

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this enquiry. Between 1969 and 1973 I was a researcher and community activist working with many communities throughout Victoria to reduce the road toll. Victorians and the dedicated professionals working in the road trauma sphere have sustained a campaign for over 50 years and have reduced the death toll from 1061 in 1971 to 273 in 2019. The all of community approach has been the major factor in this campaign being successful.

There are a number of issues I wish to address which include-

1. One of the first actions taken by the campaign over 50 years ago was to remove the Victorian Police as the key spokesperson/leader in the campaign to reduce the road toll. They are the road rules enforcer which is in conflict with the educator, researcher and public image of a community campaign. The Police have too many other responsibilities to give the road toll its first priority and its overall credibility is questioned by so many others in the community. Therefore a panel of individual experts need to be known to the Victorian public that it is leading the campaign. Campaigns such as "Think of us before you drive" that refer to alcohol, speed and mobile phone use are not doing justice to such an important issue that directly effects so many peoples' lives. It is an insult to the importance of life for so many Victorians. Messages to the public need to articulate a positive reason for people to change their behaviour. In 1970 the police could not tell us what .05 actually meant until community research was undertaken and Peter Brock and a host of others sold the message of "turn off before .05" and gave reasons for it. Well known personalities who have a passion to reduce the road toll need to become involved and be managed by an independent group of leaders in the field.
2. Death on Victorian roads is unacceptable and the Towards Zero Road Safety Strategy/Action Plan demonstrates the government's commitment to reducing these fatalities. Perhaps it is now time to take it a step further by introducing a tally on road injuries. Certainly a more difficult task to measure but a formula to count such casualties would widen the overall campaign and give new opportunities for those effected to speak out on the issue. No doubt our overcrowded hospitals will have lots of stories on the subject. While there are many of these stories in books, documentaries and magazines they do not seem to be highlighted in every day life through the media.
3. There seems to be three areas where an impact on the road toll has been effective, however, the \$1.4 billion the State Government is spending on Towards Zero seems to be narrow in its ambition. Roads and infrastructure, safety of vehicles and change in road behaviour have been effective over the years. The 3000km of flexible safety barriers

is tackling the issue of 'country people die on country roads' but there is little to be seen to empower country drivers to take action themselves to reduce these devastating figures. What is the proportion of expenditure being spent on (a) road infrastructure, (b) safety of vehicles and (c) behaviour change? The biggest focus in the 1970's was to change behaviour to drink driving and with the wearing of seat belts to make safer cars. These were short term cost effective solutions which worked and were acknowledged throughout the world as ground breaking legislation.

4.The media, in particular, the Sun News Pictorial with its 'Declare War on 1034' in 1969 was a sustained campaign and organisations all over the state became involved. When speaking to schools and public meetings in towns and suburbs the message was not about road safety but about 'what can we all do to reduce the road toll?' and organisations responded positively to this call for social action. I believe the media, particularly in country Victoria where over 50% of road deaths are occurring, can play a vital role in not only reducing death on our roads but also reduce injuries if they are given the information, training and stories.

Is there something to be learnt from the 1970's and what is the message today? To bring about further change; road users, professionals in the road trauma sphere, the vehicle industry, governments at all levels and the media need to discover a deeper relationship to not only reduce death on our roads but the thousands of life changing injuries which effect so many Victorians.

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File1:

File2:

File3: