

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Pedestrian Safety

Melbourne — 19 April 2006

Members

Mr B. W. Bishop

Mr J. H. Eren

Dr A. R. Harkness

Mr C. A. C. Langdon

Mr T. W. Mulder

Mr E. G. Stoney

Mr I. D. Trezise

Chair: Mr I. D. Trezise

Deputy Chair: Mr E. G. Stoney

Staff

Executive Officer: Mr R. Willis

Research Officer: Ms M. Johnson

Witnesses

Mr David Anderson, Chief Executive Officer; and

Mr George Mavroyeni, General Manager Road Safety, VicRoads.

The CHAIR — Welcome to our pedestrian safety inquiry — from VicRoads, David Anderson, chief executive officer, and George Mavroyeni, general manager road safety. George, on behalf of the committee, we would like to congratulate you on your appointment. This committee had a fruitful working relationship with your predecessor, Eric Howard, and we are sure that relationship will continue on with you. I have worked with you in the south-west region, so I know this committee will enjoy working with you. Welcome and congratulations.

As you are aware, we currently have a pedestrian safety inquiry. A report was handed to the Parliament in 1999 and this committee has decided to review the outcomes of that report since that time. We welcome VicRoads to the committee and thank them for their input today.

Mr ANDERSON — We will do a double act and try to cover the terms of reference, but we have got a fair bit of material, so we are going to try to skip through it. If I can go on normal tradition, you might prefer just to interrupt us — is that the way you would like to do it?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Overheads shown.

Mr ANDERSON — We thought we would do a presentation in four parts: very quickly look at the casualty data covering pedestrians and where we are heading in this state, and then I will get George to run through the specific actions that have been taken following the previous inquiry, the recommendations the committee made and the ones that the government adopted. We have then got a few other initiatives we have implemented, in addition to the ones that were a result of the government adopting recommendations, and then I thought perhaps at the end we could just have a discussion about some of the opportunities we see for further improvement.

We have a fair bit of data, it is in our submission, and I do not think I will go through all the slides, but essentially that one just compares Victoria with other states. You can see from year to year if you just compare the white bar versus the red one. In most states there has been an improvement in pedestrian safety. New South Wales is perhaps a bit of a stand-out, but we do not want to go into that too much. Just looking at Victoria, there has been that sort of improvement, particularly in the metropolitan area — that is not surprising, that is where most pedestrians are — and not so much in rural Victoria.

The number of Victorians injured, by age group — again it does not tell us much because it is mainly the young who are pedestrians, or the elderly. This one might tell us a bit more.

The CHAIR — Going back to New South Wales, this is a statistic from when we were in Sydney where there were more pedestrians killed in Sydney itself as an area than motorists in 2005.

Mr ANDERSON — In the central part of Sydney or overall?

The CHAIR — The overall Sydney region. We got that from Harold Scruby from the Pedestrian Council of Australia.

Mr MULDER — From a comment made before and as an observation, there seems to me to be more of a tendency now for pedestrians to disobey the road rules in and around the city. I am talking about crossing while lights are red without waiting for the light to go green. Do you have any data on enforcement in terms of what is happening there and whether there is any targeted enforcement for pedestrians?

Mr ANDERSON — I do not think we have got any data. I do not know whether the police have or not, perhaps you should ask them. I would probably make a similar observation. I do not know whether it has actually got worse. I do not think it has ever been all that good. We do not have any data on enforcement, but we could try to get it or — are you going to talk to the police?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr ANDERSON — If they are coming in, maybe you should direct it to them in the first instance.

This graph is probably more applicable for making judgments. It is injury rates per 100 000 population by age group, and it probably has not changed much, but again you can see teenagers, if you like, or younger adults, and

elderly people. Injury rates for elderly people are high, probably because of their frailty, but also because they are not all that quick.

Mr BISHOP — Is that similar to the driver graph data? It looks pretty similar.

Mr ANDERSON — Yes, it probably is and probably for similar reasons.

I do not think we can make any comment about gender. I do not think there is any data that would support any conclusions in that area. Again I do not know whether there is much to get out of that group; we included it because the data is there.

Alcohol: it is still a problem, but there has been some improvement, and we will come back to some issues to do with alcohol.

Location: it really depends on where there are the greatest conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, and as you get into denser metropolitan areas you obviously are going to have more pedestrian activity. We put this graph in because 50 or 60-kilometre-per-hour zones are again where there is a lot of pedestrian activity. We might say that for the first time in the state's history the average speed of traffic in 60-k zones has actually dropped below 60.

That might be a useful piece of information or it might be irrelevant, but I think it is important that speeds in those zones are managed. I know it is a controversial issue, and I will go on record to say that I wish it was not a controversial issue politically, because I think we would actually save more lives and have fewer injuries if we ended up with all of the community understanding the importance of managing speed down in these sorts of areas of conflict.

