

# **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

## **Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll**

Melbourne—Wednesday, 23 September 2020

*(via videoconference)*

### **MEMBERS**

Mr Enver Erdogan—Chair

Mrs Bev McArthur

Mr Bernie Finn—Deputy Chair

Mr Tim Quilty

Mr Rodney Barton

Mr Lee Tarlamis

Mr Mark Gepp

### **PARTICIPATING MEMBERS**

Dr Matthew Bach

Mr David Limbrick

Ms Melina Bath

Mr Andy Meddick

Dr Catherine Cumming

Mr Craig Ondarchie

Mr David Davis

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips

## WITNESS

Ms Pauline Morgan, Head of Road User Safety Delivery Programme, Department for Transport, United Kingdom.

**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll. I wish to welcome members of the public who are watching via the live broadcast. My name is Enver Erdogan and I am Chair of the committee. Mr Bernie Finn is our Deputy Chair. Mr Lee Tarlamis, Mr Rod Barton, Mrs Beverley McArthur and Mr Tim Quilty are other members of the committee.

All evidence taken at this committee is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and is further subject to the standing orders of the Legislative Council. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. However, any comments repeated outside the hearing may not be protected. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament. All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

We welcome your opening comments, but I ask that they be kept to a maximum of 5 to 10 minutes to allow plenty of time for discussion. Can I please remind members and witnesses to mute their microphones when not speaking to minimise any interference. If you have any technical difficulties at any stage, please disconnect and contact the committee staff using the contacts provided. Could you please begin by stating your name for the benefit of our Hansard team and then start your presentation. Over to you, Pauline.

**Ms MORGAN:** Thank you very much. My name is Pauline Morgan, and I work for the Department for Transport, based in London. Road safety is part of the Department for Transport. My particular area is in road user safety, so we specifically look at road safety interventions that will help the users of the roads—vulnerable road users, cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and motorcyclists as well as drivers. I have been doing that work in my current role for four years now, in terms of delivering an overall program. Prior to that I was involved with enforcement legislation in relation to road safety as well—so, for example, looking at the legislation for mobile phone hand use.

I am really pleased to be asked to present to this committee, so thank you very much for inviting me. We are very proud of the record we have in the UK in terms of our casualties and fatalities, but I think there is always something more that we can learn, and always more that we can share, so I am really pleased to be here.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Pauline. I might pass over to my Deputy Chair, Mr Finn, to ask the first question, and I will ask a question a bit later. Thank you.

**Mr FINN:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Pauline, thank you very much for joining us today; we really do appreciate your time. I notice that you mentioned motorcyclists there. Motorcycle deaths have been a particular concern of ours in the state for some time now. There seem to be more than there should be. What is your experience in the UK, and what has been your answer to some of the issues that that has raised?

**Ms MORGAN:** Motorcyclists for obvious reasons are one of our target groups. They are consistently over-represented in our fatality figures, so while the number of people may be low in terms of using motorcycles compared with cars, for example, they are very high risk.

What we have been doing over the years is to concentrate, one, on safe riding behaviour and also concentrating very much on the safety of the equipment, particularly helmets that are worn. We have what is called the SHARP campaign. This helps riders understand through a star rating how safe a helmet is, so that informs their choice of helmets when they buy a crash helmet. In terms of what we have been doing to help them in terms of behaviour, we do have quite a strict regime of training. Anyone before they ride any size bike has to undertake something we call compulsory basic training, so they must acquire the very basic skills before we will allow them out and progress them through to a full licence for riding a motorbike. For qualified riders, I think certainly in the UK our attention has been on those that use motorbikes for leisure, for example, so the higher engine capacity style motorbikes. We have worked with organisations like RoSPA in the UK to put information out and videos out to help riders understand how to ride safely when they are out on the road. We also work

with our agency, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, who are responsible for the testing regime for motorcyclists, and we work with them and other motorcycle action groups to improve riding skills once they are out on the road.

