CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into cause of fatality and injury on Victorian farms

Canberra – 22 January 2004

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Witnesses

Mr C. Brooks, Team Leader, Road Safety, Research and Strategy (affirmed); and
Mr J. Henchy, Team Leader, Safety Statistics (sworn), Australian Transport Safety Bureau.
The CHAIR — Thank you, Jon and Chris, for giving us your time today. Under the powers conferred on this committee by the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act, this committee is empowered to take all evidence at these hearings on oath or affirmation.

I wish to advise all present at these hearings that all evidence taken by this committee, including submissions, is, under the provisions of the Constitution Act, granted immunity from judicial review. I also wish to advise witnesses that any comments made by witnesses outside the committee hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. We are an all-party parliamentary committee hearing evidence today in the inquiry into causes of fatality and injury on Victorian farms, and we welcome you.

I ask you to advise your full name and address and let us know if you are appearing in a private capacity or representing your organisation, and, if you are representing your organisation, the position you hold in that organisation.

Mr BROOKS — My name is Christopher Geoffrey Brooks, I am the team leader, road safety research and strategy, at the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, and I am here as an officer of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Canberra. The address is 15 Mort Street, Braddon, ACT.

Mr HENCHY — My name is Jonathan Patrick Henchy, I am here today representing the Australian Transport Safety Bureau with my colleague. The address of the bureau is 15 Mort Street, Braddon, and my position is team leader, which is a unit head of the transport safety statistics unit.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Your evidence will be taken down and become public evidence in due course. Could you please provide us with your presentation? Afterwards, if we could have some time for questions, that would be fantastic.

Mr BROOKS — Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will lead off. I would just like to note that Joe Motha, who was also going to appear, has had some personal responsibilities relating to deaths and funerals of close friends this week and so was unable to come.

We thank the committee for the opportunity to speak to you. The committee has asked us to talk particularly about transport accidents, both on and off farm. Our capacity to assist you with information about on-farm transport accidents will be limited because that is not really an area where the ATSB has responsibility or data. So we will be focusing mainly on deaths and injuries on public roads, of which unfortunately there are all too many among people who live and work on farms.

I will give a quick overview of rural road safety issues in general, and Jon will be speaking about data availability and some specific findings relating to people who live and work on farms.

Basically road crashes are a major cause of death and injury to people who live in rural areas. There is a common perception that it is visitors or tourists rather than the locals who are involved in rural crashes, but in fact most people who die on rural roads are rural residents. In Victoria in 2002, out of 211 rural fatalities there were 152 rural residents.

People who live and work in remote areas have a significantly higher road-death rate per 100 000 population than the rest of the community, and that is illustrated in the second of the slides in the series we have provided you with. For people in the other rural category, basically rural people not living in country towns, the overall road fatality rate is 19 deaths per 100 000 people per year, which is roughly double the rate for people who live in capital cities.

Looking at road fatality trends, I guess the good news is that particularly in Victoria — and I would refer the committee to figure 4 here — there has been a substantial reduction in the road fatality rate in the last couple of years, and that reduction has been much sharper than in the rest of Australia and in any other single jurisdiction.
There are a number of factors that contribute to the relatively high road fatality rate of rural residents. On average, compared with city people, they are driving more on roads with a speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour or more, and the faster you are going, the worse a crash if it occurs; they are driving more on roads with relatively low design standards; possibly they may need to drive further, although the data shows that the majority of road deaths for people who work on farms are occurring within about 50 kilometres of home; they are further from medical help if the worst happens; they do more of their driving on roads where police enforcement of speed, alcohol and seatbelt regulations is relatively sparse; and they often have very effective networks to alert them to any enforcement activity that is going on. So they wear seatbelts less often and the incidence of alcohol in road crashes is higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

And I should say, going back to the improvement in road fatalities in Victoria in the last couple of years — and Vicroads will probably have provided you with more detailed information on this — the improvement has been much better in urban areas than in rural areas, and we can provide further details on that if you would like.

Turning to the seventh of these graphs — I will work through this very quickly, and these are now talking about crash location rather than where people live — we can see that in slide 7 the involvement of alcohol is substantially higher in large towns and rural localities than it is in urban areas.

Turning to graph 8, for seatbelt use we see that the proportion of vehicle occupant fatalities involving people not wearing a seatbelt is much higher in rural localities than in urban areas, and there is a suggestion in that graph that it is a particular problem in small towns, with people perhaps belting up on the open road but feeling, ‘Well, why would you wear a belt if you are only driving at 60?’ You would wear a belt because, of course, a crash at 60 can very easily be fatal.