Mr MULDER — David, can I just ask a question on that. What part does traffic congestion play in that drop-off in speeds travelled in those areas? It would have to have an enormous impact. I know there are other issues surrounding that as well. I am referring to the highly political matter in relation to speed cameras, but traffic congestion must have had an enormous impact on overall speeds dropping, not just on the arterial roads but also in 60 and 50-k zones.

Mr ANDERSON — I do not know whether — congestion is such a difficult beast to deal with, it is pretty hard to even define what it is. These are free speeds. George might want to explain what that is.

Mr MAVROYENI — That is really taking the congestion out of the equation, so vehicles are free to travel as fast as they wish, basically.

Mr MULDER — Okay.

Mr ANDERSON — If we define congested areas as places where you cannot do the speed limit, where there are lower speeds, then I guess you could say congestion is good for safety. We know that in the UK, where there are very low casualty rates, they would often conclude that congestion is a good thing. I do not particularly want to relate this to congestion.

Mr MULDER — Fine.

The CHAIR — Can I just make sure that what I am reading is correct. That is telling me, for example, that the mean average speed in 1999 was something like 65, and the mean average speed now is something like 59.

Mr ANDERSON — Yes, below 60 for the first time ever.

Just looking at the committee's recommendations that the government supported in — —

The CHAIR — Sorry, David, can I just go back to that slide again. Is there a graph that you can match — for example, showing pedestrians killed? Is there a graph to show that the number of pedestrian fatalities has actually dropped away as well, that would match those statistics?

Mr ANDERSON — In 60-kilometre zones — —

Mr MAVROYENI — I do not think we have got that.

The CHAIR — I would just be interested to see what that is with the pedestrians.

Mr ANDERSON — Can we take that on notice and come back?

The CHAIR — Yes. I would just be interested to see if the graphs would match, because there is about a 6 km/h difference in five or six years.

Mr ANDERSON — We do have a graph later on that shows the risk of being killed at different speeds. It shows quite dramatic reductions for lower speeds, which is not surprising, but the data is there. We will get to that later.

I am going to get George to just go through each of the recommendations that the government adopted and the action that has been taken. Obviously there have been a lot of recommendations, so it would take a long time if we go through it bit by bit. We will try to get through it fairly quickly and then use the time at the end to have a discussion about where we go from here.

The CHAIR — Yes, no worries. Yes, fine.

Mr ANDERSON — This is a bit of history.

Mr MAVROYENI — We will start with the recommendations that were supported. Recommendation 1 was that driver training should place more emphasis on teaching young people the appropriate skills to drive safely, to be aware of the surrounding environment and other road users. In that regard we have got the Novice Driver Kit, which was released in October 2001. We have got the Hazard Perception Test now, which includes pedestrian scenarios such as pedestrians running from between parked cars and pedestrians approaching a crossing. Keys Please has been modified, and that is available to year 10 students. We are trying to increase the exposure there to year 10s. Currently we are targeting over 20 000, about 40 per cent of all of the students, and we are promoting the 120 hours driving practice as part of the considerations for the new graduated licensing scheme when it comes into play, so a lot of work has been done in that area.

Recommendation 2, that the general urban speed limit on local roads be 50 kilometres an hour but councils should have the option to apply to retain 60 kilometres an hour where justified, was introduced in January 2001.

Recommendation 4, that school zones of 40 kilometres an hour in urban areas and 60 kilometres an hour in rural 100-kilometre speed zones be implemented — and in fact that was the case. I think they were implemented in 2004. That was the commencement, and there has been continual improvement in conspicuity and that sort of thing. Every school now, primary and secondary, has got a school zone.

The CHAIR — Just with the 40 km/h zones, I think there is a trial in shopping areas. Is that right?

Mr MAVROYENI — Yes. We are coming to that one as well.

The CHAIR — Keep going, George. I promise not to interrupt again.

Mr ANDERSON — No, that is all right. We thought we would just work through those recommendations and cover the lot.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 5, that the Department of Infrastructure develop urban design guidelines using the philosophies found in the Queensland integrated regional transport plan and the Dutch and Swedish sustainable road safety principles. In fact we have got a resource called *Safe Urban Environments* released in May 2004. This is essentially the domain of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Infrastructure. We have a document here, a copy of that resource, if you are interested. We have highlighted the references to improving pedestrian safety in this document, so is it worth tabling that?

The CHAIR — Yes, if you could.

Mr ANDERSON — I think we will come back later and just say that the document is great; the trick now is to get people to use it, and that might be something the committee would pay attention to during the rest of the inquiry.

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 8, that the role and effectiveness of community road safety councils be reviewed. Austroads undertook an evaluation in 2002. Those recommendations have been picked up and have been implemented, and a resource has actually been developed to help these community road safety councils with evaluation. Again we can table a document here which describes the evaluation process and gives some useful information to help with the evaluation.

