

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike in Victoria

Melbourne – Monday 1 September 2025

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WITNESS

Glenn Weir, Assistant Commissioner, Road Policing Command, Victoria Police.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome members of the public watching via the live broadcast and in the public gallery.

To kick off, we will get committee members to introduce themselves to you, starting with Mrs Deeming on the screen.

Moira DEEMING: Thank you. Moira Deeming, Western Metropolitan Region.

Gaelle BROAD: Hi. I am Gaelle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

Katherine COPSEY: Katherine Copsey, Member for Southern Metropolitan.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Member for Northern Victoria.

Richard WELCH: Richard Welch, Member for North-East Metro.

The CHAIR: All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing, and then transcripts will be made public on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, can you please state your full name and the organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

Glenn WEIR: Certainly. My name is Glenn Charles Weir. I am the Assistant Commissioner for Road Policing with Victoria Police.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you. We now welcome your opening comments but ask they be kept to around 10 to 15 minutes to ensure plenty of time for discussion and questions.

Glenn WEIR: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for the opportunity to appear before the inquiry to provide a policing perspective in relation to road strike impacting wildlife. On behalf of Victoria Police, I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to Elders past and present. I would also like to extend that respect to all Aboriginal people here with us today, in person or streaming online.

I previously stated my role, and as such I am responsible for policies and practice regarding community safety on Victoria's roads. Our roles and responsibilities at VicPol in relation to wildlife road strike incident response include: responding to emergency calls for service where a vehicle has collided with an animal and an emergency police response is required, assuming the role of the control agency for road rescue emergencies and other road emergencies under the *State Emergency Management Plan*, coordinating with other emergency services as necessary and including wildlife rescuers if the animal requires care, euthanising seriously injured animals on compassionate grounds, and recording and investigating all reported collisions unless there is no

injury to any party and the owner of any damaged property can be notified of the collision within a reasonable time.

Responding to these events is only one part of Victoria Police's road safety role. Road trauma prevention is a core component of our broader commitment to protecting life and property and to ensuring community safety. Victoria Police's goal, along with our road safety partners, is to bring the annual road fatalities to zero. This vision aligns with the global road safety movement known as Vision Zero, which is based on the principle that no person should be killed or seriously injured on the road network, and we aim to achieve this by 2050, with the first step of halving road deaths by 2030. These might sound like ambitious objectives, but the alternative would be to require us to tolerate a certain level of death or injury on our roads, and we cannot accept that. There is no tolerable level of road trauma, and in my view we should be continuing to devote all of our efforts to reducing road trauma as much as possible.

Victoria has a proud tradition and history of innovation in road safety practices and outcomes. Specifically, we have been a global leader in road safety with many world firsts to our credit, including mandatory seatbelt laws, introduced in 1970; random breath testing being introduced in 1976; road safety speed and red-light cameras, introduced in 1986; roadside drug testing, developed and introduced first in the world in Victoria in 2004; and more recently, distracted driver and seatbelt detection cameras introduced by the Department of Justice and Community Safety in 2023. These innovations have translated to a road fatality rate that has been amongst the lowest in the world. This is still the case today, but we are trending in the wrong direction. For reasons which remain somewhat unclear, Australia's road trauma rate has steadily increased since 2020, the end of the pandemic, which is the year in which Victoria had a record low number of road fatalities. The increase in lives lost on our roads coincided with our emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic response and seems to reflect changes in public behaviour and attitude, especially on the roads, where people seem to be taking greater risks and making avoidable mistakes.

To tackle this problem, in December 2024 I launched the *Victoria Police Road Safety Strategy*, which goes from 2024 to 2028. This publicly available strategy sets out Victoria Police's approach to preventing road trauma. It encourages a highly visible whole-of-workforce effort to address the leading contributors to crash frequency and severity. In road safety we call these behaviours the fatal five: speeding; driving with impairment, either drugs or alcohol; distraction; fatigue; and failing to wear a seatbelt – still the most significant causes of road trauma, with speed still the single leading causation factor. The strategy also acknowledges that we work closely with our key partners in a formalised Victorian road safety partnership. The partnership comprises Victoria Police, the Department of Transport and Planning, the Transport Accident Commission, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Health. These agencies collectively reflect the components of the safe system approach which continues to be used by our partnership to holistically manage all the risks associated with road use. The system describes four interrelated pillars that work together to prevent crashes that result in death or serious injury, and those pillars are: safe vehicles, safe people, safe speeds and safe roads.