There is just one other graph I would like to draw your attention to — that is, no. 9 — which illustrates, based on Australian data, the relative risk of involvement in a fatal crash at different speeds. Broadly, it shows that for people travelling just 10 kilometres per hour above the average speed on a rural road, the risk of involvement in a serious casualty crash doubles, and it basically goes through the roof at about 20 kilometres per hour over the average speed; it is getting up to a risk multiplier of seven.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Is it the same for 60 kilometres an hour as for 100 kilometres an hour, or is that for 100 kilometres an hour?

Mr BROOKS — There is a very similar relationship at 60 kilometres an hour, where basically your casualty risk doubles with an extra 5 kilometres an hour; at 100 kilometres an hour it is double with an extra 10 kilometres an hour. The message from that is that not only extreme speeds but even moderate amounts of speeding involve a very significant increase in risk, and although the moderate speeding is less risky than the extreme speeds, there is a lot of it. So if you add up what is contributing to the totality of road trauma, vast numbers of people going a little bit over the speed limit can add up to as many casualties and deaths as the much smaller number of people going a lot over the speed limit. That is the key message there.

In terms of road environment, problems with the road are seldom listed as a cause of a crash, but we know that fatality rates and casualty rates are higher on lower-standard roads than they are on higher-standard roads. We know that the road standard and the road environment have a lot to do with the severity and consequences of any crash that occurs.

So we are talking here about multiple contributing factors and no single solution. There is a national consensus on directions forward in road safety which is summarised in the national road safety strategy and the current national road safety action plan, and I have included that in your folders. Very briefly, that puts a particular focus on three areas: the application of engineering measures to improve the safety of roads; speed management — that is, speed compliance and speed limits; and driver impairment — alcohol, drugs and fatigue.

The action plan, which has been endorsed by state, territory and federal transport ministers, says the first two of those — the road improvements and the speed management — are particularly important. With road improvements, it is not only looking at options that involve major upgrades but also emphasising mass applications of cost-effective safety-targeted measures, things like shoulder sealing, edge lining and roadside hazard clearances.

Mr INGRAM — ‘Roadside hazards’ as in trees?

Mr BROOKS — Yes, so hazard management can involve either getting rid of the hazard or, if you have no reason to get rid of it, putting up barriers to stop cars going into them. There is a range of extremely
cost-effective options. An indicator and evaluation of the federal road safety black spot program showed that the first few years of the current program, 1996 to 1998, came up with a benefit cost ratio of 14 to 1, so $14 in community benefit for every $1 outlaid on black spot applications.

I will wind up by saying Jon will speak briefly on this small monograph about road fatalities in the farming communities. It makes the point that most of those occurred within 50 kilometres of home. It made the point that they were happening in places where farmers feel comfortable and relaxed; they feel they are in a vehicle they know, in a good vehicle on a good road, and they know the conditions. They are very confident and sometimes over-confidence can be a problem. There may be some factors there that have common features with the on-farm crashes.

I do not know if this has been run in Victoria but I just note that a year or two ago New South Wales ran a very impressive series of advertisements focusing on the message that it is country people who die in country crashes. It was very simple — there was no preaching, no threats, no blood and gore; it was simply real people who had lost someone in a crash standing at the site and saying two or three words such as, ‘My brother’, ‘My best mate’ or, ‘My son’. I will hand over to Jon.

Mr HENCHY — Thank you, Chris. My area of responsibility in the ATSB is to run the databases for a number of transport modes, particularly air and road, and I will confine my comments today to road unless the committee wishes otherwise.

The ATSB has two databases. There is a very timely database which we source from the police which is right up to the month, so we have data to December 2003, which shows the reductions that Chris mentioned, particularly in Victoria, in the road toll. That has a limited amount of information. It does not include anything on farmers per se or farm workers.

There is another database which is more detailed and draws on coronial records, so it has full police reports; it has the results of toxicological examinations and the coroner’s verdict on the case and finding. That forms most of our fatal file, and that is the file we generally go into to do detailed analysis for any particular road safety issue.

However, it is important to note — I think Chris may have alluded to it — that basically all our databases only relate to fatalities that occur on public trafficable roads. They do not cover, for example, fatalities that are related to all terrain vehicles operating on a farm or people injured by plant machinery and equipment such as tractors flipping over, that sort of thing.