Mr ANDERSON — Could I just say our experience with community road safety councils is that their level of professionalism has been increasing over the years, and they are now doing hundreds of projects. VicRoads thinks that they are really a very valuable resource in Victoria and probably the other states — some of them, like South Australia — would have similar structures. They were questioned years ago when they were first introduced, but I think community road safety councils do a terrific job and are a very important part of the Victorian road safety scene.

Mr MULDER — Can I just ask a quick question on that? I understood that VicRoads was withdrawing administrative support for road safety councils.

Mr ANDERSON — Not withdrawing. We have been maintaining about half a person per council, Terry, and we have not really withdrawn. If you look at our budget — —

Mr MULDER — Was it higher than that at one stage?

Mr ANDERSON — Probably not. There might be one or two cases where three councils are supported by one person, but I have been involved in road safety since the early 1990s and that has always been about the situation. There may have been years where it was a bit higher and it has been reduced, and the regional staff have sort of said, 'Hang on, we should have more resources'. I think that is perhaps what is reflected in your comment.

Our budget figures would show a pretty well uniform level of support. I think over the years there has been a growth in the number, a small growth; it is now 23 councils, and it was 20 for a long time. Where we add a new council that resource gets stretched a little bit, but we would certainly support them into the future.

The CHAIR — Is any evaluation done on the effectiveness of the road safety councils?

Mr ANDERSON — Evaluations have been done on the projects they have done. You cannot actually evaluate the council itself, but the projects it has done. I can remember several ministers ago where a minister said, 'We do not want them to produce fridge magnets', and they do not produce fridge magnets any more. They do work that I think is pretty well researched and pretty well backed up by research.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 9 was that a road safety course encompassing engineering and social sciences be developed and delivered through a Victorian tertiary institution to broaden the academic background of people involved in road safety. A course has been established through Monash University. It is a course that is conducted over three days, and 60 people have attended the course so far.

We also have a testimonial from one of the people that did attend. Admittedly it is a VicRoads road safety person, but that person spoke very glowingly about the course itself. There is also an opportunity to undertake some training through the Queensland University of Technology. There are four Victorians who have completed or are currently undertaking that particular training course.

Mr ANDERSON — Before George goes on, one of the notes I have made is that on page 22 of our submission, right at the bottom, there is a statement which is fairly significant — that is, that there used to be a good road safety course at the University of New England at Armidale and a lot of our VicRoads staff were put through that postgraduate course, but it has now dropped off, it is no longer there, because of lack of interest. I think education is an issue in Victoria. Should we rely on these specialist sorts of postgraduate courses or should we be saying that the basic engineering — or whatever the discipline is — courses should include an element of this road safety? It is in fact fairly scientific; it can be taught and in fact can be managed. I would say that our undergraduate courses generally in Australia — I am saying this because Austroads has had a look at it — lack this sort of content. Maybe that is an issue the committee might want to consider further.

Mr BISHOP — I think that would follow one of our recommendations in the last report we did, where we recommended that road safety take a higher priority in road design, if I remember correctly.

Mr ANDERSON — You did.

Mr BISHOP — So that would follow through on that. Is that what you are talking about?

Mr ANDERSON — Yes, I think so, but I think a lot of the specialist courses also deal with the behavioural side of road safety. Often when people graduate and they are busy working and they do postgraduate courses, as many here might know, it takes a lot of effort to do that. Whilst people will do a Master of Business Administration and stuff like that, I do not know whether post graduation is the time to get this sort of development. I do not see why the basic courses that are taught in universities should not have some of this material in them. I have been on course advisory committees for three universities now, and those courses are not all that much different to the courses that I and people in my age group did. So I think there is room for improvement in that area. I guess I will not get Christmas cards from universities next year, but so be it.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 11 is that the Responsible Serving of Alcohol program be reviewed to determine its effectiveness in preventing patrons reaching unacceptable levels of intoxication. A review was conducted in 2002 by the Australian Drug Foundation, and basically it found that workshops would be the best way to go to improve the knowledge base.

Workshops in fact were implemented and about 280 000 licensees, bar staff and hospitality students have participated since the introduction of these workshops in 1992. I think it is appropriate to also note that in the last four years there have been between 35 000 and 40 000 attending each year, so it is a growing participation, which is terrific.

Recommendation 14 was that Victoria Police and the Liquor Licensing Commission conduct routine inspections of licensed premises. I think that is really one for the police to respond to.

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 15 was that promotional material highlighting the danger of becoming an intoxicated pedestrian be developed. There was extensive research which indicated that community-based projects are the way to go. Quite a number of those have been developed, including things like the Looking Out for Pedestrians resource, PartySafe, which is essentially a police initiative but also supported by VicRoads, and Looking After Our Mates. We have some samples of those here that might be of use to the committee, so we will table those — if I can find the right ones we will.

