelt program we had some years ago in the schools, where in fact a number of us believed that flowed through to our community because the kids said, 'You haven't got your belt on, dad' or 'mum' or whoever it was? Do you think that same process could apply?

Supt. KEOGH—Yes, I do. And I think sometimes kids can be a cause of distraction.

Mr BISHOP—Harassing from the back seat.

Supt. KEOGH—Yes.

Mr LANGDON—Can you arrest them and take them off our hands!

Supt. KEOGH—The other issue I was going to mention was that under the current *arrive alive!* strategy there is a program titled Enhanced Crash Investigation. VicRoads are funding the program. It includes Monash University doing the research, and they are looking at 81 serious injury crashes that occurred over a period of time, selectively. It also includes people going to hospitals and interviewing drivers and passengers in the car and spending the time to get a whole range of additional information that the police do not get, using that information in an environment where there are counsellors, police, ambulance officers, a whole range of people to talk through the issue, and making recommendations thereafter. That program is almost finished. I mentioned before—and I do not know whether this is important—that it was going to cost about a million dollars just to run that program with 81 crashes.

If we were going to do some research about the causes of crashes—and Ian Johnston mentioned this to me—over in the States, instead of asking the police officers to collect all this data ad infinitum, they just collect the data for a period of three months. You might narrow it down to a particular area and you tell the police in that area, 'We're doing research,' and tell them why and get them on board. Then you will probably stand a better chance of getting accurate information, and after that period of time they do not collect it any more. That is another possibility.

Mr EREN—Peter, in a situation where a collision occurs and the vehicle involved is insured, do insurance companies request your collision report off you? What information do you provide to insurance companies in relation to any of that sort of report or data?

Supt. KEOGH—The answer to your question is, yes, often they do request copies of the report. I think for privacy reasons there may be some parts of the report that are not provided to them. Insurance companies then go one step further and pay an investigator to go and interview the police member, but generally they will get a fair bit of information and, I guess, by way of comparison, they compare what the police investigation came out with with what the insured reported.

Mr EREN—Following up from that, obviously they put a lot more resources into fully investigating because they have to pay out at the end of the day, and it is about costs, so their reports would be much more comprehensive than the police report.

Acting Insp. COLE—Not comprehensive necessarily in the areas you want. They are looking at covering things from a legal perspective in terms of the liability. And the other issue you may find is that the different insurance companies tend to follow slightly different paths. I know there is the Insurance Council, but I have not yet seen a common claim form for accidents or even a common investigation format for accidents that carries through all the insurance companies.

Mr EREN—My point was that obviously currently there is no sharing of information after the fact. They may further investigate the crash and find out the real reason why it happened, but that information is not shared back. Would it be useful if insurance companies shared their database on crashes with the police?

Acting Insp. COLE—I think the time delay would be a factor, because if there is important information that would justify someone being charged, that has to occur within 12 months from the date of the accident, and I do not know whether that would always be of advantage to the police because sometimes it drags on for quite some time. I guess one area of advantage for data would be to identify causes of crashes arising out of coronial inquests. The amount of time they spend on those sorts of investigations is really incredible. Resources are probably an issue. We do not have the resources to spend on less serious injuries.

Mr STONEY—We might go on to that. Is it now called the major crash unit? It used to be the accident appreciation squad.

Acting Insp. COLE—Yes.

Mr STONEY—Could you give us a run-down on what they do and what they look for.

Supt. KEOGH—The major crash investigation unit consists of about 50 members. Their criteria for attending a crash are: if three or more people are killed; if someone is killed or suffers life-threatening injury and the person who caused that crash is in some way culpable, and that culpability can be by way of excessive speed, or drug, or alcohol, or reckless behaviour.

Mr STONEY—Who decides? That decision would have to be made very quickly.

Supt. KEOGH—Initially by the attending police. If they feel that the case needs to be investigated by major crash, they will discuss the evidence with the investigator, and they will either attend or say no. I think it is something that you should do. If major crash attend, generally that unit would be a team of a sergeant and two or three members. They take measurements and photographs and they have a reconstructionist at the office who will look at the available evidence and provide advice to the investigators of the pre-crash speed of the vehicle, and obviously there are proper blood tests and that sort of evidence pursued all the way.

Mr STONEY—Would they dig down into distraction or would they go for just the obvious 'crossing the double lines' or whatever it was?

Supt. KEOGH—They would certainly continue their investigation until they got to the truth of the matter, which may include some form of distraction, but sometimes their evidence can only be obtained from someone telling them something, and if there is no independent witness and they are relying on someone in the car, they rely on their honesty.

Mr STONEY—How many accidents a year would major crash attend?

Supt. KEOGH—Three to four hundred. They will attend and not always take it on as an investigation. They will take on about 160 a year.

Mr STONEY—Is it a public hearing? Could this committee have a look at those particular accidents as a snapshot to see if there was any hint of distraction in those?

Supt. KEOGH—Yes, they could. Their briefs are available, obviously, but you would have to spend the time to go through them to identify what you were looking for. It would not always jump out at you that the person was on the phone and that was the cause of the crash. There are probably multiple factors involved in some of those crashes.

Mr BOTH—The committee is aware of recent work done in New Zealand, analysing police crash reports to determine the significance of various forms of distraction. Could a similar study be carried out in Victoria?