There is still a concern it is not something you can stop doing. When you are dealing with any particularly vulnerable road user group like motorcyclists, you are in it for the long term. We have made progress over the years, but clearly there is always more that we can do. I think the focus that we want to take for the future is whether there are any additional measures that we can take in terms of the equipment riders can use—so, for example, air jackets and things like that—in addition to the traditional sort of helmet safety, leathers and protective equipment that they wear.

**Mr FINN:** Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I might pass over to Mr Lee Tarlamis to ask a question.

**Mr TARLAMIS:** Thank you, Ms Morgan, and thank you, Chair. The number of road deaths in the UK has remained relatively static over the last couple of years. Firstly, how have you achieved that? And secondly, are there any specific strategies that you have in place either to try and get those numbers lower or to get them moving downwards, if I can put it that way?

**Ms MORGAN:** Yes, the numbers have come down significantly. As I said just now, it is something that you need to be in—road safety—for the long-term, because it can take a long time. Over the years there have been improvements in vehicle safety and there have been improvements in driver behaviour. If I just take drink driving, for example, we have had a 30-year-long campaign to tackle drink driving. And there have been changes in legislation. In the early 2000s there was legislation around using a mobile phone when you are driving, and we have increased penalties over the years. So a combination of things has brought it down.

I think what we are finding now is this flat line, a stubborn flat line. I think that is complex to understand. We are not the only country that I think are experiencing this flat line. I guess, to coin a phrase, we have already picked off the low-level fruit and now we are down to what is a stubborn level that means it is not easy to understand what intervention to take in order to bring it down further. We are committed to bringing that figure down. We are an evidence-based organisation, so we do do a lot of research and we do monitor interventions or any intervention that we may take in order to understand whether or not they would make a difference. And I think what we have been careful to avoid is a knee-jerk reaction that actually would not make any difference. So I think over the past five years we have been going through that process.

The government published a statement in 2015 on a series of measures that it wanted to take it, including a Safe System approach; and in 2019 we published a road safety statement of over 70 actions that we wanted to take. Now, included in that we have got some large projects underway to help us better understand the causes of collisions. So we have a Road Collision Investigation Project underway at the moment. That is a three-year project that is looking at a deep dive on why a collision has happened and what was the driver behaviour underlying that. So not just what happened on the day—what events led up to that collision, was the driver feeling tired, those sorts of things. That is a three-year project that will help inform what we want to do for the future rather than just saying, ‘Oh, let’s suddenly change this piece of legislation’ or ‘Let’s introduce a new intervention’, without really understanding what the causes of the collisions are.

**Mr TARLAMIS:** Thanks. And I note that the UK formulates much of its road safety policy at a national level. The governments and administrations of Britain, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have some oversight and responsibility. Is there much difference in road rules between those jurisdictions? I am not familiar with them, so I am not sure, but are there any differences that might cause confusion or is it fairly standard across, in terms of the different road rules and regulations and things like that?

**Ms MORGAN:** Yes. So England, Scotland, Wales, they have full responsibility for road safety policy, so they can develop their own policies and how they apply in their own jurisdictions, and that has been a very important process for us in devolving that power. I think the main areas where we remain consistent are in what the actual offences are, but over the years we have devolved powers to in particular Scotland and Wales—for example, you know, there is the offence of speeding, but Wales and Scotland can set their speed limits, so we have devolved powers for that. Another example, for drink driving, there is an offence of drink driving across

all the jurisdictions, but Scotland, for example, has a lower level of tolerance in terms of how much you can drink, and they have got powers to do that.

So I think it has been important for us as a government and as road safety officials that there is a degree of consistency, and so the legislation framework in terms of the offences is held centrally, held by the Westminster government, but there are powers that the administrations have that allow them to develop it, to tailor make it to their own jurisdictions. Northern Ireland is slightly different, if I just comment on them. They do have powers to take forward their own legislation in respect of road safety.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I might pass over to Mr Rod Barton and then Mrs Beverley McArthur.

**Mr BARTON:** Thank you, Chair. Pauline, morning. The Department for Transport's road safety statement says that one of the priorities or focus over the next two years will be older vulnerable drivers, and also younger road users. I wonder if you can just tell me some of the strategies around those, because certainly the 18 to 25s in Victoria are being represented too high in our statistics as well.