Recommendation 16 is that government ensures that the Australian Road Rules being introduced in Victoria do not diminish the current road safety standards in Victoria. We have an Australian Road Rules maintenance group, and that meets every six months, to monitor the implementation of these rules. The group has some concern for the safety of vulnerable road users and for safety in general. Some examples of rules that they have been looking at introducing are things like a rule prohibiting drivers queuing across pedestrian crossings and a requirement to stop before passing the rear of a stopped tram. I think they would be very good initiatives to introduce. So it is quite an effective process, we think, for focusing on pedestrian safety.

Mr ANDERSON — Perhaps just again to add to that, just recently we have suggested that the terms of reference of that particular group be reviewed to ensure that they have the right focus, if you like. That is an initiative that has come from Victoria. The National Transport Commission manages that group, and so we will be following that up at the next opportunity we have to meet nationally, but it would be our intention to ensure that safety is incorporated into their terms of reference. Otherwise a group like that can end up taking too legalistic a view of road rules, and without having a mind to exactly what they are trying to achieve. What we do not want is just a whole lot of rules; we want rules that are enforceable, but we do not want rules that compromise safety. There is no point in having road rules otherwise.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 17 is that traffic infringement notice penalties under Road Safety (Traffic) Regulations 1988 for pedestrian misdemeanours be raised to \$50; and that has been done.

Mr MULDER — Do you have any data on how much that is bringing in at all?

Mr MAVROYENI — No, I do not have that, Terry. Perhaps the police might — —

Mr ANDERSON — We can get the Department of Justice to look it up. We could provide it for you. It might be easier for us to chase that up if it is available.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 18 is that pedestrians be alerted to the dangers of illegal road-crossing behaviour and offences through education campaigns. That is something that Terry was raising earlier. Again a community-based approach seems to be the most effective way of addressing this particular matter.

The CHAIR — When you say ‘community-based approach’ you are saying, for want of a better term, handing it down to the local councils?

Mr MAVROYENI — Local councils and community road safety councils have a role to play in this area as well. Broad advertising through the TAC advertisements, for example, is another useful mechanism. We have some examples here of various resources that you can flip through.

The CHAIR — My concern is that if ‘community-based’ means handing it down to local councils, I know that when we toured rural Victoria a couple of years ago on whatever inquiry it was there was obviously a large variance in commitment to road safety by various councils. Some of the councils we met were fully committed to road safety; they employed their own safety officers and were doing a good job. Then we had the other end, where obviously there was lip-service at best being applied to road safety by some councils. Just personally, it is of concern to me that we rely on councils to implement some issues such as this.

Mr ANDERSON — Previously your recommendation 6 was that more effort go into creating consistency in local government plans, and page 36 of our submission addresses that. We can elaborate on that in a minute.

The CHAIR — Yes; no worries.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 19 is that VicRoads encourages research conducted by the Federal Office of Road Safety — which is now the Australian Transport Safety Bureau — and the National Road Transport Commission to develop Australian design rules (ADRs) and design standards that will help to reduce injury severity to pedestrians.

Getting into Australian design rule changes has proven to be problematic from my limited experience in this area, but that is the sort of feedback I am getting from people around me. A more effective measure to get the message through is through the Australian new car assessment program, ANCAP, which gives a rating of the safety characteristics of a vehicle — and that is where a lot of emphasis is now being put — as well as trying to bring about some changes through the ADRs, but ANCAP is proving to be the more effective mechanism.

Mr ANDERSON — Australian transport ministers from all states and the federal government have expressed some frustration at the lack of speed in producing Australian design rules and data produced showed that it was taking up to 11 years to change a standard. Separately, when we had a look at the quality of the current standards, if all cars met those standards, and that was all they did, we would have a much less safe car fleet than we do now. The manufacturers are exceeding the standards, and therefore you would have to question the reliance on ADRs to actually improve safety. I think this has probably come out in other inquiries, but it still seems to be the case that it is just a bureaucratic nightmare.

Even in Europe they have taken an extra four years to produce a standard, compared to what we thought they would, and to get Australia to follow it just seems to be too bloody difficult. We need a different approach, and the ATC — that is, the Australian Transport Council — has asked for a review of the methodology. Whether in fact we even need Australian standards has been questioned; whether we cannot just adopt American, Japanese or European standards, depending on the source of the vehicle. That just remains a frustration for all of us.

Mr MAVROYENI — The ANCAP program is based on a 5-star rating, and in 1999 a 3-star pedestrian rating was introduced, so there are two measures.

Mr BISHOP — How difficult would it be to get ESC, electronic suspension control, in on the Australian design rules?

Mr ANDERSON — It would be fabulous if we could get it. I guess my answer should be that I do not know, but it is something that needs to be pushed very hard, because there is more and more evidence that if we could get those sorts of technologies into vehicles, then we could probably halve the road toll. It is probably the golden bullet.