Supt. KEOGH—Until they became electronic, all the crash reports were centrally filed, so someone could deal with that in New Zealand and go through the evidence contained in the briefs. But, unlike New Zealand, it has been an offence to use a hand-held phone here in Victoria for some time now and people may not admit that fact when they make a statement to the police. Albeit that that research was done in New Zealand two years ago, they still do not have an offence of using a hand-held mobile phone while driving.

Mr EREN—Peter, there was, obviously, a tragic incident that occurred yesterday, and I do not want to dwell too much on it, but after an incident such as the one at Thomastown Market the police come in, and how do they establish the main reason that the incident occurred?

Supt. KEOGH—They talk to witnesses.

Mr EREN—I think it was reported that the driver had an epileptic fit. In establishing how an accident occurred, how is it that you investigate it fully? You turn up, you listen to the witnesses, you obviously interview the driver, but do you go further? Do you go to the doctor of that person to get some information?

Supt. KEOGH—Yes, because ultimately, if we were to recommend that some action be taken against his licence, VicRoads would be looking for some sort of support, and if we did not provide it then VicRoads would require that person to provide a medical report.

Mr EREN—Should doctors have an obligation to report certain illnesses that may have an impact on a person's driving ability?

Supt. KEOGH—Yes, it would be good for road safety if people suffering a medical condition should provide advice to a road authority so that the road authority could take action if necessary.

Mr STONEY—It doesn't happen at the moment?

Supt. KEOGH—No. I think it is a decision that the medico makes of his own accord.

Mr BISHOP—Some of the other jurisdictions we have talked to, Peter, have suggested having a black box in the car, as they have in Europe, but it is not enthusiastically welcomed here because of civil liberties. But would that be an advantage to your investigations?

Supt. KEOGH—Yes, it would be, and I think sometimes evidence from the black box recorder has been used by the reconstructionists at major crash investigations. As you mentioned, sometimes it is a privacy issue, and I imagine that it may incur a cost.

Acting Insp. COLE—There are some significant practical and technical issues. Either you take a sampling approach, in which case you may have none of the vehicles carrying the black box involved in an accident, or a very small proportion, and then you look at the viability of that, or you go for a widespread approach for which there is a cost both in terms of installing that sort of technology and in reading it, in doing something with it. There is a significant capital cost involved which needs to be borne by somebody. It is a question then of how to apply it. People fiddle with odometers and so forth—not that it happens very often, of course—but wherever you have a technology there is an ability for people to look at ways of thwarting it. I think it is viable. It is like black boxes in aircraft: after a while people determined that there was a real need for them to assist with investigation later on. But there is a huge industry that has to come with it in order to support it.

Mr BISHOP—But that industry is partly there now.

Acting Insp. COLE—Sure, it is.

Mr BISHOP—Many cars have black boxes in them. It is really up to, I suspect, governments to make a decision on whether they have black boxes or not. I do not think they would in the UK, Chair. When we went there, that was seen as an impost on civil liberties. But that would be a decision to be made, and I suspect if they were in every vehicle the cost would plummet dramatically.

Acting Insp. COLE—Yes, but there would still be a cost in terms of the enforcement infrastructure to be able to read that information, to process it and put it somewhere. I am not saying that it is a bad thing; I am not saying it is impossible. I am simply making people aware that there is a huge cost and infrastructure change required to support that.

Supt. KEOGH—I think when we have downloaded the data from a black box we have gone to GMH or Ford to use their equipment.

Mr STONEY—The other thing, looking to the future—and it is not quite on distraction but it probably is distracting—is video cameras in police cars, which I think are quite popular overseas. Where are we at with that? There was a rumour that we were going to move in that direction.

Acting Insp. COLE—I understand a decision is soon to be made through an IRPS submission to fund 200 in-car videos in traffic cars, and when that announcement is made, I believe that we will start the installation as soon as the money comes forward.

Mr STONEY—It would be a great asset in terms of security and recording what actually happens when motorists are interviewed. I assume that if a traffic policeman pulled up someone, that would be all on camera.

Supt. KEOGH—Yes. We ran a trial two years ago. We had in-car videos in 20 traffic cars and members embraced it with a great deal of confidence. There were significant benefits coming out of it through admissions by people. Instead of going to court and contesting the matter, they paid the fines and that sort of stuff, so there were significant benefits there.

Mr STONEY—You could probably pay for the whole program by selling it to *Australia's Funniest Home Videos!*

Mr LANGDON—I hope our policemen do not do some of the things we have seen Americans do!

Supt. KEOGH—Can I mention one thing? There was something in the paper yesterday about technologies advancing so quickly, and a mobile phone is not just a mobile phone any more: it is your office, it is a radio, it is a tape recorder, and all that sort of stuff. We need to be able to enforce the law in a practical sense. What if someone has the phone up there and he is talking on the phone, but he says, 'No, I wasn't talking on the phone; I was listening to the radio,' or, 'I was transcribing a note for my secretary to type,' or they are listening to an iPod but not a mobile phone? Some of this is fine-line stuff. We struggle with the practicalities of it, and the community get up in arms when we try and enforce laws that are impractical.

Mr STONEY—Thank you for attending. We very much appreciate it. It has enhanced our knowledge of that issue.

Witnesses withdrew. Committee adjourned.