For example, if the tractor were being driven on a public road and a fatality or injury occurred, that would be recorded and in due course we would get the data and that would be put into the database. So the limitations are, firstly, it relates to on-road fatalities and secondly, information on the occupation of those killed and injured is extremely limited.

Occupational information is not always reported by the police; sometimes it is and sometimes it is not, so it is not a high priority. But location is picked up so we are able to pick up the location of the crash, the speed limit on the road — the road details are of concern: the type of road, the terrain, the visibility — a whole range of other factors.

The only study that has been done in recent times particularly relating to farmers and farm workers was done towards the end of June 1999 which drew on the fatal file I just mentioned, the coronial information, coupled with the Australian Bureau of Statistics information, which records basic information about the occupation of people killed for various causes including road cashes.

I draw your attention to a summary of the study, which was incidentally done by the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety. They drew on our database and the ABS database; and the federal Office of Road Safety, which was our predecessor, actually assisted with funding and provided some advice on analytical techniques and database methodology. The key finding are summarised there.

It shows that the main factors involved were alcohol, speed and fatigue. Chris mentioned the issue about 50 kilometres and it also draws attention to that — that most farm workers were killed within 50 kilometres of their homes, that the vast majority of the crashes were single-vehicle crashes and of those, most would be off road; I think run-off-roads in one form or another, in many cases hitting obstacles such as trees, culverts and other obstructions. It also pointed out that the single most effective measure that could be adopted would be for farmers to wear their seatbelts.
Chris mentioned earlier the high incidence of those not wearing seatbelts among those fatally injured, and the level of intoxication was also significantly higher than in the non-rural areas. They were the main findings. With that, I will wait for your questions.

Mr WALSH — On the issue of running into objects when they run off the road, one of the dilemmas we have is that under native vegetation laws now local government cannot cut down trees. Have you done any work on the changes that may have happened as we have gone to this regime where vegetation is closer to the side of the road than where it used to be?

Mr BROOKS — To my knowledge the ATSB has not but Austroads, which is the association of state, federal and also New Zealand roads and traffic authorities, has done some work in that area, not directly addressing that question but suggesting a matrix for the range of options that can be available, taking into account both the level of risk on a road and the environmental or heritage or other values of what is at the roadside and suggesting — I suppose it is a fairly simple-minded thing — that if you have an area of high risk and high environmental value, then you are going to look at options like barriers rather than removal. If you have an area of high risk and low environmental value, you are looking at clearance; and if you have low risk and low environmental value, you might leave things as they are. It is terribly simple but it is a rational way forward.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Have any studies been done on single-car accidents and any links made between rate of rural suicides and single-car accidents? We had one witness state previously that there was not necessarily as close a link as what some people may argue. Are there any national statistics?

Mr HENCHY — The issue of suicide is very interesting because it is one of the causes of death that we have specifically excluded from our accounts. These are supposed to be accidental or non-intentional type accidents. We have difficulty in ensuring that we take out all the suicides because coroners necessarily careful in ruling that the situation was a suicide.

When reading some police reports, as I do occasionally, you can see that it is fairly possible that there may well have been a suicide in a particular situation where they drive straight into a truck on a clear road or something like that or someone has driven straight into a tree. We are unable to do a detailed analysis for that reason, I guess. Does that answer your question?

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Yes, it does.

Mr McQUILTEN — What about older people on roads? I live in the country, and one of the things I notice is quite often you are going along at 100 kilometres an hour and you have to put the brakes on all of a sudden because an old lady is likely to be going at 40. I notice — presumably it is happening more now with an ageing population in rural areas — that older people who are 70 or 80 are driving around and might be losing the plot a bit. Any thoughts?

Mr BROOKS — I guess there are a couple of issues to pick up on there. Firstly the data shows that at ages above 70 and 80, the risk of a road fatality per distance travelled is higher than it is for people in middle age and even approaching or exceeding that of younger people. In terms of numbers the risk is with the under-25 people, and people in their early 50s are quite obviously the safest, but there are complicating factors.

One is the vulnerability of older people. They will die in a crash that a young fit person would have survived, and once you take out that issue of fragility, their figures look better. When you turn from a rate per distance travelled to a population rate, the elderly are not contributing much to the total of road fatalities at all because they do not drive all that much, so if one were to take everybody over 70 off the road entirely it would not greatly impact on the aggregate road figures.

