

INQUIRY INTO THE COUNTRY ROAD TOLL

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. That VicRoads collate and analyse crashes involving Government fleet vehicles including those involved in property-damage-only crashes.

This recommendation is supported in part

The Government supports the need for Government departments and agencies to monitor and analyse the crash involvement of their staff in Government provided vehicles in order to meet their Occupational Health and Safety obligations and to introduce crash reduction measures. However, Government fleet travel is not typical of general community travel. For example, time of day, travel at night or weekends, purpose of trips, number of vehicle occupants, blood alcohol and drug levels, fatigue levels of drivers, and the age, type and features of vehicles may not be representative of country driving patterns. Any results obtained may therefore not be representative of overall country trends and could be misleading in the development of state wide programs and policies.

Recommendation 2. That VicRoads investigate and report on the:

- Travel patterns of rural Victorians; and
- Relationship between crash propensity, driver occupation and purpose of journey in country Victoria.

This recommendation is supported

The Government is aware that the cost of surveys across all of country Victoria would be difficult to justify. It will ask VicRoads to include the conduct of a survey of road users on a subset of higher priority roads in country Victoria in its Research and Development program in 2006/2007.

The survey will seek to record travel exposure, travel patterns, purpose of journey and driver occupation and age, among other matters. This information will be used to estimate relative crash risk for drivers, and the results will be published.

Recommendation 3. That all drivers admitted to hospital as a result of a crash be tested for blood alcohol concentration.

This recommendation is supported

This recommendation is supported by the Government as the information would assist with the development of road safety policies and programs. However, the practicalities of its implementation require further investigation and consultation.

VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission will consult with the main trauma hospitals and relevant medical colleges to address this recommendation by the end of 2006 and investigate the issues associated with its implementation, including the possibility of testing for illicit drugs.

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

While there is no formal requirement for staff in hospitals to take blood samples hospitals have, since 1991, agreed to a Code of Practice committing them to take blood samples from all drivers and all others where the road status is unclear. Legislation requires patients to provide a sample if requested and gives doctors protection when they take one.

Most hospitals are provided with Preliminary Breath Testing Devices that are calibrated by Victoria Police. The BAC results of breath tests and blood tests taken at hospitals are collated by Victoria Police Traffic Accident Section and included in the VicRoads Road Crash Information System.

Recommendation 4. That Victoria Police amend their crash collision forms to provide in-depth data in relation to vehicle type.

Recommendation 5. That Victoria Police review quality assurance procedures in relation to the completion of crash collision forms.

These recommendations are supported in principle

Victoria Police is currently working with VicRoads to establish a new reporting system for the investigation and reporting of collisions. This should streamline the reporting process and provide more accurate data collection particularly in the area of 'injury status' and 'vehicle type'. The recommended information will be considered for inclusion in the new Victoria Police Traffic Incident System.

Recommendation 6. That the Government acknowledge the high level of risk on country roads, including local roads. That this issue is specifically addressed in a strategy with measures and targets identified to reduce risk.

This recommendation is supported

The Government will request VicRoads to develop a strategy and action plan for country roads. The plan will be prepared in conjunction with the proposed strategy and action plan for roadside safety and the successor strategy to *arrive alive!* and will be completed by the end of 2006.

VicRoads will provide information to local government to assist the development of similar strategies for their local roads.

Funding for implementation of programs on state roads based on the strategy and action plan will be subject to their potential road safety benefit compared to other road safety programs.

Recommendation 7. That the Ministerial Council for Road Safety develops and publishes a vision statement which lays the foundation for road safety beyond 2007 based on a safe system approach. The strategy must address issues specific to country Victoria.

This recommendation is supported

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

This recommendation will be addressed by the Government in the successor strategy to *arrive alive!* The Safe System approach will continue to be a major focus of the next strategy to be introduced from 2007 with emphasis also to be given to country roads.

Recommendation 8. That VicRoads ensure that safety of road users is given a higher priority in the planning and implementation of road improvements.

Recommendation 22. That VicRoads change its current roadworks approach to ensure that the safety of roads users takes a higher priority than mobility and amenity.

These recommendations are supported in principle

The Government considers the safety of road users a fundamental requirement in planning and implementing road projects. VicRoads ensures this requirement is met through the application of endorsed road standards which incorporate safety requirements and through road safety audits undertaken at various stages from design through to construction of projects.

There are tools used by VicRoads such as the Road Safety Risk Manager and data systems for the identification of current crash rates for various standards of roads across Victoria (currently under development) which will further assist the consideration of safety issues in the planning and implementation of road improvements.

Recommendation 9. That the Government request the Auditor-General give consideration to auditing and reporting to Parliament every two years, on the delivery and performance of the State's road safety strategy.

This recommendation supported in principle

The Auditor General's Office has advised the Government that it has included a proposed audit on road safety in its 2005-06 Annual Plan. The Office will draw on the Inquiry into the Country Road Toll in shaping the audit objectives. The Office would also consider any request from Government for a periodic audit of the state's road safety strategy. However, the response would take account of the Auditor-General's mandate which requires the Office to consider the range of activities across the entire public sector when making decisions on where to focus attention and resources.

Recommendation 10. That once during the term of each Parliament, the Road Safety Committee review the State's road safety strategy to determine whether the strategy is meeting its stated outcomes and objectives. The report of the Committee should be tabled in Parliament.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government considers an additional independent review of the effectiveness of the road safety strategy would be beneficial. The Road Safety Committee approach has led to the adoption of a number of highly important policy positions over many years that have positively impacted Victoria's road toll.