So far this year the fatal five have contributed to the death of 196 people who have lost their lives on Victorian roads – that is six more than at the same time last year. Of course these numbers represent people. That is why I never talk about the road toll. I talk about lives lost, because it is not a toll that needs to be paid when you go on a road; it is talking about a person who has lost their life.

We look at the contributing factors for these fatal collisions, and we see them generally fall into three categories. Sixty per cent of lives lost on Victorian roads are a result of single forms of noncompliance – that is, one type of illegal behaviour, such as low-level speeding, failing to give way, using a hand-held device or failing to wear a seatbelt. Twenty-five per cent are as a result of extreme behaviours. It is often misunderstood. People think that the extreme behaviours contribute to much more of the road trauma than they do. These behaviours include deliberate reckless driving, exceeding the speed limit to a gross degree and driving while impaired by drugs or alcohol. The remaining 15 per cent of road fatalities fall into a category described as system failure. These incidents involve environmental contributors such as defects in the road environment, debris, fallen trees or an animal or other object on the road. The final category, system failure, suggests the collision was caused by some unavoidable contributor. Whilst that is partly correct – that is, the cause of the collision may have been unavoidable – if the safe system is operating optimally, then the severity of that collision should not result in death or serious injury. So the collision might still occur, but if other factors are in

play then it should not result in death or serious injury. The safe system idea, to put it simply, is that the collision may well occur but no person should be killed or maimed as a result.

To give the committee an idea of the significance of road trauma in Victoria, Victoria Police records indicate that for the five-year period to 31 December 2024, there were 1182 fatal crashes, resulting in 1265 fatalities and many more serious injuries. Of these 1182 fatal collisions, we believe that approximately 20 people – or 1.7 per cent of all people killed – were killed in collisions where striking or avoiding a wild animal was identified as one of the contributing factors. Looking at the same five-year period, Victoria Police recorded a total of 921 injury collisions involving a wild animal being struck, and of these injury collisions, predominantly the most involved was a kangaroo or wallaby, at 68 per cent. The majority of these collisions involving wildlife road strike occurred on high-speed roads, with speed limits of 80 kilometres an hour or higher – 74 per cent of those collisions occurred on that type of road. And the collisions mostly occurred in the twilight hours of dawn or dusk – so 4 am to 8 am and 6 pm to 10 pm – with an increase in daylight collisions with wildlife occurring on weekends, which I think is more about the road traffic than the wildlife traffic. They do not seem to have weekends, but we did notice a spike on weekends. The correlation between speed and both increased likelihood and severity of a collision is well established by research and reflected in road trauma data. That is why excessive and inappropriate speeding features foremost amongst the fatal five areas of focus for road policing.

While wildlife road strike comprises a small portion of the overall number of road trauma incidents that Victoria Police respond to, we recognise this is an issue of public concern and I welcome the opportunity to answer any of the committee's questions to provide further perspective on the matter if you have any questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much for that. We will go to questions now, and we will start with Mr Welch.

Richard WELCH: Thank you for coming today; we appreciate it. Just one clarifier on the causes: speed is one of the causes, but in that context are you describing speed as in excess of the legal speed or just speed generically?

Glenn WEIR: Generally we look at speed post the limit but also in terms of driving to the conditions – environmental and all other factors. The speed limit might be 60 kilometres an hour on a road, but if there are a heap of pedestrians there or something, or it is pouring rain – speed as a factor takes in a number of things. It is still the overarching lead cause of trauma in Victoria – speed.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. You had some good stats on the number of animal-related incidents that you do. Do the police put much into reconciling that with what Wildlife Victoria are doing? How does it factor into your operational model?

