

## Re: Inquiry into the increase in Victoria's Road Toll

Thank you for allowing me to put forward my opinions regarding the increase in Victoria's Road Toll. The opinions I express below have come about because of our family's personal story of tragedy due to road trauma. Our much loved son was killed through no fault of his own by another driver who was also killed.

I believe there are definite areas of concern (listed below in no particular order) which, if looked at seriously and worked through, will only assist in reducing the incidence of road trauma on our roads:

- There appears to be a general lack of respect in our communities. There appears to be little awareness of others, and the equal rights of others to be on the road. This can be seen by driver rudeness/abuse to police and other drivers, dangerous driving tactics, flaunting the rules (such as driving unlicensed, unregistered vehicles, unroadworthy vehicles). All age levels can be involved in such behaviours. However, the modern trend appears to overprotect and overindulge children who as a result do not learn responsibility and the accepting of consequences for their actions. These children grow up and want to drive a vehicle. Driving is a privilege and a wonderful opportunity to enhance your life but it is a serious activity with serious consequences to the car occupant/s or members of the public, if not treated with respect at all times. Rules are made for driving to give some level of accepted confidence of behaviour to vehicle users and the public. The driver must take responsibility for what happens in the vehicle that he is in charge of. Too many collisions appear to be the result of a 'don't care' or 'she'll be fine mate', or 'I'm in the car and I can do what I like' attitude – all totally immature and disrespectful attitudes.
- Mental Health of drivers is becoming a growing problem and needs real attention. The whole community needs to be proactive in accepting responsibility where they see a driver's mental health affecting their day to day activity and especially when driving. Other drivers/passengers and members of the public can be impacted by poor decisions made by people suffering mental ill-health. Sadly, a vehicle can be used as a weapon when used by a driver who is not coping with life.
- Privacy and Confidentiality Rules are a real hindrance to 'a level playing field' for people/groups of people needing to accept the consequences for their actions. A collision and its consequences are a collision and its consequences. People should never be excused for destroying others' lives just because they have some special circumstance which exempts them from conviction. Where death occurs to all parties, posthumous charging/criminal reporting should be made against the person/s who caused the collision – no excuses for Confidentiality or Privacy or Medical consideration. People who drive a vehicle must accept the consequences of their actions. I am aware that a person who is deceased cannot be convicted under our laws for causing death to another, but that person should be charged posthumously and therefore give some respect and acknowledgement to the innocent victim/s.
- Penalties are inadequate for some driving offences. Abuse the privilege of driving and you lose your car. If you are driving another person's vehicle, that vehicle is lost. Unlicensed drivers seem to be able to flaunt the system continuously. They need to be confronted by victims of road trauma and its impact. Unlicensed drivers should never be driving on the road. If the excuse is "I didn't know" then they need to relearn/learn their road rules and resubmit/submit to a licence test at their expense and at their expense meet road trauma victims. Tough love is the best form of love for misdemeanours. Through the 'hip pocket' or 'embarrassment' it is hoped drivers will reassess the serious responsibility that goes with being a driver – they can be confronted with some of the consequences.

- All single vehicle collisions causing death need to be investigated fully as to the background situation leading up to the collision. Blood samples need to be taken and analysed. Such data needs to be made public and so draw attention to single vehicle collision details.
- All members of the community need to take some level of responsibility and lose the attitude “it won’t happen to me”. You can be impacted by road trauma! It can happen to anyone – as it happened to our family.
- Physical road issues and conditions are important, for sure, but the most important point of all is the suitability/fitness to drive of the “brain behind the wheel of the vehicle” and that ‘brain’s’ behaviour.
- Ask those affected by road trauma what they think went wrong, and what could have /should have been in place to avoid/stop the collision that has devastated their lives. I can assure you that they have all spent many, many hours thinking every angle of how the impact happened, why it happened and what should be done to fix the problem so it can’t happen again.
- VicRoads and all the Medical Profession need to accept that they are at the coal face of being able to identify those who should not be driving due to medical reasons – short term or long term. Medically unfit drivers need to be identified, supported and assisted to find alternative ways to retain independence without driving. Such people need support networks identified and informed. If Privacy and Confidentiality rules hinder a medically unfit-to-drive person from obtaining the necessary support (including from family and friends), those confidentiality rules need to be overridden by consideration of what is in the best interest of the person concerned and community safety.
- Community members need to be vigilant and speak up when they see dangerous driving behaviours – due to alcohol/drug intake, poor reactions, emotional and mental stability, fatigue, erratic behaviour and distraction. It is not about putting in your mates, but more about showing that you want your mate and others to be safe.
- Offering driving challenges/skill development in controlled environments with trained instructors for new and experienced drivers away from the public roads may be a way of reinforcing good driving methods and attitudes.

Life for all people is precious and fragile. The senseless abuse and destruction of life must be treated with the seriousness of its actions and consequences to those affected.

Thank you for reading my submission

Rosalie Dows