However, the Government would not like to see the Committee's capacity to address specific road safety issues diminished substantially by a focus on regular overall reviews.

Recommendation 11. That when determining appropriate intervention levels on country roads, VicRoads use a risk-management approach founded on exposure and includes casualty severity as a measure.

This recommendation is supported

VicRoads will continue to give emphasis to significant development of risk assessment tools such as the Road Safety Risk Manager, Australian Road Assessment Program and data systems to provide crash rates based on travel exposure for all roads. These tools will enable further enhancement of risk management approaches to the identification and development of road safety treatments and road maintenance procedures, on all roads, and particularly higher speed roads.

Recommendation 12. That the Government purchase vehicles with improved safety features for Government fleet vehicles, specifying a minimum four-star ANCAP rating for general-use vehicles.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government accepts there is an opportunity to show leadership to the private sector in selecting safer vehicles for the use of their employees. As well as providing safety benefits for Government employees, members of the community will also benefit when vehicles are on-sold.

The Government is reviewing the Whole of Government Standard motor Vehicle Policy which currently states:

“17.1.3 The employer shall exceed the requirements of the vehicle Australian Design Rules by fitting vehicles with manufacturer-approved options, so far as practicable, to provide vehicles that are safe and without risk to health. Wherever practicable, only vehicles with an Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) three star rating should be considered for procurement.”

This review will investigate the possibility of adopting a requirement for a minimum four star ANCAP rating standard for general-use vehicles and adopt this approach where possible.

Recommendation 13. That the Government request the Auditor-General prepare a road safety financial statement annually and table the report to Parliament.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government believes it is important for the community to be informed about the expenditure on road safety by the agencies involved in the Road Executive Group.

Agencies are required to audit their expenditure annually. The Government will ask the Road Safety Executive Group to collate, consolidate and publish audited road safety expenditure by the agencies on an annual basis.

Recommendation 14. That in order to improve safety on lower standard roads, VicRoads increase the proportion of funds allocated to these roads.

Recommendation 20. That VicRoads implement a major program to upgrade category C roads to make them safer.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government will ask VicRoads to review minimum road standards for Category C arterial roads.

In general, it would be expected that safety deficiencies on heavily used lower standard roads and C roads would be reflected in crash records and therefore consideration would be given to appropriate upgrading. For low traffic volume roads including C roads, it is often difficult to justify the safety returns on investment compared to other higher return projects. In many instances, lower cost countermeasures will need to be considered to achieve priority for treatment.

Recommendation 15. That VicRoads investigate ways for learner permit holders to increase their experience on country roads, under a variety of conditions.

Recommendation 16. That VicRoads review the training and licensing scheme to address the impact of inexperience on country roads in the first twelve months of licensed driving.

This recommendation is supported

The Government will ask VicRoads to undertake research to determine the best way to encourage learners and their supervisors to gain experience on country roads.

The Government's recently published Young Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing discussion paper supports a requirement for all learner drivers to acquire a minimum of 120 hours on-road supervised experience. Learner drivers could be required to provide in a logbook proof of driving, on various road types as part of the mandatory supervised hour's requirement.

VicRoads' Keys Please program, the L Site interactive website, and the Transport Accident Commission's (TAC) HELP campaign all provide information and approaches for learners and their supervising drivers to acquire the 120 of hours supervised on-road experience on all types of roads.

The Government is concerned about the impact of inexperience, especially in the first twelve months of driving on all newly licensed drivers. The Paper recommends:

- Encouraging voluntary restrictions on late night driving or driving with multiple passengers in the first 12 months after licensing
- Requiring a good driving record to progress to the second probationary licence stage.

These matters will be considered by Government for introduction in Victoria, subject to community feedback received through the Discussion Paper process, closing in November 2005.

Recommendation 17. That VicRoads and the Department of Education and Training conduct pre-licence education and training programs, such as Keys Please, to all pre-

licence drivers in schools' curriculum.

This recommendation is supported in part

The Government will ask VicRoads to advise on the cost and feasibility of extending the reach of Keys Please sessions from the current 20% to at least 50% of young people and their supervising drivers in the target age group by the end of 2007. VicRoads is conducting surveys and focus groups to find out the reasons why people attend (or do not wish to attend) Keys Please sessions. This is leading to the development and trial of support material to enhance the marketing and awareness of Keys Please and involve teachers and their students in these processes.

While the Department of Education and Training is not involved in driver training, it has a strong commitment to the long-term strategy of making student behaviour and attitudes to road use safer through appropriate and targeted Traffic Safety Education and will support the extension of Keys Please coverage

Recommendation 18. That with a focus on safety, VicRoads co-ordinates the implementation of design and construction standards for local roads and roadsides across country Victoria.

This recommendation is not supported

The Road Management Act stipulates that councils are individually responsible for setting the standards for their own local roads, subject to community needs, financial resources and the condition of their local road infrastructure.

VicRoads will work with municipalities to provide guidance on design and construction standards. Municipalities are encouraged to apply VicRoads standards to roads under their care and management. Other reference documents include Austroads Guidelines and relevant Australian Standards. VicRoads facilitates various training courses / workshops to which councils and consultants are invited which address on going road safety and related road design issues.

Recommendation 19. That VicRoads establish a program to audit and record road and roadside safety across the entire road network and publish road safety performance ratings for roads according to road types.