Glenn WEIR: We look at reported collisions and then look for all involvement. Animal strike is one of the categories that we categorise collisions under. In terms of looking at what other agencies deal with, either wildlife rescue, Parks or anyone else, we do not corroborate or look at that in terms of what they are seeing, no.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. Obviously one of the things we are, as an inquiry, aiming to do is look at different models of how we either mitigate the problem or help resolve the problem. The issue of cleaning up after animals' carcasses or euthanising animals – is that a role you would prefer not to be within police duties, or where do you see that?

Glenn WEIR: Yes, I suppose, but often instead of the agency of last resort we are the agency of first resort, and we are 24/7, 365 across the whole of the state in a response mode. If there is risk or potential and we are called to something, we will attend where we can. If there is a large animal strike – a large kangaroo struck and sitting in the middle of the road and it is deceased – we are not going to not attend. We are not going to leave it there. We are going to engage with either local council or some other local service to remove the animal. We are going to go through and search to see, if it is kangaroos, if there are joeys afoot or in the pouch. It is well established. We deal with this all the time. Cattle, sheep, stock – wandering stock is a big problem in some areas. Cows are big, you hit them, it is not good for anyone. In the absence of a 24/7 response across the whole of the state by another agency, I cannot see how we are not going to be heavily involved in it.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. Last question is: do you think the operating model of knowing who to call or who to alert is clear enough, or is there –

Glenn WEIR: For the public?

Richard WELCH: Well, both for the public but for yourselves as well. If the call comes in, what do you do with it?

Glenn WEIR: There is an assessment made at our communications centre where the call goes to. If it is wandering stock, local government or the ranger from local government might be the best place to call. If there is a collision involved and the road is blocked or there are injuries or there is an animal that might need to be euthanised, it is more probable than not that we will attend, because by the time another agency gets there, either there is massive traffic congestion, the animal is suffering or there is an unintended consequence. Sometimes we do not want people walking around on a roadway, particularly if an animal has been injured and is in distress. People focus on that animal because people are compassionate, and I understand that, but they put themselves at greater risk. I gave the data – a large proportion of the collisions occur on rural roads that may or may probably be one lane and not very well lit; there would be no streetlights. It is a dangerous environment for people to be out of their cars walking around on a road, so we will respond as quickly as we can and deal with the issue.

Richard WELCH: I guess the point I was getting into, though, is then: from your operating procedures you have got a nice flow chart of who you contact when?

Glenn WEIR: Our communication centre would be contacted, particularly for wildlife rescue because it is fairly disparate across the state, and people act with best intentions.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Welch. I will pick up from there. It is probably a good lead-in to my questions. We have heard from a number of different witnesses in the rescue space who will sometimes call on the police for assistance, and there seems to be some parts of Victoria where in the local communities police are willing to assist with things like euthanasia and then others where they say, probably understandably, that it is not their role. Are there any sorts of consistent guidelines or advice or training given to police officers on how to deal with the animal component of this where a human life is not affected?

Glenn WEIR: There are certainly instructions on how to euthanise animals, should that be required. I mean, there are a number of factors. No two situations are the same. It will depend on service demand, what else is going on, availability of staff and availability of other services, and the supervisor will make that call as to whether police respond in the first instance or not. Where we can, we do not want people being at risk or motorists being at risk, either those who are involved in the incident or others, on a particular bit of road. We certainly do not want the animal being at risk. So we will make an assessment there. I mean, we euthanise animals quite a lot. We abide by, where we can, the national protocol for the destruction of animals, certainly around kangaroos and wallabies. Where we can be, we are guided. We have our manual, which certainly gives instruction and gives significant detail about what should occur when faced with a certain scenario. I think it is well understood and is well adhered to, and generally, in the absence of firm evidence and particular issues, can I hand on heart say that we always get it right? No, of course not. Will we always attend where we are called to? No, we cannot, because as I said, it is that balance between service demand and availability. But overall, I think when our members are called to deal with issues like this, they make judgement calls pretty well and they deal with things as best they can.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you. Wildlife Victoria have told us that they had over 150,000 reported incidents in 2024 and that in some instances people will call Wildlife Victoria as well as VicPol or 000. Do you have any data on (1) calls you get about wildlife, road strike or displaced wildlife and (2) calls where an agency or a group like Wildlife Victoria or another rescue group might call on you?