Dealing with the speed issue, I refer the committee back to the graph I was showing a couple of minutes ago which indicates not only an increase in risk for people who are travelling at above-average speeds but also a substantial decrease in risk for people travelling at below average speeds — that is, once you take out data on things like manoeuvring and so on. There is some earlier work still much quoted which purports to show it is as dangerous to go 10 kilometres below the average as it is to go 10 kilometres above the average. That data was contaminated by information on people who were waiting to make a turn et cetera; they were doing a very low speed because they were waiting to turn off the road and somebody collected them.

Within broad limits the data suggests that it is safer to go a bit slower than a bit faster, so if we could speed all those oldies up we probably would not get much of a safety advantage either.
Mr INGRAM — You have a breakdown of things like seatbelts and alcohol. In relation to on-farm vehicles on the road — I am talking mainly about farm utes and vehicles like that — do you have a breakdown of vehicle type and vehicle usage, and are statistics coming through about maintenance of those vehicles causing crashes on roads?

Mr HENCHY — Our databases certainly have recorded details of vehicles — utilities, four-wheel drives, sedans and so forth — so that is available. On the mechanical defects — I assume you are talking about the significance of mechanical defects — past studies have shown these are in a very low order of significance in terms of causality, they are not even in the top eight or so of the causes.

Mr INGRAM — I was just wondering whether it showed up in that.

Mr HENCHY — Yes.

Mr INGRAM — The other issue is that in a number of fatal accidents, seatbelts are not fitted. Are they trucks that do not have seatbelts fitted or are they older vehicles or farm machinery?

Mr HENCHY — They would have to be pretty old because seatbelts have been mandatory for a long time now, so it is either older vehicles or plant and equipment.

Mr BROOKS — The other thing that can show up in the figures is where there is no seatbelt fitted in the position that the occupant was in the vehicle — for example, if you are riding in the back of a ute and there is no seatbelt, if you are putting more people in the car than there are seat belts, so they can show up as ‘seatbelt not fitted’.

Mr INGRAM — I just noted that in the data. I was trying to work out why that came up.

The CHAIR — A number of farm vehicles I have had the pleasure of driving in have been fitted with seatbelts, but because the driver is not a seatbelt user there is no availability of seatbelts for a passenger because they are just pushed down behind the seat or frayed or whatever else. Is that taken into account as ‘not available’?

Mr HENCHY — The police would record it as ‘seatbelt installed but not worn’. They would not say ‘it was lodged in behind the seat’ because it is not fully coded for that; they would just say it is not worn.

Mr MITCHELL — With the increases in the risk factor for speeding can you give me your thoughts on having vehicles speed limited, similar to what happens with trucks — maybe not to 110 kilometres an hour but having some form of governing speed fitted? Do you think that would have much of an impact?

Mr BROOKS — Can I comment on that? There are speed limiters in some other countries. I believe in Germany vehicles are limited to about 180 or 190 kilometres an hour. If we start to look at limiters closer to what might match Australian conditions, people have sometimes said, ‘Well, what about limiting to, say, 120?’. If you limited it to 110, then that would be the legal limit on a lot of roads and people would say, ‘Well, sorry, but how am I going to overtake?’ So let us imagine that we limit it to 120.

There is then a concern, and we have no direct evidence but I think it is a plausible concern, that if vehicle speed was limited to 120, a lot of people would use that as essentially their cruise control — ‘That is what the government has let me do’ — on both 100 and 110 kilometre-an-hour roads; so on roads where the average actual speed is now very close to the limit, which is not uncommon, you might find that the actual speeds were going up, and it is the actual speeds that count.

Looking further into the future, technology is already available and essentially being tried and researched. It is known under various names but it includes intelligent speed adaptation. Vehicles equipped with this are on Victorian roads at the moment. They know where they are, what road they are on, what the speed limit is, and they start complaining to the driver if they are driven over that limit. It is just a technical question of whether you want the car to refuse to go over the limit.

It can start making nasty noises, it can start pushing back on the accelerator foot — there is a range. The research is going into the behavioural effects of that. That obviously gets rid of some of the problems of a dumb speed limiter because it knows whether it is on a 100 or a 110 kilometre-an-hour speed limit.

That is a very interesting future development, because quite small changes in actual travel speed have the potential to give you a big safety benefit so there is a potential down the track for a big safety benefit but obviously it would
have to be very well researched, and to my knowledge there is no government in Australia planning to make that a mandatory requirement next year.

Mr WALSH — They would have to forgo all the speed camera revenue, wouldn’t they?