This recommendation is supported

VicRoads will carry out crash analysis and identify road safety performance ratings for arterial roads across Victoria, with initial results for part of the network to be available by mid 2007.

Recommendation 21. That the Government increase funding for safety improvements to country roads.

This recommendation is supported in principle

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

The Government has allocated substantial funding over the last five years for specific road safety infrastructure improvements throughout Victoria.

The Government's funding for on-road safety measures is based on programs which will deliver the highest reduction in casualties (particularly fatalities and serious injuries) for the available funds. The programs include components targeting run off road crashes in country Victoria. The Safer Roads Infrastructure Program (SRIP) Stage 1 includes \$90 million to address run off road crashes in country Victoria and outer metropolitan areas. The SRIP (Stage 2) funding of \$110 million will primarily address intersection crashes in urban areas, but there will be a component of funding to continue run off road crash treatments in Country Victoria.

The implementation of future programs will be subject to the cost effectiveness and available funding when compared to other potential road safety initiatives in Victoria.

<p>Recommendation 23. That VicRoads, in conjunction with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and municipalities develop a Code of Practice for roadside safety zones based on the principle that the safety of road users should always have precedence.</p>
--

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government recognises that a greater degree of consistency in the assessment of potential vegetation impacts is required to ensure that important road safety benefits are achieved.

The Government supports the view that road authorities should not be prevented nor unduly encumbered by the requirement for permits from meeting their obligations in managing the roadside within the road reserve.

To achieve this outcome the Government supports the development by DSE and VicRoads of a Code of Practice to guide decision making about hazardous vegetation within road reserves.

It is intended that the Code of Practice (which will need to be consistent with Commonwealth and State legislation) will allow important decisions affecting road safety and the natural environment to be taken, without lengthy delay, in a way that is both transparent and consistent. There also needs to be a clearly defined mechanism for the resolution of disputes between stakeholders that delivers outcomes which will reduce road trauma. Further resolution of these issues through the code development process is proposed.

Vegetation removal is an important issue associated with improvement projects and the on-going maintenance of a clear envelope alongside and over roads.

Road authorities should have the ability to remove road safety hazards as promptly as practical. Net gain considerations, while required, should not be used to prevent the removal of the hazard.

The Government is committed to meeting its net gain objectives on road related projects, however it acknowledges that meeting offset requirements on a project by project basis may not be the most effective and efficient way to achieve the desired outcome.

Recommendation 24. That VicRoads increase the minimum clear zone distance for high-speed, high-volume roads such as freeways, beyond the current nine metres and in accordance with international best practice.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government recognises the need to keep road safety standards and guidelines under review to ensure they reflect best practice, and to monitor developments in new technologies and research findings from Australia and overseas.

VicRoads will review the clear zone guidelines by the end of 2006, taking into account information provided by the Committee. The new guidelines will address the cost and practicality of achieving clear zones on existing roads as well as the cost of providing clear zones or alternative safety treatments on new works.

Recommendation 25. That VicRoads and municipalities apply minimum clear zone distances on high-speed, low-volume roads.

This recommendation is supported in part

The Government will continue to target road safety investment to programs which deliver the most cost effective reductions in road trauma. Applying minimum clear zone distances on all high-speed, low-volume roads is unlikely to offer the best value for money and may have significant environmental consequences in some cases

To achieve appropriate clear zones or the installation of treatments such as safety barriers, the Government supports the development by VicRoads and the Department of Sustainability and Environment of a Code of Practice to guide decision making about hazardous vegetation within road reserves.

It is intended that the Code of Practice (which will need to be consistent with Commonwealth and State legislation) will allow important decisions affecting road safety and the natural environment to be taken, without lengthy delay, in a way that is both transparent and consistent. There also needs to be a clearly defined mechanism for the resolution of disputes between stakeholders that delivers outcomes which will reduce road trauma. Further resolution of these issues through the code development process is proposed. This work is dependent on findings of the exemptions review which is currently underway regarding permits and tree removal. The findings will be presented to Government in early 2006.

VicRoads is also working with utility companies to develop guidelines for the placement of utility poles and these guidelines will be completed by June 2006.

Recommendation 26. That VicRoads undertake a detailed investigation for widespread use of roadside safety barriers to reduce run-off-road crashes on country roads and publish a feasibility study in relation to their installation throughout the network.

Recommendation 27. That VicRoads and municipalities increase installation of barriers as a means to providing a safer roadside, where hazardous roadside objects cannot be removed.

These recommendations are supported in principle

The Government has established the Safer Roads Infrastructure Program (Stage 1) in which more than \$90m has been allocated to treatments to address run-off the road crashes. A further allocation in the order of \$20m is expected to be provided for run-off the road crash treatments from the Stage 2 program.

VicRoads has examined the Victorian State road network to identify lengths with the highest levels of run-off the road crashes. Detailed assessments were carried out within these lengths to identify sections with significant risk from roadside hazards. A range of countermeasures were then considered for these sections, and treatment projects were developed.

Benefit cost ratios were calculated based on the run-off road crashes that had occurred on the sections where treatments were proposed.

Projects were then listed in order of highest benefit-cost ratio as the basis for prioritisation. Some flexibility to ensure consistency of treatments along a route was also applied (for example to avoid short gaps in shoulder seals).

In many locations (including some state highway lengths) current environmental practice for vegetation and the presence of embankments near to the edge of the road shoulder prevent the installation of flexible barriers as the required deflection parameters for the barrier to work as designed cannot be achieved. In these circumstances the more rigid guard rail type barriers are a viable alternative.