Glenn WEIR: No. I could take those on notice. So you are asking around, one, issues that we are called to specifically in relation to collisions or other road strikes – I mean, if there is a road strike, it is a collision – and then the second part is where we are called to assist other agencies. I would have to check this, but anecdotally, I would suggest – prior to this role, I was the assistant commissioner for eastern region for three years, which goes from Hawthorn to Wodonga to Mallacoota, so it is a large part of the eastern half of the state, where this is a significant issue – that we quite often get called by other agencies, particularly volunteer agencies, who are

called but cannot respond, because they are volunteers. But I would have to take that on notice to provide the data specifically to those two questions.

The CHAIR: That would be great. Thank you. Just back on my other question about training, is there any training given to officers on humane euthanasia or pouch checking? I have seen some instances on social media where police officers will have rescued an animal, which is great if they are doing the work to take them in, but is there any formal training given to them on how to deal with wildlife that comes into care?

Glenn WEIR: Our Victoria Police manual has a specific animals chapter to deal with our care responsibilities around dealing with dead or injured animals, and we certainly refer to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* as our guiding overarching legislation. It gives us the authority to destroy an animal, but that is a last resort if we believe they would suffer if they continue to remain alive, or it also gives us the power to seize animals, and that is more in the in the cruelty space. But our people are humans as well. The national protocols quite clearly outline that if there is a joey at foot or in the pouch and the mother is deceased, then those joeys should be euthanised as well, and our people make judgement calls there around: 'Well, are they better off? Can we rescue the joey and then get it to an animal rescue?' I am certainly not going to criticise any of my people for that.

The CHAIR: Me neither.

Glenn WEIR: No, I did not think you would. But it is perhaps a process where the protocol, which is just a guiding protocol, is something that we tend to follow most of the time but, hand on heart, not all the time.

The CHAIR: Yes, of course. Thank you. Given the road policing role that you have, has there been any sort of integration of intentional patrols in wildlife hotspots? If not, is that something that you would support?

Glenn WEIR: I would look at anything that is holistically around keeping people safe on the roads. That is my focus: keeping people safe on the roads. If that means limiting the amount of danger they are exposed to by collisions with animals, that would be something. But holistically, it is around keeping people safe on the roads. But we do not have any specific tasks. There would be warning notes. I heard the previous witness around notifications from online platforms for any hazard – broken down car, collision, animal – but it is not something we do as a matter of course, no.

The CHAIR: Obviously part of our work as the committee is coming up with a report with recommendations, and I think something that we are trying to work out is the role that everyone has to play in this space. Do you see Victoria Police continuing to have a role in working with agencies and rescuers moving forward in ways to address this problem?

Glenn WEIR: Absolutely. I think our cooperative arrangements with wildlife rescue agencies are different all around the state depending on who the agencies are. In the absence, as I said before, of a 24/7 go-to agency to provide that holistic care, response and advice, local arrangements will be in place, but our comms centre coordinates that. That will continue, no doubt, and if we can enhance it, yes, we will.

The CHAIR: Great. That is my time. Thank you so much for that – really helpful. We will go to Mrs Deeming.

Moirra DEEMING: Thank you. I have got a couple of questions. I was thinking about how police resources are stretched pretty thin anyway, and there are so many people that we have heard from that are actually keen to help. They are already volunteering, and sometimes they have asked for legislated cover in terms of being able to set up something to keep themselves safe on the road. I was just wondering about whether you think there is capacity for removing it completely from the police if necessary and you could have like a register of people that are on call for a particular region that have the training. My question is about whether you think that this can be completely taken out of the police's hands with the correct legislation and training, or do you think there has to be an element of that remains with the police?