Mr BROOKS — But you would forgo the social and economic costs of road crashes, which in aggregate are in the area of $15 billion a year in Australia on conservative estimates.

The CHAIR — Have you any suggestions about country roads? For example, you talked earlier about the how the road toll has reduced significantly in Victoria, and the government as you know would argue that that is to do with keeping the speed limit down as low as possible. The road toll has decreased in the last year on country roads but not to the same extent that it has over the last two years in Victoria. Do you have any ideas about where we can go or recommendations about where we can go to make country roads a bit safer?

Mr HENCHY — The results of that study which you mentioned earlier are still irrelevant in the sense that the factors there are still the key factors — that is, the seatbelt wearing may be addressed by some sort of educational process although there has been that in the past, let me emphasise that. With intoxication there is the question of resources being devoted to compliance with the legal limits in that regard. With road engineering, there is the black spot program and there are other measures that Chris mentioned about trees et cetera, those sorts of issues.

In terms of a magic bullet for it all, it is difficult to think of one factor other than, say, the seatbelts and a couple of others that are perhaps more easily addressed.

Mr McQUILTEN — What about the idea that if you do not have a seatbelt on, the car will not start?

Mr INGRAM — Farmers are pretty good at getting around that.

Mr BROOKS — Last year we published research that the Monash University Accident Research Centre had done for us on seatbelt reminder systems. What that was looking at was not an interlock which prevents you from starting the car but something which would make the car essentially complain long and loud if it were driven while any occupant was unbelted, and, again, you have the option of just the driver, or the driver and front-seat passenger.

The analysis that Monash did for us indicated that, even on fairly pessimistic assumptions of how many people might disable or ignore such a device, it would be likely to be cost effective — solidly cost effective — over a range of options. It is actually mentioned in the current national road safety action plan as an issue to be pursued, and the department, not the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, will be issuing a regulatory impact statement reviewing the pros and cons of making that sort of device mandatory.

Amongst a whole range of issues that need to be considered when you are considering regulation on that is the issue whether the market is likely to provide that kind of device anyway without regulation. There is a case that they are likely to, because some manufacturers are already doing so, and the reason they are doing so is that they can get bonus points on the Euro NCAP and ANCAP safety ratings — these are the car crash test safety ratings. Both those systems now get essentially a bonus point for having a belt reminder system which is more aggressive than the minimum little light that is currently required. So the answer to the question of whether they would save lives is fairly clearly yes; the question of whether therefore you immediately jump to a regulatory option is a policy issue yet to be decided.

The CHAIR — I would imagine that if they were already installed it would actually be illegal to disable them because that would be modifying the car, would that be correct?

Mr BROOKS — If they were mandatory in standards, then it would be illegal. I am not sure of this, but I believe that with the Ford belt-minder system, for example, if you look in the owners manual you will find instructions for a sequence of things you can do — turning on and off the transmission and opening doors — that will disable it. And if you cannot find it in the owners manual, you type in ‘belt-minder disable’ on an Internet search engine and you will find dozens and dozens of pages that will give you the instructions on how to disable the system. You would not have modified the vehicle in any way, except for a few electrons in a chip somewhere.
That is another difference between a voluntary system and a mandatory system. The manufacturers have an incentive to get the brownie points for a voluntary interlock but to provide potential buyers with a means of disabling it if they do not like it.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — On fatigue as a causal factor, we talked about alcohol and seatbelts — but where does fatigue come in? We have had presenters from the Rural Workers Union mention that shearsers have a long day, they shear 100 sheep and then drive back home for an hour and a half. How does that come up in the figures?

Mr HENCHY — Fatigue is a major factor. In fact, it is shown in relative terms in chart 17 in the pack you have.

I will just comment on fatigue. Fatigue is one of those things that, unlike alcohol and those things where you can do a toxicological study and get an exact reading, is very difficult from a data analyst’s point of view to get a firm handle on. We do it, and we use a proxy fatigue measure, basically based on circumstantial evidence. If a vehicle runs off a perfectly good road in good conditions — the weather is good and there are no obstructions et cetera — and if a few other criteria are met, then for analytical purposes we would regard that as a fatigue-related thing. It is a major concern. There has been a lot of study into fatigue with truck drivers, for example, and other categories. So, yes, fatigue is a major issue.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Have you targeted those drivers and then looked at historical evidence for each particular individual and asked what had he or she been doing prior to that accident — for example, had they had a long working week or workday? Do you actually look into fatigue as an issue?