The evaluation of the program will be an important input into the development of potential longer term large scale barrier installation programs and the results of the evaluation will be published by the end of 2007.

VicRoads will continue to work with local governments through the Saferoads Program to support pilot barrier installations and trial evaluations.

The implementation of future programs will be subject to cost effectiveness and available funding when compared to other potential road safety initiatives in Victoria.

Recommendation 28. That VicRoads investigate the use of wire rope safety barriers along the centre of undivided roads and the feasibility of doing so concurrently with barriers along the side of the arterial roads throughout the network.

This recommendation is supported

VicRoads will carry out such an investigation in the 2005/2006 financial year.

Recommendation 29. That VicRoads investigate means of supporting barrier systems in such a way that they minimise the risk to motorcyclists who crash into barriers.

This recommendation is supported

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

The Government receives advice from the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Committee on motorcycling matters, including safety. The Committee has recommended a trial of barrier post protection treatments at various locations which are higher risk (such as curves) on popular high speed motorcycling routes. Preliminary investigations into appropriate sites and products has commenced with installation expected from November 2005.

The trials are to be conducted on rural routes with high motorcycle use, but subject to successful trials and cost-effectiveness, such products could be considered for wider use on the road network.

In addition, VicRoads is currently investigating new designs of poles, posts and signs which are more forgiving for motorcyclists. Information gained from this research will develop recommendations for inclusion in VicRoads road design guidelines.

The Government will continue to encourage industry to develop new products to improve fragility and cost of roadside furniture and ask VicRoads to continue to trial and evaluate innovative products and techniques and implement those that are an effective use of funds.

Recommendation 30. That in order to provide a safer environment, VicRoads review crashes on curves on arterial roads to:

- Determine the dominant crash characteristics;
- Assess the appropriateness of current design guidelines to provide consistency in safety standards on these roads, taking into account the geometric features of individual curves as well as variable features along the route such as curve density, operating speeds and differences in operating speeds between successive curves;
- Rank possible countermeasures according to effectiveness;
- Undertake a treatment program for curves, focussing on lower standard roads, particularly category B and C roads;
- Commence a program to proactively seal the shoulders on category C roads with priority given to curves and crests; and
- Expand edge lining and other delineation practices, particularly on curves to improve safety on the more narrow and winding roads in hilly terrain, with particular regard to the use of audio-tactile edge-lines and wider edge-lines.

This recommendation is supported in part

The Government will ask VicRoads to conduct further analysis of crash risks and consider new countermeasures to address crashes at curves on arterial roads, including the analysis of the effects of a succession of different radius curves along a route on safety outcomes. The analysis will be completed by the end of 2006. Potential projects on category B and C roads arising from this work will then be identified for consideration in the 2006/2007 annual budget process.

It is important that future decisions on funding taken by Government as part of the annual budget process are based on treatment locations and countermeasure treatment types which will provide the most benefit for the available funds. Earmarked ongoing funding programs

for particular crash type treatments are likely to be sub optimal in achieving the greatest overall road safety benefit with available funds for the community.

Recommendation 31. That VicRoads publish an evaluation of its trial of centre line audio-tactile lines and assess the appropriateness for their wider implementation as a countermeasure to reduce the occurrence of head-on crashes.

This recommendation is supported

The Government will ask VicRoads to expand the current trial of centre line audio-tactile treatment in 2006 and to evaluate the road safety benefits after a full year of operation (by the end of 2007). This treatment will then be considered for wider implementation as a countermeasure to reduce the occurrence of head-on crashes, based upon its cost effectiveness in comparison to other treatments.

Recommendation 32. That VicRoads investigate the role of lane width and associated pavement and roadside treatments in order to encourage appropriate driver behaviour on Victoria's C and local roads.

This recommendation is supported

The Government supports an investigation of the effects of lane width on driver behaviour and crash rates. VicRoads will examine existing research about relationships between crash risk and pavement width and will analyse crash rates on Victoria's C road network. Both activities will be completed by the end of 2006. While local roads are the responsibility of local government, it would be appropriate that a joint study be carried out by both levels of government on local roads. Subject to agreement of local government, such a joint study could be completed by July 2007.

Recommendation 33. That VicRoads increase the use of low-cost road treatments to modify drivers' perceptions of the road environment and reduce travel speeds. In doing so, the combined effect of lane width, gradient and alignment should be considered, along with audio-tactile edge-lines, to effectively narrow the perceived lane width and reduce speeds on lower class roads.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government supports further investigation into the potential use of low-cost road treatments to modify driver behaviour. Subject to the successful outcomes of these investigations and any associated trial by the end of 2007, these measures will be considered by VicRoads for inclusion in future annual programs on the basis of their cost effectiveness.

Recommendation 34. That VicRoads investigate the benefits of introducing vehicle-activated advisory signs at hazardous intersections and curves in country areas.

This recommendation is supported

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

The State government announced in May 2005 that \$2 million has been committed over four years to trial speed awareness devices in high-risk locations, to help motorists check and adjust their speed. The speed awareness devices will be trialled at ten sites either at sharp curves or on approaches to intersections, particularly in regional Victoria.

In general, it could be expected that at identified higher risk locations where other options for treatments have been exhausted or as an interim measure prior to more major treatments, installation of vehicle-actuated advisory signs may be appropriate and effective. The outcomes of this initial program will be the basis for future funding consideration by Government.