Glenn WEIR: I think there will always be an element of us responding to incidents on the road, whether it is a fallen tree, a dead kangaroo or a car collision, because whilst people might be authorised to go and attend the issue at hand in terms of animals, there is always the overarching risk of that inherently dangerous component of working on the roads. Police, in my view, would always attend as part of that response. It may be an

enhanced response through a third party that currently does not exist, through a more enhanced, funded and coordinated approach, but I think there is always going to be a role for police in responding to those types of incidents.

Moira DEEMING: Thank you. Just to be clear, it is because of the safety issues around working on the road?

Glenn WEIR: Yes. It is very dangerous, as we know. We do it every day. It is an inherently dangerous place, particularly, like the evidence I gave earlier, around the timing of the propensity of most of the strikes, so either dawn or dusk, when it is dark and really dangerous. I doubt we could ever remove the responsibility completely from us having anything to do with it.

Moira DEEMING: All right. Fantastic. That was my main question. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks, Mrs Deeming. We will go to Ms Broad.

Gaelle BROAD: Thank you very much. Given the incidents of last week, we all just want to say thank you so much for your service and for your contribution here. Just how big an issue is wildlife road strike? When you have so many competing issues on the roads, how significant is it?

Glenn WEIR: It is certainly something we consider, and we respond and we investigate. Part of my command is the major collision investigation unit, in terms of investigating fatalities. There is currently one active investigation that may have involved avoidance of a kangaroo, but it is still very much preliminary and not cut and dried.

Gaelle BROAD: Was that near Macedon?

Glenn WEIR: Yes, in July. When I was made aware of this committee and asked to appear, it was something where I went, 'Ah, okay.' It was not something that I thought, 'Yeah, that makes sense, because it's an issue that I'm seeing every day.' That said, there is – and I see it every day – not an increase, but I grew up in the bush, so it is something that I am alive to in the Wimmera, particularly with our weather conditions, with drought conditions in some parts of the state and the movement of animals seeking water and across roads. Yes, it is an issue, but it is not at the top of the concerns that confront me on a daily basis.

Gaelle BROAD: And just from your observations and your understanding of how it works currently, do you have any actions that you think need to be taken to manage this issue?

Glenn WEIR: There are a number of treatments that you look at, because it is like pedestrians or bicycles and cars – the best thing for them to do is be apart, and I suspect it is the same with animals. But of course putting infrastructure in place that limits animals' ability to be separate from the roads is expensive. We have the second-largest road network in Australia in our state, so to do that would be particularly problematic. I was thinking about this, because I thought that question might come up, if there was one thing that we could do straightaway to limit the road strike, and I really struggled to come up with something, either technology or infrastructure. It is something that is not immediately apparent and would probably be extremely expensive, which would be a real challenge.

Gaelle BROAD: So just saying that then, wildlife corridors – would you want to see those separate to roads?

Glenn WEIR: If we could separate all road users – and I will include animals as road users, along with pedestrians and everyone else – in the ideal world. But it is fantasy, if I can be frank, because I just do not think it is achievable.

Gaelle BROAD: With education programs, just from your experience with roads, what do you think would be effective? Because we have heard from other witnesses about the importance of educating people. How do you think that could work?

Glenn WEIR: Enhanced education could work and help to mitigate the risk. But of course we are not educating everyone involved in this conversation because we cannot educate the animals, so that is the problem. We supply people using the road network with a whole range of messaging. We still cannot stop everyone drink driving, yet it would seem obvious not to do that. We cannot stop people speeding or not

wearing seatbelts. So the ability for people to understand a message we are trying to give them – I mean, most local people across Victoria know where the problem areas are, what the time is and that you need to keep a look out, but it is the random nature of such things that is the real problem. So education would never be wasted, and signage and all of those things that can go towards increasing people's ability to understand any risk on the road. But yes, it is a long road to get to anywhere that will have an impact, I think.

Gaelle BROAD: Just with kangaroos, I guess they are very unpredictable and can come out very quickly. We have heard about road verges and clearance. Do you have any comment on the importance of maintaining a bit of distance from the edge of the road?