Mr HENCHY — We have not studied it to that level. The police reports that accompany the coronial documents often, but not always, give a bit of a history — for example, that that person woke at 6.00 a.m., visited a friend and then drove to the pub or picked up a girlfriend or boyfriend, as the case may be — and gives a little bit of background. But I would have to say it is not always consistently reported, so it is difficult to develop a uniform picture. That is not to say you could not do a study on a sample basis.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — No-one has?

Mr BROOKS — There has been some more work done in the case of heavy vehicle crashes, but no matter in what depth you investigate, fatigue is still something elusive. I think there is a general consensus that the reported figures, either from police or coronial data, are a kind of lower bound estimate of the contribution of fatigue to crashes. And as a general indicator, say, in the heavy vehicle area or for road crashes in general, some people have suggested that the contribution of fatigue is of the same sort of order of magnitude as the contribution of alcohol. But all those figures are rubbery.

Then there is the question, ‘What can you do about it?’. Again, if you go to the current action plan, which is a sort of consensus of expert opinion amongst researchers and administrators, it is saying, ‘Well, one of the things you can do is implement the indirect measures, the road-based measures’.

It is difficult to get behavioural solutions to fatigue. We know that young people, particularly young males, are a high risk group for fatigue — you know, driving at 3 o’clock in the morning combined with a lifestyle of not having had enough sleep, partying hard et cetera. You can go out and try to persuade young men not to drive late at night, not to party hard and to get enough sleep. I have two sons, so I have my own views about how effective that is going to be.

The alternative is installing things like rumble strips at the side of the road or other engineering solutions that make it less likely that a car will go out of its lane if the driver is going off to sleep, or the engineering solutions that reduce the chances of somebody being killed if the car actually does leave the road. The current action plan says, ‘Well, that sort of engineering fix that we know works and that we know is cost effective is one of the lines you should follow, without abandoning efforts like public education and so on’.

Mr WALSH — When you see things like a police district sign on the side of the road that says they are targeting fatigue at the moment, how do they actually measure fatigue to target it?

Mr BROOKS — You would have to ask them.

Mr WALSH — It always seems a very nebulous target to me. You can target speeding, drink-driving or whatever, but how do you target fatigue?
Mr McQUILTEN — If you pull over and have a little rest, they could wake you up to congratulate you.

The CHAIR — Have they been shown to work at all? Is there any evidence around to say that those signs that say, ‘This is the particular area we are targeting at the moment’ are working?

Mr BROOKS — I am not aware of any direct evidence of that for those signs. There is certainly very extensive literature that says the process of encouraging compliance with sensible road rules is a blend of enforcement, education and persuasion. When you look at it, the objective chances of being caught for an offence are fairly low in most cases, and there are limits to the enforcement you can put on drivers if the public generally is not behind it. So you are trying to have the enforcement out there but also trying to be constantly talking about the enforcement being out there to create an impression in people’s minds that this offending is not worth doing.

What we find in our public opinion surveys is actually strong majority community support for pretty tight enforcement of rules relating to road safety. For years we have regularly been getting 97 to 98 per cent support for random breath-testing. You could give me the rest of the day and I could not come up with another question you could ask the Australian public that would get 97 to 98 per cent support. That is where the community is at when it feels that something has a legitimate road safety objective.

When we look at speed enforcement we find again, though, that most people think the existing level of speed enforcement should be maintained or increased, and from memory it is something like 10 or 11 per cent who think it should be decreased. In Australia and also in Victoria most people think that fines should be as severe as they are or more so. Most people support relatively tight enforcement tolerances. They are saying that either there should be no tolerance above the posted limit or it should certainly not be more than, say, 5 kilometres an hour in an urban area and certainly no more than 10 kilometres an hour in a rural area. I could supply the committee secretariat with some details of that if you are interested.

So broadly you have the community’s support. People do not want to be killed or have somebody in their family killed or injured by a drunk or by somebody who is driving when they are half asleep or by somebody who is extravagantly speeding. It is a case of, ‘However I define speeding, I don’t want you doing it, thank you very much; and however you define speeding, you don’t want me doing it’.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your time, Chris and Jon. It has been very valuable. You will receive a copy of the transcript in about a fortnight, and any obvious errors of fact or grammar may be corrected, but obviously not matters of substance. Thank you for your time. It has been of great assistance.

Mr BROOKS — It has been good to speak with you.

Witnesses withdrew.