Victoria has adopted a vehicle safety strategy which is heavily reliant on marketing safety to consumers, because we believe that is the best way for manufacturers to respond in a positive way that enables them to be viable and to make money et cetera. But consumer-driven approaches seem to be preferred around the world, as opposed to regulation-driven approaches. I think you could say regulation driven approaches fail. The question is whether we try to get the Australian design rule process to achieve the more rapid introduction of technology in the fleet, or whether we go the consumer way. Our judgment at the moment is that we should provide more information to consumers.

VicRoads, together with Bosch and the TAC, has been doing a lot of demonstrations at the motor show and at Federation Square and other places to show just how great this sort of technology is. As far as our program is concerned, next year we will be suggesting to the government, to the minister, that we put a hell of a lot of resources into marketing vehicle safety, particularly that sort of technology.

Mr BISHOP — I suspect that, if it takes 11 years to change them, in 11 years a lot more cars would have that component installed anyway — which is a bit frustrating, I guess.

Mr ANDERSON — I said at a forum last week that I think that, if we had relied on the Australian design rules to introduce mobile telephones, probably no-one here would have one, but maybe that is a good thing. I do not know. I will leave the committee to decide.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 20 is that research be conducted on bull bars to ascertain their level of involvement in pedestrian crashes. That research was done, and it was found that bull bars contributed to about 12 per cent of pedestrian deaths — that was across the whole of Australia. VicRoads is currently looking at introducing a permit scheme for vehicles with bull bars registered in the Melbourne metropolitan area. That would be older-style bull bars, I think, David, because there was apparently nothing wrong or of concern with the newer-style bull bars.

Mr ANDERSON — That second dot point came out of the committee's recommendation associated with elderly road users. We have not got anything more to report on that, but we are looking at the feasibility. There seem to be a fair few issues to work through, but that will not stop us at this stage anyway.

Mr MULDER — Have you discussed a fee structure in relation to that, David?

Mr ANDERSON — We have not got that far. We are just trying to work out how you actually justify it, because if it has to be done via some regulation, as you are aware there is a pretty rigorous regulatory impact statement process to go through. You really have to be able to prove that it is beneficial to the community. We just need to do our homework very thoroughly before we say, 'Yes, that is a goer'. That does not mean that we are not going to have a go at it; it is just that we know that it is not going to be successful unless we have done the homework.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 21 is that children, carers and bus drivers be educated in safer behaviour around school buses. VicRoads has been working with key stakeholders, particularly the Department of Infrastructure, in introducing a number of initiatives which are shown on the screen in front of you.

Mr MULDER — Is there anything to do with parents in there as well?

Mr MAVROYENI — I think there is.

Mr MULDER — There is?

Mr MAVROYENI — Yes.

Mr ANDERSON — Some of these activities are being done with a number of stakeholders, and there has been terrific support from the bus operators, from the bus drivers, from the Transport Workers Union, from the

Victorian Transport Association and others, so it is fairly positive. This next group were the recommendations that the government supported in part. I think there is only one of those.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 7 was:

That Road Safety Audits be required on all significant planning applications and traffic engineering proposals and systematically used to review the entire road network over a period of time.

In that regard in VicRoads is a requirement to undertake road safety audits, based on the scale of the project and during various phases of the project development and implementation, as indicated up on the screen. We are also encouraging municipalities to undertake a similar process, and we are assisting with the training and development of people within municipalities to undertake road safety audits.

Mr BISHOP — Can you go back to that one? On the top point, would that include, as an example, utility poles? We have often talked in this committee — Terry has, and you have too, Chair — about the Geelong Road with the huge poles there whereas in Europe you would never find that; there are the collapsible poles. Has it gone that far? What would you say to that?

Mr ANDERSON — The Geelong Road issue was one of treating the route according to the standards that existed at the time, and when those gantry poles were outside the clear zone that we adopted, we did not extend the treatment. Since then we have added, through one of the black spot programs, some more barriers, which you would be aware of, probably.

What we have to keep in mind is that we have a lot of older infrastructure that is still not up to the standard of the Geelong Road, and people are getting hurt, and therefore it is sort of a dilemma, really. Do you complete an entire route to a very high standard? Or do you go back to projects like the Princes Freeway to the east — and if you look at the Warrigal bypass section, where there were much lower standards in those days — and treat those first?

My conclusion is that we probably should do the latter, and we should be dealing with those sections where people are already getting hurt. It would be nice if Australia had the resources to build to the European standards, but we are the same area with about a twentieth of the population and it is just one of the things that we face in managing road networks.

We will be and are improving the standards, but that is easy enough to say; you have to actually have the resources to keep up with improvements to roads. Fortunately we have had in the last few years half a billion dollars to improve roadsides out of money that the TAC has been able to provide because of the reduced road toll. So we are bringing a lot of routes up to a better standard — but not up to the sort of thing you would have seen in Europe on the very high-standard freeways. Although having just come back from two weeks in Italy, I am not sure that the standards are universally good over there.