Glenn WEIR: The importance of maintaining the road network for a whole range of things around visibility of a whole range of risks that are on the road – road surfaces, road verges on the side, vision ahead – is vital. The whole road network, the maintenance of the road network, the health of the road network is certainly a component of it, and it is an absolutely vital way to drive down road trauma, not just in terms of animals but in terms of a whole range of things. So yes, it is vital.

Gaelle BROAD: Yes, I totally agree with you. I will not go into it, but I think it is an area that I hear a lot of people's feedback on. I want to understand too: what part do police play currently in the response? You talked about what is known, but when someone has an incident, they hit an animal or have an accident, who should they call first?

Glenn WEIR: There are a whole range of things. If the animal is deceased and off the road and the people are not injured and their car is okay, if it is a wild animal, a wildlife strike, then there is no requirement for them to do anything legally. But of course if you hit an animal at speed, you would get a hell of a fright, so I would always encourage people, where safe, to pull over, take stock, check their vehicle safely and, if they can, check on the animal. Of course we do not want people, as I said, wandering onto the road and off the road, because we do not want the potential solution to cause a bigger problem than exists. If someone is injured, naturally people should call 000 for a response, and that will be a multi-agency response involving Ambulance Vic, ourselves and FRV if necessary. Then if there is an injured animal in the incident, well, then an assessment will be made about what needs to be done: who needs to do what? Is it a rescue? Is it a euthanasia scenario? That is all. It is hard to say, 'This is what our response looks like,' because everything is different – where it is, when it happens, at what time, what is involved. But essentially it is something we do every day, and it generally works pretty well.

Gaelle BROAD: Can I just ask one more?

The CHAIR: Yes, of course.

Gaelle BROAD: I am just interested: we have heard a number of different mitigation measures talked about – virtual fencing, overpasses, underpasses. What about street lighting? Because we have a lot of incidents that do happen in rural regional areas. Do you have any comment about what difference that may make?

Glenn WEIR: Again, it probably comes back to a similar answer: to keeping things clear. Any illumination that enables people to see further and with more clarity is better. But of course, as I said, having the second-largest road network in Australia, to properly light our entire road network is something that is probably not feasible. But in answer to your question, if I won Powerball, yes, it would be a really valuable way forward.

Gaelle BROAD: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Great. Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: Thank you. We heard from Vets for Compassion earlier in the inquiry, who have the darting service and can come out and deploy tranquilliser darts, and I was not really aware of the restrictions on that. I am just interested if you have got even a ballpark around the alleviation of the strain on police resources that responders like Vets for Compassion and Wildlife Rescuers make, in terms of them being called instead of the police to respond to these incidents.

Glenn WEIR: Yes, I suppose it is one of timeliness. We are not going to let an incident play out while we wait a couple of hours, perhaps, for someone to attend, because it is unfair on the animal and it creates greater

danger. So it is a difficult question to answer; it is sort of ‘how long is a piece of string’? As I said in answer to Ms Broad’s question, every scenario is different. Our guidelines, as I said before, around euthanising animals are quite rigid: it is a last resort, no-one wants to do it, and if there is another option around a veterinary service or wildlife rescue we will certainly explore that. But it is a really difficult question to answer because no two incidents are the same.

Katherine COPSEY: Yes. Just on another part of that question – I suppose it is hard because these are calls the police are not then getting – do you have a sense of how much of the response burden those organisations are taking which might otherwise fall to Victoria Police?

Glenn WEIR: No, I do not; we do not see the data that we do not get. We would be able to provide a better answer if those were all 000 responses, but of course the capacity of 000 would have to be factored into that, so that that would allow a really coordinated response. The people who need to attend would attend, and we would be able to keep really good data on how many calls there were – who went, when, how long it took, what was the result, where did it happen and are we seeing an increase in wildlife strike in that area. That is probably something we would go to either the DTP or local government to say, ‘Hey, we’re getting some issues here. Is there a need to look at fencing? Are animal numbers out of control? Are there any other factors?’ Because it is not much good tasking our people with shooing away kangaroos or whatever – it is not within our remit – but we would rather do something or be involved in the process rather than turn up to another collision that puts people at risk on the roads.