Recommendation 35. That from a safety perspective, VicRoads review the method and criteria by which speed limits are set, including the appropriateness of adopting the current 100 km/h default speed limit for all roads outside built-up areas.

This recommendation is supported

The current review of speed limits by VicRoads' Speed Limit Advisory Group is addressing a number of matters regarding lower speed limits at schools, shopping centre streets and country town centres, including the impact of these lower limits on sections of the road network. Review of the method and criteria by which speed limits are set for higher speeds and the appropriateness of the 100 km/h default speed limit for roads outside built up areas does not form part of this current review.

The Government will ask VicRoads to refer these specific matters to the Speed Limit Advisory Group for consideration after the current review is completed, and to provide advice to Government by the end of 2006.

Recommendation 36. That the Transport Accident Commission develop and continually improve campaign material specific to country audiences.

This recommendation is supported

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) recognises the importance of ensuring communications remain relevant to all key target audiences. The safety issues in country areas can differ markedly to those in the metropolitan area. As a result, the TAC will ensure that key communications are just as relevant to country as they are to metropolitan members of the high-risk target audiences. Wherever practicable, market research will test the reactions of country as well as city residents to creative ideas.

Recommendation 37. That VicRoads undertake an in-depth study in order to establish among other factors, the role of road design, trip duration, proximity to destination and stage of journey in fatigue-related crashes.

This recommendation is supported in principle

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

The Government will ask VicRoads to develop a proposal for funding consideration in its 2006/2007 Research and Development Program for an in-depth study that will include a review of the current definition of fatigue.

Recommendation 38. That VicRoads investigate age-related factors and fatigue to enable the development and implementation of countermeasures targeting at risk groups, particularly young people.

This recommendation is supported

The Government will ask VicRoads to further investigate these issues. VicRoads has commenced implementation of programs targeting fatigue and young people.

Young drivers are still over-represented in fatigue related crashes. There is sufficient literature/research in this area, which could be used to develop a best practice approach to countermeasure development. VicRoads will carry out a literature review in 2006/2007 through its Research and Development program.

Recommendation 39. That WorkCover Victoria and the Transport Accident Commission conduct programs to raise awareness of work related fatigue and the risk of driving while fatigued.

This recommendation is supported

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) will develop and air further public education campaigns with the aim of educating Victorian motorists about the dangers of fatigue and to promote practical steps that can be taken to either prevent its onset or ameliorate its effects.

In respect of work place-related fatigue, the TAC will work with the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) in order to develop and then promote guidelines to assist companies to meet their "duty of care" obligations with regard to road safety (including avoiding "fatigue") under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Recommendation 40. That to reduce the risk of driving while fatigued, including to and from work, the Government publish a guide which advises employers, employees and others in the work chain, on managing the risk of fatigue in the workplace with particular regard to time at work and scheduling.

This recommendation is supported

The Government will ask WorkCover to publish a guide which advises employers, employees and others in the work chain, on managing the risk of fatigue in the workplace.

There is a need for clear, plain language and practical guidance for employers and employees on managing the many factors that cause or contribute to fatigue. Managing fatigue in the workplace requires both employers and employees to have a clear understanding of their individual contributions to the fatigue cycle. It is not just time at work and work scheduling

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

that should be considered; it is also employee lifestyle and health and the guidance materials will address these issues.

Recommendation 41. That VicRoads ensure that the number of rest areas on rural roads and in built-up country areas be increased. These facilities must be adequately signed and have a reasonable level of security to ensure that drivers can safely make use of them to sleep when fatigued.

This recommendation is supported in principle

VicRoads will consult with road user groups and develop proposals for additional rest areas where required. These proposals will be developed by the end of 2006. Implementation will depend upon funding priorities across the State.

Recommendation 42. That VicRoads:

- Investigate physiological indicators which may be used effectively to detect fatigue; and
- Monitor and report to the Government on the development of technological devices which may be used as fatigue countermeasures.

This recommendation is supported

The Government will ask VicRoads to consider these projects in its Research and Development program for 2006/2007.

Recommendation 43. That VicRoads establish the extent to which inattention contributes to injury crashes in Victoria and if significant, develop countermeasures to deal with this issue in road safety strategies and action plans.

Recommendation 66. That VicRoads undertake research to determine the effects and extent of driver distraction of in-car features.

Recommendation 67. That the Government refer to the Road Safety Committee, an inquiry to:

- Define distraction, both internal and external to the vehicle, and its effect on the driver; and
- Explore, examine and identify possible strategies for road and vehicle design to minimise the potentially dangerous effects of driver distraction and to enhance road safety.

These recommendations are supported

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

The Government has recently requested the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee to conduct an Inquiry into driver distraction and related issues.

Recommendation 44. That VicRoads investigate and then implement strategies:

- To influence attitudinal and behavioural change among country males in relation to drink driving; and
- Specifically target women at risk.

This recommendation is supported

The Government will ask VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission to build upon existing programs by investigating and implementing further strategies and actions to achieve increased attitudinal and behavioural change in drink driving by country males and to develop specific measures to target women at risk with alcohol related issues. This will be implemented by the end of 2006.

Recommendation 45. That the Department of Human Services request the Federal Minister of Health promote a more efficient and independent system of monitoring and controlling alcohol advertising.

This recommendation is supported in principle

This recommendation is currently being implemented by the National Committee for the Review of Alcohol Advertising (NCRAA), which reports to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS). The Victorian Government through the Victorian Department of Human Services provide the Chair and secretariat support to NCRAA.