Mr MULDER — David, can I ask a question coming back to the issue of the Geelong Road, which the Chair and I travel a lot. With the signage on the side of the road, a lot of new signage has been put up outside of barriers. There are the BP service station signs, the Avalon Airport signs, and the old ones there like — ‘Report illegal fishing today: phone 1800’ and so on — and by the time you get to it you cannot tell what the rest of the number is. It seems to me there is an awful lot of inappropriate signage there and a lot of it is outside of barriers.

Mr ANDERSON — Yes, the standards — if the poles are 50 millimetres or so, they are not a life-threatening hazard or an injury-threatening hazard.

The CHAIR — Unless you are on a motorbike.

Mr ANDERSON — Unless you are on a motorbike.

Mr MULDER — And I think motorbike fatalities from last year to this year are up 70 per cent.

Mr ANDERSON — On the Geelong Road?

Mr MULDER — I do not know about the Geelong Road, but across the state I think there was a 30 per cent increase from 2004 to 2005.

Mr ANDERSON — In terms of injuries I think they are down, but fatalities are a sort of smallish number, so they vary a fair bit. They are up — motorcycles, 16 — that is, to this time last year, midnight 18 April, 16 in 2006 and 12 in 2005. They are very small numbers if you look at fatalities, so I am not sure if the variation is significant. It would be better if it was zero, obviously.

Getting back to your comment about the proliferation of signs, I would agree that signs sometimes seem to be the only solution that anyone comes up with for everything. I guess one could say that we put them up or allow them to be put up, but I can tell you that we knock back many, many more requests than we ever agree to. So there is a bit of a dilemma about how to manage signs.

Certainly putting ones outside the barriers is not acceptable if they, in themselves, present a hazard. I use the Geelong Road a lot, so I would be very aware of the ones you mentioned. I know the areas you are mentioning, but next time I am going down to, hopefully, see the Cats win — —

Mr MULDER — You were not there on the weekend.

Mr ANDERSON — I was there on the weekend; don't worry, I am there every week. Let us not get into that; I am feeling depressed already.

The CHAIR — It was good to see that a lot of extra barriers have now been rolled out in the last 12 months, which is good.

Mr ANDERSON — Yes, it has been thousands of kilometres around the state. Let us hope that that sort of program continues. It does not help pedestrians much, but I guess we are off the subject.

Mr BISHOP — Going back to the first point, if you have a project within those guidelines, how do you go about a safety audit? I am pursuing this issue, but it is one that the committee was quite strong on during the road toll report as well as the one on crashes involving roadside objects.

Mr ANDERSON — There are a number of stages. Let us say it is a large project — let us say it is the Deer Park bypass or one of the new projects on the Calder, or whatever — the first thing you need is independence. You cannot have the people doing the planning or the design or the construction doing the audit; you need independent and qualified safety auditors. We would tend to use contractors; companies which are specifically in the audit business. There is an Austroads guide to how to do an audit at all the different stages, and we expect them to follow that practice.

For some of our smaller projects that the regions do, we can use a different region to do the audit, to try to keep the overall costs under control. They tend to be fairly quick audits, but we do like a bit of competition between our regions, so we might get the people from the Ballarat area to look at a project that is being done in Geelong, and vice versa, and we also get our central design group to look at some of the designs. They all follow the same audit guidelines, though.

The CHAIR — We had better push on because I am mindful that the time has got away.

Mr ANDERSON — Then there are the four recommendations that were supported in principle.

Mr MAVROYENI — I refer to recommendation 3:

That the Minister for Roads and Ports —

at that time —

recommends to the federal Office of Road Safety that a review of speed tolerances in Australian design rule 18.5.1.1.2 relating to speedometers is required as a matter of urgency.

An amendment to the Australian design rules was introduced in November 2004 to deliver on that recommendation.

Recommendation 6 was:

That the minister for planning and local government ensure that all municipalities develop a road safety plan that meets the needs of all road users.

In fact, VicRoads has provided some seed funding to local government to assist with the development of its strategies. As you can see, 72 of the 79 municipalities have implemented strategies and action plans. A lot of them have employed road safety officers, and in addition to that, some of them have employed what they call road safety champions — not the full role of a road safety officer but going some way towards that. So there has been a lot of development in that area.

The CHAIR — George, what has happened to the other 7 of the 79?

Mr MAVROYENI — They are part way through the process of developing their strategy, and one of them has chosen not to. I think it is a very small borough. It is just too small to worry about, I think.

Mr ANDERSON — We cannot speak for them, but that is just some factual information we can give you, that there is one that is not going to bother, but there will be 78 of the 79.

Mr MULDER — David, the money for the ‘implement local road safety strategies’ is not for the employment of road safety officers; it is just to document the strategy, is that right?

Mr ANDERSON — Yes.