Katherine COPSEY: I do not know if there will be a clear answer to this one, but I am really interested in your observations around how you can interact with an organisation that has that overarching legislative guidance and support. I am thinking, for example, of the SES or the CFA and the benefits from your point of view of a structure like that and how that translates operationally compared to what you are having to do with various wildlife rescue services across the state at the moment.

Glenn WEIR: Our relationships and multi-agency response and coordination is really strong. It works really well. It gets tested every day because we use it every day for a whole range of emergencies. If there was the capability within another organisation to be a first responder in wildlife strike, that would be great. I do not think there is one currently, but if there was one to be funded and structured and set up, it would fall within the remit of other emergency services and we would deal with them in the same efficient way that we currently deal with all our emergency service partners.

Katherine COPSEY: Great. Just coming back to the main part of your work and avoiding death and injury on the roads, you spoke a lot about speed as a factor, and it is certainly something that we have heard quite a lot from various witnesses during this hearing so far. We have heard about ‘roo o’clock’ and the increased risk at dawn and dusk. Something that has been suggested is variable speed limits that might apply at times of higher risk. And I am just interested in your experience of where we have those in Victoria currently – for example, school zones. Do the majority of drivers respect and understand those? And do you think anything is gained from the novelty of that, or the awareness that you have to go at a certain speed at a certain time? How do drivers normally cope with that?

Glenn WEIR: Generally school zones are reasonably well complied with. We will enforce around where we get complaints or particularly at the start of school terms to make sure everyone is on the same page. The setting of speed zones is a matter for local government or DTP, depending on who owns the roads, and we always enforce to the speed limit that is set. So if speed limits were set because it was a particularly hot zone for animal strikes and there was a view by local government or the department that the speeds needed to be lowered to mitigate the risk, then we would assist that by having some enforcement. DJCS may assist by having some sort of automated enforcement there in terms of a camera, if it was fit for purpose. But yes, I mean, ultimately that is a matter to set the speed zone to those responsible bodies and then we would enforce around that.

Katherine COPSEY: But drivers are familiar with the concept of a variable speed limit, and it has not been a significant barrier to people obeying that.

Glenn WEIR: No. Again, it is an investment of infrastructure that is a matter for government. If they make that decision, we will certainly assist by educating or enforcing as necessary.

Katherine COPSEY: Great. And then just a couple of other things that have come up. We have heard the criteria that are used to determine blackspots are commonly taken from road toll or incident data around crashes. Would you see any problem, if we had good data about where there were really high frequencies of wildlife strike, in that being incorporated into safety decisions?

Glenn WEIR: No data is of no use; every dataset is useful. The ones that obviously concern us greatly are where it is a combination of road strike and trauma resulting in injury. But again, sometimes the difference between an injury or fatality or no injury is 5 metres with a bit of luck, so we target the behaviour that we know leads to road trauma. If we had that dataset – I mean, we would have that now. If it was an injury collision, we would have that data. But of course if there was a significant increase in road strike in a particular area, then our role in that – as well as all the other stuff engaging with agencies to limit it – is to try and moderate driver behaviour as well, particularly around compliance with speed zones. If there was a view that the speed zone should be dropped and the relevant authority took that, we would, as I said, do that by presence and enforcement. So yes, no data is wasted.

Katherine COPSEY: Just a final one, our previous witnesses spoke about road design and the design of roads that in and of itself makes speeding more difficult or makes high speeds more difficult to achieve. Generally speaking, given what we have seen in terms of the impact that speed has on your work, is that something that the government should be looking at more?

Glenn WEIR: Well, I did not quite finish engineering at uni, and we do engage with DTP a lot around this, so I would probably defer to them. Any mitigation treatment that can be placed on roads to keep people safer is something we would certainly encourage. You can put the best mitigation in, but it is the behaviour of people that is what needs to be mitigated the most.

Katherine COPSEY: Great. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Copsey. Does anyone have follow-up questions? Great. Thank you so much for making the time, especially at the moment. We really appreciate it.

Witness withdrew.