**Ms MORGAN:** Yes. When we look at the statistics, we have got a peak in terms of young drivers, and then it peaks again at the other end of the age spectrum. They need different approaches for different reasons. With our young drivers, who are again high risk, our approach is to better understand what would make a difference. We have a very large project underway at the moment, Driver2020. That is testing out different types of intervention that may help learners before they actually pass their test and then novice drivers when they have passed their test but are new to driving. I must confess, in terms of how the project is progressing it has had to slow down slightly because of COVID-19. That is just a fact of life with some of our research projects. But the sorts of interventions that they are looking at include things like technology and include things like guardian agreements—the power of guardians or parents to be able to agree with young people how they can drive safely on the road—and seeing what difference they make. There are learning logs and those sorts of things—specific interventions that we are trialling to see if they make a difference, and on the basis of that project we will make a decision about what we will do in the future.

At the other end, with the older age group, I think the *Road Safety Statement 2019* says we would look at whether it makes sense to have an eyesight test. This actually applies to any age, to be quite honest; your eyesight may fail at any age for all sorts of different reasons. But we did want to look specifically at whether or not it was an issue for older drivers. Again, as I said at the very beginning, when I started, we do not just launch into it; we do some research—we have got some research underway—to look at that. We want to be sure. For example, with elderly drivers it is not always their eyesight. It may be their ability to turn their head quickly. There is other functional movement that you need as a driver to be able to drive safely. Throughout that we are very, very conscious that for older drivers we want to ensure their mobility, their continued mobility. So it is an important subject. Again, I am afraid that that particular project has slowed down slightly because of the COVID-19 pressures that we are under at the moment. But again what we want is to better understand the situation, particularly in relation to eyesight for older drivers or whatever intervention we make and whether it would make a difference.

**Mr BARTON:** Currently you do not do any testing throughout people's lives. Once you get your licence at 18, as long as you do not do anything wrong, it keeps on going.

**Ms MORGAN:** Yes. There is a process of self-declaration, and I think our experience is that older responsible drivers are very good on that. They are willing to make that very difficult judgement about whether they should continue driving. You have to renew your licence at age 70—at any stage if your health deteriorates. At whatever age, you have to declare and have a medical assessment to assess whether you should continue to drive.

**Mr BARTON:** I lived in London for a couple of years, and I just cannot recall—with the kids when they get their licences, do they have to go through a certain amount of hours before they actually get to go for their licence?

**Ms MORGAN:** For young drivers—well, for any driver—no. You have to reach a certain standard before you can pass your test. Whilst we do not, say, dictate a number of hours you have to undertake, inevitably you need to go through that process to really get up to the standard that we expect. The majority of young drivers

would take driving lessons with an instructor. You also have to take a theory test, a separate theory test, as well as a practical test.

**Mr BARTON:** Okay, thank you. Thanks, Pauline.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I will pass over to Mrs McArthur.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Ms Morgan, for appearing before us today. It is very good of you. I just wonder, in your submission you refer to ‘intelligent speed adaptation’. Could you just expand on that a bit for us, please?

**Ms MORGAN:** Yes, so there is technology already out there that allows the system within the vehicle in essence to read a GPS signal that allows the vehicle to understand what the speed limit is. Now, depending on how advanced the technology is, the intelligent speed adaptation informs the driver. So in high-end vehicles, for example, you would get a message telling you what the speed limit is in that particular location, and of course you must comply with the speed limit laws.

The technology is available that would allow you to actually limit the speed, so that the vehicle itself would not allow the driver to exceed the speed limit in a given location. We have not mandated those yet. You will know we have been part of the European Union. We are going through a transition period at the moment, but prior to us formally leaving the EU, at the beginning of this year there was work, and we contributed towards what were called the general safety regulations, which member states contributed towards. And within those regulations was included the ability to fit intelligent speed adaptation to new vehicles.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Chair, if I may? You also refer to the Safer Streets for London project, and you had a 40 per cent targets to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 2020. I am just wondering, have you achieved that target, and if so, how?