Mr MULDER — Council employs the officers out of their own — —

Mr ANDERSON — Yes. Some of the councils have either advertised for someone who is already trained in that area or they have redesignated the role of someone on the staff to focus on that area. We are providing some matching funding for them to do some of the projects within their strategy, and there is a limit to how much you can do. Essentially we would like to see some of the councils’ own resources just refocused a bit so that they get a better safety outcome. Most councillors I talk to do not have a problem with that approach.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 10 is:

That compulsory testing for the presence of alcohol and other drugs be introduced for pedestrians involved in a road crash who present to hospital.

I understand that in the 1980s all people involved in a crash who attended hospital would be blood-tested, but since then there has been a significant drop-off in the blood sampling that has been undertaken. A study was undertaken to assess blood sampling in the year 2002, I think — it was around that year that it was undertaken.

In that study some 440 samples were taken. About 40 per cent of those who could have been sampled were sampled, so that was a significant reduction. Out of that I think only 1 per cent related to pedestrian blood sampling — a significant drop-off. My understanding is that doctors are not that interested in undertaking a whole lot of blood sampling. They are continuing to undertake sampling for drivers and riders — —

Mr ANDERSON — Where they have to. We keep getting pushed back a bit by their saying that it is sometimes better to carry out the treatment than waste time taking blood, and it is pretty hard to argue, I suppose, with medicos, particularly if you are a once-upon-a-time civil engineer.

Mr MAVROYENI — Recommendation 13 is:

That breathalyser units be available at all licensed premises and their use encouraged

There have been some initiatives to encourage the installation of breathalysers: RoadSafe kits were issued to community road safety councils and through local government to help promote that, and there is also a program introduced by the TAC to fund the installation of a number of breathalysers at various premises.

Mr ANDERSON — One of your terms of reference is to revisit any recommendation that was not supported by the government at the time. There is only one of those, and that was to do with the definition of ‘intoxication’. Last year we commissioned some work to see if we could make progress in this area. There are a lot of words on that slide, but at the end of the day we were not successful. There are still problems in trying to find a legal definition of ‘intoxication’, because it involves not only having a substance on board but behaving in a certain way, and that is fairly subjective and very difficult to get agreement across the country.

Mr MULDER — On the breath-testing stations at licensed premises: if someone was to use one of those, get out and drive and then prove to be over the limit in a car, is there a ‘reasonable steps’ defence there, do you know, or has that been tested at all?

Mr ANDERSON — If the device showed them to be under?

Mr MULDER — To be under, and they got out and drove.

Mr ANDERSON — I think there are usually warnings on those that say your BAC reading can still increase. If you have just skulled your last few shots, or whatever the kids drink now, as long as you have not got mouth alcohol and you test yourself, your blood alcohol can still go up. There are usually a whole poultice of warnings that say, ‘This is only a guide, and you can go up or down from here’. I am not aware of any case that has gone one way or the other on that.

Mr MAVROYENI — David, I understand that the director of liquor licensing has been requested to develop some guidelines to help determine whether a person is in a state of intoxication or not. That is a piece of work that still has to be done.

Mr ANDERSON — That is in our submission. We thought we would also present — again, it is all in the submission — some other initiatives that have been implemented. I think the committee is well aware of the concept of the Safe System approach both from your observations overseas and other presentations that you have had. It is now becoming a bit more mature as a thought process and as a system that people are beginning to understand, that it is a balance between the drivers, the vehicles, the speed limit and the environment.

What we are debating at the moment is that we really need to get this system in balance. I do not think we can afford — this is a personal view; it can be a VicRoads view, therefore, but is no further than that — we have got to make sure that we get all of this system in balance. I do not think in the long run it is advisable to continue to reduce speed limits. A transport system is meant to get people and goods from A to B, and we have got to make sure that it remains efficient.

It might be heretical to say something like that to this committee, but I think we need to get the agencies that we work with and local government to understand that there is this balance. Yes, we could reduce speed limits to 30 km/h and 25 km/h and all that sort of stuff, but, hell, are we not losing sight of the overall purpose of having a system in the first place?

Mr MULDER — David, there is a review of speed zones being conducted. Whereabouts is that at the moment?

Mr ANDERSON — That is a review by the speed limits advisory group. They have made their recommendations. We have endorsed all of those, I think, and they are with government at the moment. My understanding is that they would intend to make an announcement reasonably soon, but I guess they have got a lot of other things on their plate at the moment. In general it was fairly positive.

As you know, there are a few bits and pieces that need to be improved. The conspicuity of signage in some areas — we are already trying to deal with that. We have still got funding from the school speed zones project — there were savings in that program. We are continuing to look at sites and improve the conspicuity of some signs where it is necessary.

We are also trying to address some of the areas — you nominated one in Colac, but there are a few others, actually only about half a dozen — where we need to try and rationalise the speed zones. The review will give us some guidance in that area, but it will still be a bit of a dilemma for the community to do that, because there will be some areas where people will not want the speed limit to be increased. But you might have to, just to smooth things out a bit. No doubt you will have some first-hand experience of that.

