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## GOVERNMENT TACKLES DRIVER DISTRACTION

In its latest commitment to reducing the state's road toll, the Bracks Government will address the issue of driver distraction and its effect on road crashes.

Minister for Roads and Ports, Tim Pallas, said as a result of the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee, more thorough research would now be undertaken in Victoria to find ways to reduce distractions for drivers.

"Very little research has been done on how distractions like car DVD players, mobile phone use and road-side signs affect safety in a car," Mr Pallas said.

"What we do know is that research suggests 25 per cent of crashes may be due to distraction so we want to look in more detail at the level of distraction caused by mobile phone use, in-car video screens and external road-side distractions."

Last year the State Government asked the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee to investigate the role that certain devices and activities have on driver behaviour. Some of the recommendations adopted today by the Government include:

- Review guidelines to regulate roadside signs and advertising;
- Education campaigns to reduce distracting activities while driving and to increase the profile of distraction as a road safety issue;
- Review of road rules regarding mobile phone use and in-car display units

Mr Pallas said a review of rules regarding mobile phone use and in car display units would focus on rapid technological changes, particularly with mobile phones.

"For example, in-car display units and mobile phones are currently covered in separate rules but the Road Safety Committee questioned whether a driver watching television on a hands-free mobile phone would be breaking the current road rules," Mr Pallas said.

"We are also asking VicRoads and local councils to review guidelines that regulate the location, size and design of road signage within road reserves."

Mr Pallas said VicRoads would also develop, along with the automotive and motor accessory industry, a verification process for the installation of visual display units to ensure compliance with Australian Design Rules.

"The Bracks government is working hard to reduce the road toll by 20 per cent as part of the *arrive alive!* Road Safety Strategy, 2002-2007," Mr Pallas said.

"By not investigating and addressing the impact of distractions to drivers and developing countermeasures to reduce these distractions, we risk ignoring a growing factor on our road toll."

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