Since its inception in July 2002, NCRAA has been working closely with the alcohol beverage industry to enhance the overall effectiveness of the self-regulatory system for alcohol advertising. There have been noticeable improvements in the self-regulatory system for alcohol advertising, especially with regard to the promotion of a more efficient and independent system. In particular, there has been:

- an increase in the number of complaints relating to alcohol advertisements being upheld when reviewed under the alcohol specific advertising code, the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC);
- greater consideration of public health concerns when complaints relating to alcohol advertisements have been adjudicated as a result of the appointment of a public health representative to sit on the ABAC Complaints Adjudication Panel;
- the appointment of a government representative to sit on the ABAC Management Committee;
- an avenue established for formal complaints to be made about internet sites advertising alcohol products; and
- the provision of an annual report to the MCDS prepared by the ABAC Management Committee detailing alcohol-related complaints and adjudications.

The National Committee for the Review of Alcohol Advertising is now in a monitoring role to ensure the objectives of the work of NCRAA and the alcohol beverage industry continue to be reflected in the outcomes of the self-regulatory system for alcohol advertising, and will continue to advise Governments on the effectiveness of these measures.

Recommendation 46. That Consumer Affairs Victoria and Victoria Police increase the enforcement of *Responsible Serving of Alcohol* in licensed country premises.

This recommendation is supported in principle

Consumer Affairs Victoria administers the Responsible Serving of Alcohol (RSA) program in Victoria. 40,000 participants undertake the RSA course each year. RSA training together with a range of other training programs including Licensees First Step are offered to licensees on a regular basis across Victoria.

Licensees are also encouraged to be members of Licensing Forums and accords which encourage best practice in licensed premises including the implementation of the principles of the responsible serving of alcohol. Accords are a partnership between licensees, CAV, Victoria Police and councils. Many clubs in country Victoria have joined the Good Sports Program and have received accreditation on meeting their obligations in the responsible serving of alcohol. The Government will continue to encourage clubs to participate in this program.

Victoria Police, through appointed Liquor Licensing Inspectors, have the responsibility to ensure that licensed premises comply with legislation as well as the conduct of responsible serving of alcohol to patrons, through both overt / covert policing methods. If concerns are raised about particular hotels, through either public complaints or through the Police's own work practices, these hotels are visited to ensure compliance.

A recent change to the Police database allows the Police to identify those premises that are frequented by people who end up in custody. This can help identify problem locations and lead to a better targeting of resources. Also, a further database has been updated which provides the name of the hotel in which people charged with a drink driving offence had their last drink. This information is provided to officers to assist in planning visits to licensed premises.

Recommendation 47. That to meet the transport needs of country people, the Department of Infrastructure:

- Promote and fund the implementation of local transport options for those at higher risk in country Victoria, particularly young people; and
- Progress implementation and expand delivery of transport options for travel to and from sporting and other recreational venues, particularly where alcohol is consumed, and at night.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Department of Infrastructure (DOI) is increasing its presence in regional and rural Victoria. This includes the formation of a team to take a lead role in the formulation and ongoing review of Regional Transport Service Plans. This expanded approach to regional transport service planning will help address issues of transport accessibility and help expand options for young people.

Building upon service improvements already implemented in the Latrobe Valley and in south west Geelong (Marshall) DOI has designed timetables that provide services later into the

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

evening and at weekends to provide an alternative to private vehicles to meet both the changed working environment and increasing demand for mobility. This strategy will be rolled out further as the Regional Fast Rail Project delivers increased weekend and evening services to which DOI will provide a range of connecting bus services.

DOI also co-sponsors the Transport Connections Program (TCP), in conjunction with the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and Training, and the Department of Victorian Communities.

TCP was established in 2003 to address the access and mobility needs of transport disadvantaged communities and individuals in rural and regional Victoria, including young people. Nine pilot projects across the state are currently supported and have successfully delivered local transport improvements. An independent evaluation of TCP is currently underway and a final report is expected in June 2006.

The focus of TCP is the overall theme of "transport disadvantage". i.e. for older people with disabilities and those below driving age. Notwithstanding this, the provision of further transport choice at the local level should go some way towards mitigating drink-driving when TCP has been implemented. This issue will be explored in the evaluation of the program and taken into account in considering proposals for extension of the programs address a wider range of transport disadvantage across Victoria.

Recommendation 48. That the Department of Infrastructure, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, fund a trial of designated driver and supporting education programs throughout country Victoria.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government will ask VicRoads as the relevant agency to develop proposals for a trial of designated driver and supporting education programs by the end of 2006.

Conduct of a trial of alcohol education programs and programs that assist drivers to develop appropriate strategies when drinking, which include designated drivers as one of a number of options is supported. Overseas research does not suggest significant benefits can be achieved from utilising the strategy of designated drivers alone.

Current alcohol education programs, such as *Looking after our Mates*, provide participants with a balanced range of strategies, which will enable them to drink (or not drink) socially but not exceed BAC limits when driving. The designated driver option forms one of many strategies provided in such programs.

The Government will consider funding for any recommended trial program proposals in the 2007/2008 budget process.

Recommendation 49. That Victoria Police increase resources for roadside detection of drug impaired drivers throughout country Victoria in order to increase the anywhere anytime approach and to ensure equity with metropolitan Melbourne.