**Ms MORGAN:** On that point I am afraid I cannot comment on that. The responsibility for taking that initiative forward is with Transport for London, so that information would have to be provided from them. We were talking about how we devolve responsibility to the jurisdictions—England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland. The local authorities, such as Transport for London, have their own responsibility for [Zoom dropout], and that initiative was part of that.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Finally, can I just ask for your position on wire rope barriers? I understand that in England they are being removed and cement barriers are replacing them in some places.

**Ms MORGAN:** Again, I am really sorry. That is not my area of expertise on the infrastructure, but I am happy to go away and find out more information for you on that.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** That would be very kind. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. That would be helpful. Ms Morgan, I just had one question for you. It is in relation to data collection and use. How is data for road accidents collected in the United Kingdom in terms of: how is it collected for serious injuries and slight injuries?

**Ms MORGAN:** Okay. We have a process. It is a form basically. The form has got a number, and it is called Stats19. So we continually refer to Stats19. That form is completed by the police when they attend a collision. There is an assessment made on whether there is a fatality, whether there is a serious injury or whether there is a slight injury. The form also collects other data. So, for example, the user type; the road type, whether it is a rural road or urban road; where it happened—the location; gender; age; and so forth. So that is the basis of all of our data that we use. We publish our statistics from that Stats19 data on an annual basis. That data collection has been going on for a significant number of times. Actually I only recently read, I think, it started in 1909. It has changed over the years, but of course it gives us a wealth of data over a very long period of time, and yet we are going to have another project underway to look at how we can improve the data that it collects and whether or not we need to update it in any way.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for that. Mr Quilty, do you have a question?

**Mr QUILTY:** I did miss parts of the presentation, but I have a question just on that data. What sort of training do the police who fill out the forms get? Is there some sort of standardisation in how they are trained, so that you know the results are reliable?

**Ms MORGAN:** Yes, the officers are trained to complete the form, because obviously it depends on what they observe when they attend a collision. It is important that they have a consistent assessment in terms of how they complete the form, so officers are trained to complete that. The detail of how they are trained I am afraid I do not know.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. That is a good complementary question, because in Victoria the data collection is a bit different. In the United Kingdom if someone were to report an incident to the police station—so it is just a minor accident and they turned up at the police station—would the police be required to get down those details and still submit a form, a stats19? In a collision where it is a minor accident and someone turns up at the police station, are police still required to take a record of that incident?

**Ms MORGAN:** The simple answer—yes. If it resulted in a fatality or a serious injury, then yes, but I guess this is where local conditions really come into it. If there is a fatality or a serious injury, then certainly for a fatality the case would go to a coroner. The police would have to attend the scene of the collision in order to collect a wide range of data way beyond the information that is collected on that stats19 form. So, for example, they may need to see skid marks to assess how fast the car was travelling and things like that. So I think yes, if someone reported an incident to the police station and there was a fatality or there was a serious injury or a slight injury, it would need to be recorded, but I think it is unlikely to happen, because the police would have to attend the scene of the incident.

**The CHAIR:** I think some of our data collection seems very similar to yours in that data in relation to serious injuries is collected quite thoroughly, and obviously even in our example the coroner can look into matters where there is a fatality, but I think some of the recording of maybe more minor incidents is not as scientific, it would seem.

Does anyone else have any more questions? It does not seem as though there are any more. Ms Morgan, on behalf of the committee I wish to say thank you for appearing at our parliamentary committee today. It has been a real pleasure. I found it very informative, and you have been very helpful in guiding us to see what is happening in the UK and your performance in keeping the numbers relatively static and not having increases like we have experienced recently. So keep up the good work, and I wish to thank you and the Department for Transport for all your efforts.

**Ms MORGAN:** Okay. Thank you very much. Thanks for inviting me. Goodbye.

**The CHAIR:** Committee members, that concludes today's hearing. Thank you all.

**Committee adjourned.**