Here is the graph of impact speed and the risk of death which I mentioned earlier. It clearly shows, not surprisingly, that lower speeds reduce the risk dramatically, but again we have got to keep the whole system in balance. For pedestrians, though, we do not have the vehicle as part of it, so where we have got pedestrian areas, we have got to either separate the pedestrians from the vehicles via things like signalised crossings, pedestrian refuges or other

devices like that, or if they are really heavy activity centres, then we may have to look at speed limits, but I get the feeling that we have probably stretched it as far as we can in terms of reducing speed limits — a personal view.

In the report we go through some of the initiatives that are part of this Safe System approach, but in the interests of time, Chairman, I will not go through them in detail here. There is also more and more support for walking. You will notice that the health agencies are pushing obesity and all that sort of stuff, so we are aware of those pressures. With the Disability Discrimination Act requirements, there is a fairly large program going on in Victoria to meet the requirements of what is federal legislation, and Victoria is pretty much up to scratch in doing that. But again, many of those are to do with pedestrians.

Dwell on Red is where you have an intersection. Normally in Victoria if there is no traffic, one set of lights is green and the other is red. There is some evidence to suggest we should trial, particularly late at night and particularly around licensed premises, a concept where if there is no traffic, all the lights go to red in all directions. This means that if a drunk pedestrian staggers across a road somewhere at one of those sites, then vehicles at least will be faced by a red light. We do not know whether they will work in Victoria, but we are doing a trial.

On opportunities for improvement, the central activity district of Melbourne in particular has a very high pedestrian rate still, and we want to work with the City of Melbourne to try some new things. Scramble crossings are those intersections where you can cross every way when the lights go red all around. There is one at the corner of Elizabeth Street and Flinders Street at the moment, but we would like to work with the City of Melbourne to see if we can try a few more, and maybe that is applicable for some of the major country or regional centres as well.

Mr MULDER — Have any studies been conducted in relation to one-way traffic in some of the more metropolitan roads and streets?

Mr ANDERSON — Not from the pedestrian safety point of view. I think we probably need to look at one-way systems a bit more for other reasons.

Mr MULDER — Traffic flow?

Mr ANDERSON — Traffic flow and public transport flow. It is certainly a technique that is used in many other cities, but for whatever reason Melbourne has never done all that much other than in the central area.

On shopping precincts, early work was done in Stonnington, and a few of the Walk Safe programs seem to have been reasonably successful. We tried some time-based 40 kilometre-per-hour speed zones. I think they were generally successful in terms of community acceptance. Probably one of them we could have done just a bit better, but we accept that we are far from perfect as an organisation, but there is probably more work to be done.

We are trying to do an evaluation of those 40 zones, as to whether they actually do reduce pedestrian injuries. Again, I will not go through this in the interests of time.

As to vehicles, I think we mentioned those a couple of times. We think there are huge gains to be made in road safety by having better vehicles, and there are suggestions here to investigate the benefits of applying a premium on injury insurance policies for light trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles. That is an interesting area to get involved with, but we will just leave that with you.

Alcohol: there is still more that can be done around licensed premises, and there are some other ideas in here that we would like the committee to consider. We are not saying that they are not without problems, but it would be interesting to get other people's views on those ideas.

I am not sure if I should keep going through these. We might just leave those in the submission.

Mr MULDER — If the fencing outside licensed premises could be combined with outside dining, that would probably be something that operators of licensed premises would be happy to support?

Mr ANDERSON — Yes, I think so. When you think of all the coffee ads that are going up on fences anyway, I think there is some real scope for those, particularly at the corner pubs.

The CHAIR — There is one other quick issue that Terry alluded to before, about pedestrians obeying road rules. There is the use of things such as ear plugs and mobile phones by pedestrians, who are either not hearing

traffic or are completely oblivious to what is going on around them. That is obviously something that has crept in over the last two or three years. Could we have your comments? Is VicRoads addressing that type of situation?

Mr ANDERSON — I am not sure. Is the committee addressing it in the distraction review? We are not doing anything specifically about that at this stage. Certainly there are a lot of joggers and people walking about who are listening to things, but the answer is no, we are not doing anything at this stage.

The CHAIR — I think a young lass was killed by a tram only 12 or 18 months ago in the central activities area, with an iPod or something in her ears. This is obviously very relevant to what we are looking at at the present time. When this was done in 1999 I think the issues — —

Mr ANDERSON — They would not have been such an issue. They might have had portable CD players then, but certainly not iPods.

Mr MAVROYENI — We do not have information on the size of the problem at this stage.

The CHAIR — If there are not other questions we will leave you, because we have another group coming in at 1 o'clock. Thank you again to VicRoads — to David and George — for your input.

Mr ANDERSON — Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.