Recommendation 51. That Victoria Police increase speed detection activities:

- In built-up areas using mobile speed cameras to target areas of known risk or those with a crash history; and

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

- Using mobile radar and similar devices on lower-volume roads, particularly category C and local roads, to emphasise an anywhere anytime approach.

Recommendation 56. That Victoria Police increase rates of screening for alcohol impaired drivers to exceed current targets in country areas, utilising a combination of:

- Small, mobile random breath test units;
- Less predictability in enforcement operations – an anywhere anytime approach;
- An increase in overt enforcement; and
- An increase in enforcement during high alcohol times, particularly by rural booze buses.

Recommendation 62. That Victoria Police increase the level of general traffic policing in country areas and in particular on rural roads. This could be achieved by:

- The introduction of a randomised enforcement program which includes enforcement of heavy vehicle requirements; and
- Extending the loop patrolling approach to include lower-volume arterial and local roads.

These recommendation are supported in principle

The effectiveness of road safety policing will be enhanced by the use of intelligence to target enforcement efforts.

Managerial changes associated with the Compstat Program will ensure responsibility for local policing including road safety rests with the local command structure. This will allow for a local assessment of the appropriateness of the policing responses in each area.

Victoria Police will continue to work with the Transport Accident Commission in the delivery of Enhanced Enforcement Programs to specifically target road safety issues.

A traffic law enforcement guide was also designed in mid 2004 to assist members involved in traffic enforcement to develop best practice programs.

Recommendation 50. That VicRoads liaises with the Departments of Health and Human Services to increase the number and reach of harm-reduction programs in local country areas as they pertain to drug-impaired driving.

This recommendation is supported in principle

Harm reduction programs are typically society based, long term and preventative in nature. They do not specifically target driving and drug use. The Government will ask VicRoads to liaise with the Departments of Health and Human Services to investigate whether a more targeted approach is possible. This will be completed by the end of 2006.

Recommendation 52. That Victoria Police and VicRoads identify the enforcement of heavy vehicle speed limits as a priority and increase enforcement of speeding trucks on rural roads.

This recommendation is supported

Victoria Police recognises the need for increased policing in respect of heavy vehicle speed and have commenced various covert and overt operations. These are utilising intelligence to ensure compliance with the speed limits while being an effective use of resources. Key benefits of the covert operations are that offending drivers cannot predict future enforcement

activity. Victoria Police is awaiting legislation to support police use of heavy vehicle engine management readers that will provide data to establish the appropriate settings on speed limiters. At the same time police are purchasing the readers.

While enforcement is substantially a Victoria Police role, VicRoads, through the activities of its Transport Safety Services (TSS) groups, undertakes occasional speed enforcement when an obvious breach is observed. While TSS's primary role is to ensure heavy vehicle compliance in relation to fatigue, mass, load dimensions and load restraint to protect the road infrastructure, further efforts to enforce speed limits will be undertaken.

Recommendation 53. That Victoria Police increase enforcement of speeding motorcycles, particularly on winding and hilly roads in country areas.

This recommendation is supported in principle

Police conduct both overt and covert patrols of known 'blackspot' and high risk areas frequented by motorcycles. Some police motorcycles are now fitted with moving mode radars and there have been some trials regarding the use of video on a covert bike as an aid to enforcement. There is a proposal to extend the use of video on covert bikes to other areas.

Motorcycle activity on these types of roads historically occurs on weekends and presents a limited time period to enable sustained enforcement to be applied to all known high risk locations.

Recommendation 54. That the Government amends the legislation for automatic suspension of licence from the date of detection for drivers caught driving any speed higher than 130 km/h.

This recommendation is not supported

Current legislation allows for the suspension of licence for motorists driving at a speed:

- 130 km/h or more; or
- 25 km/h or more over any other speed limits.

Automatically suspending a driver's licence from the date of detection would deny drivers the opportunity to have their guilt or innocence determined by a court. It would also not be practical where the offence was detected by a speed camera, as in those cases the motorists is not advised of the offence until some time after it has been committed.

The Government will ask VicRoads to review potential immediate suspension options and provide further advice on the matter by the end of 2006.

Recommendation 55. That to support speed enforcement measures, Victoria Police, VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission undertake education programs to increase public disapproval of speeding.

This recommendation is supported

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

The Government's road safety agencies will continue to place a high priority on a range of public education programs to educate the community regarding the risks associated with speeding behaviours and the significant penalties that apply and the increasing unacceptability of these behaviours to the community.

This approach is necessary to develop community understanding about speed as a critical road safety factor. This will continue to include media campaigns, public information and a range of other measures with other road safety stakeholders such as Roadsafe groups and local governments.

Recommendation 57. That the Department of Justice increase both the monetary fines and demerit points for seatbelt offences. That the Transport Accident Commission and Victoria Police then implement a co-ordinated enforcement and advertising campaign in country areas to target greater compliance.

Recommendation 59. That VicRoads increase the penalties for using a hand-held mobile phone, in any manner, while driving. Then an education and enforcement campaign be conducted to reinforce the dangers of using a hand-held phone, in any manner, while driving.

These recommendations are supported in principle

The Government supports the principles behind this but not an approach that simply increases penalties.

While setting appropriate penalties for offences plays an important part in deterring and modifying unsafe driver behaviour, increasing penalties alone does not change the way drivers behave. There must be high levels of enforcement, which must be seen as applying anywhere and anytime so that drivers believe that if they commit an offence they will be detected. This will continue to be supported by high levels of publicity.

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) will directly support Victoria Police through public education in a coordinated campaign that targets the non-use of restraints and mobile phone use. The Enhanced Enforcement Program that the TAC conducts in partnership with the Force enables police in local districts to bid for additional support for enforcement programs that target local safety issues in an effective way.

VicRoads will review penalty levels generally and provide advice to Government by the end of 2006.

Recommendation 58. That the Minister for Transport request the Australian Government to amend the Australian Standards to include the mandatory installation of aggressive seatbelt reminder systems in new vehicles.

This recommendation is supported in principle

While the Government supports the requirement for installation of seat belt reminder systems in new vehicles, especially for drivers but also for all passengers, proposals to improve seatbelt reminder systems in Australian vehicles were canvassed in a Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) which was released by the Commonwealth Government for public comment in late 2004. The RIS did not recommend the mandatory installation of aggressive seatbelt reminder systems in new vehicles due to the current positive market place response of over

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

55% of new vehicles already having such reminder systems. Also, projected figures suggested that by 2007, 98% of new vehicles would have such a reminder system installed. It was recommended this issue be kept under review, and if actual installation rates did not match projected outcomes by 2007, further investigation of the matter would be considered at that time. VicRoads will monitor these developments and provide advice to Government on this matter by the end of 2007.

Recommendation 60. That in conjunction with telecommunications providers, the Transport Accident Commission conduct an education and advertising campaign to inform the community of the dangers associated with using hands-free mobile phones while driving, and to provide advice on their appropriate use.

This recommendation is supported

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) will work with telecommunications providers to promote the safe use of hands-free mobile phones.

Recommendation 61. That VicRoads increase sanctions for drivers detected driving during a period of suspension, cancellation, disqualification or when unlicensed.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government will ask VicRoads to review and provide advice on possible increased sanctions for these offences, by the end of 2006.

A vehicle impoundment regime will be introduced in 2006 to discourage 'hoon-related' driving offences and disqualified driving.

Police and courts will be able to impound and confiscate the vehicles of repeat "driving whilst disqualified" offenders. The vehicle impoundment regime is expected to provide an increased deterrence for disqualified driving and its associated risks.

Recommendation 63. That Victoria Police monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of *Operation Swap-a-Town* with a view to its broader implementation throughout country areas.

This recommendation is supported in principle

Victoria Police will continue to monitor and evaluate *Operation Swap-A-Town* with a view to its broader implementation throughout country areas, depending on the findings of the evaluation.

Recommendation 64. That VicRoads undertake research to better understand the crash risks associated with driver assistance systems.

This recommendation is supported

This issue is included in the Terms of Reference for the recent referral to the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee.

Government Response to Inquiry into the Country Road Toll

The Government will consider the outcomes of the Inquiry and will if necessary ask VicRoads to consider this project in its Research and Development program for 2007/2008.

Recommendation 65. That VicRoads research crash data to analyse and determine the extent of crashes caused by cruise control.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The Government will request VicRoads to include this project in its 2007/2008 Research and Development program.

Recommendation 66. That VicRoads undertake research to determine the effects and extent of driver distraction of in-car features.

Recommendation 67. That the Government refer to the Road Safety Committee, an inquiry to:

- Define distraction, both internal and external to the vehicle, and its effect on the driver; and
- Explore, examine and identify possible strategies for road and vehicle design to minimise the potentially dangerous effects of driver distraction and to enhance road safety.

These recommendations are supported

The Government has referred an Inquiry into driver distraction to the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee.

Recommendation 68. That the Transport Accident Commission conduct an advertising campaign on the risks associated with driver distraction.

This recommendation is supported in principle

The findings of the proposed Parliamentary Road Safety Committee inquiry into distraction will provide further guidance to Government and its agencies in this area.

Driver distraction encompasses a broad range of possible causes, each of which most probably makes a small contribution to trauma outcomes. An important principle of communications programs is that they target a single high-risk behaviour (and not a multiplicity) and, in this way, will be more likely to achieve the intended behaviour change. Accordingly, while the Transport Accident Commission is unlikely, at this stage, to tackle the general issue of distraction, it will educate the community on specific distractions that are amenable to change and that contribute significantly to trauma outcomes, and await the outcomes of the Inquiry in 2006.

Recommendation 69. That the Minister for Transport write to the Australian Transport Council requesting the introduction of roll-over regulatory requirements relating to the predisposition of a vehicle to a roll-over and vehicle roll-over crashworthiness.

This recommendation is supported

The Minister for Transport will write to the Australian Transport Council members requesting the introduction of regulatory requirements to address the predisposition of a vehicle to roll-over and to improve standards of vehicle roll-over crashworthiness.

Recommendation 70. That the Minister for Transport promote, at the Australian Transport Council, the introduction of regulations to provide front, side and rear under-run protection on trucks.

This recommendation is supported

The Government has actively sought improved under-run protection requirements for trucks through the Australian Transport Council (ATC). At the June 2005 meeting, Ministers provided in-principle endorsement to fast-track the introduction of improved cabin strength and front underrun protection for new trucks as part of a package of measures that would include increased front axle mass for heavy vehicles fitted with these safety systems. Ministers noted that the package would include consideration of any additional pavement and bridge wear, and the potential for cost recovery from heavy vehicle charges.

A draft Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) concerning the introduction of an Australian Design Rule for side and rear under-run protection has been prepared by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS). Following comments from stakeholders, DOTARS is redrafting the RIS to reflect issues raised within the document and it will be resubmitted for consideration by the end of 2005.
