

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Melbourne — 19 October 2011

Members

Mr A. Elsbury

Mr T. Languiller

Mr J. Perera

Mr M. Thompson

Mr B. Tilley

Chair: Mr M. Thompson
Deputy Chair: Mr T. Languiller

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Jenkins
Research Officer: Mr J. Aliferis

Witnesses

Mr S. Harris,
Mr V. Harris, and
Mrs D. Harris.

The CHAIR — I call the next witness, Mr Scott Harris, and if his parents, Vic and Debra, would also like to join us at the table, they are very welcome to do so. Thank you very much for coming along this morning. I am just going to run through a brief preamble. We will then have an interactive dialogue with committee members. Hansard are the people who record parliamentary debates and also public hearings. They will be recording what we discuss here today and transcribing it, and we will then send a copy to you. You will have the opportunity to correct any spelling errors or typos and then send it back. We envisage that we will put the information up on the Web as a contribution to the road safety inquiry.

Should there be any matters that you do not want discussed with the public here, we can clear the room and take evidence on what is called in camera. That is just between us. So keep that in mind if there any thoughts that you do not want to divulge to the wider world but think would be of assistance to us as the Road Safety Committee.

We have had the benefit of some 68 submissions, ranging from people such as yourself, who have experienced motorcycle trauma as a result of an accident, through to lawyers, doctors, industry associations and other stakeholders. We are really appreciative of your giving your time to speak to us. It is invaluable in informing us as to how we balance our considerations of the safety aspects of motorcycling and community welfare, as well as the interests of having good community opportunities to have varied forms of transport. I encourage you to speak freely. We are used to being subject to interjections so feel free to disagree or interject to anything we might say. If your parents want to contribute as well, they should feel free to do so. We have on our current time frame until 12.30 p.m. for a discussion before we adjourn for lunch. We have a busy program, but I think that should be ample opportunity for us to put on the record what your thoughts might be.

We have our executive officer, Kylie, with whom you have been in contact, and John Aliferis. Should there be other issues that you wish to raise with us or discuss, feel free to liaise with them after today. We have the benefit at the moment to have parliamentary privilege prevailing so that anything you do say has the benefit of privilege. Outside the room any comments or statements made do not have such a benefit.

Mr S. HARRIS — Could you please explain that a bit more?

The CHAIR — There are some privilege statements where you cannot be sued as a consequence of making them might be my simplest understanding. There is a benefit of speaking freely in your comments. If someone stands up in the Parliament there can be rights of reply, but I do not necessarily envisage that would be an issue at the moment. If there was some sensitive territory that you wished to cover, we may seek to canvass it in camera so that we did not run into any matters of controversy in that regard. We are not opposed to controversy so I will be guided by the wisdom of my colleagues as we work through those issues. Over to you.

Mr S. HARRIS — Over to me.

The CHAIR — Tell us the date, time and place.

Mr S. HARRIS — Of the accident? It was on 15 November 2008 and it was in Kangaroo Ground. It was on a dirt bike at the back of a mate's house. Are you aware of what happened on the day?

The CHAIR — No, you need to take us through that. Some of us have read the press reports, but I think you should take us through it.

Mr S. HARRIS — Okay. You are aware it was a dirt bike. It was a Saturday afternoon and I was heading up the hill in the opposite direction to my mate, who was coming down the hill, and we collided head on and it was quite a severe impact. It put me in a coma and then off to rehab for six months. I am not too aware of many of the details of the actual accident as my memory has gone from about three weeks beforehand. So yes, that is about the most that I am really able to recall from what other people have told me.

The CHAIR — Scott, to help us with your age, what is your date of birth?

Mr S. HARRIS — My date of birth is 14 May 1985, and so I was 23 at the time.

The CHAIR — What is the description of your bike?

Mr S. HARRIS — My bike was a KTM 450 EXC-R.

The CHAIR — Were you wearing a helmet at the time?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, I was wearing all my protective gear.

The CHAIR — Run through that please.

Mr S. HARRIS — I think I was. I was wearing my helmet. I do not think I had my body armour on, but from what I know my body armour would not have done anything for me because I did not suffer any injuries from my neck down. It was all head injury that was quite severe, so the helmet that I had on would have protected my head to a certain degree but — —

The CHAIR — And how many years of experience had you had riding a trail bike up to that point?

Mr S. HARRIS — Not really. I was not really that experienced as such. I was not racing or anything. I was not at that level.

The CHAIR — How many years had you been riding a trail bike for?

Mr S. HARRIS — My trail bike or trail bikes in general?

The CHAIR — In general.

Mr S. HARRIS — In general, my first bike was at a young age, I think five, but there was a long period where I did not ride, and then I probably had the bike for about a year prior to the accident.

The CHAIR — Were you a licensed driver at the time?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, I was on my Ls, but I was not on my Ps yet.

The CHAIR — How many other riders were on the ride at the time?

Mr S. HARRIS — There were four other riders. There was five of us in total.

The CHAIR — On private property?

Mr S. HARRIS — On private property.

The CHAIR — Have there been any legal issues arising out of the accident in terms of TAC coverage? Have you been covered by the TAC?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, I have been covered by TAC. They have paid me my wage and all my medical bills to date.

The CHAIR — Are you able to tell us a little bit about the nature of your head injuries?

Mr S. HARRIS — You are probably more knowledgeable about this.

Mrs HARRIS — Just explain what your injuries are now.

Mr S. HARRIS — What my injuries are now, or what they were?

The CHAIR — Perhaps both; what happened at the time and what that translates to.

Mrs HARRIS — He had two severe haematomas in the brain, two cracks around the back of his neck and his face had come away from his skull around the cheekbone area.

Mr S. HARRIS — And the jaw.

Mrs HARRIS — That was all gone; it was just hanging.

Mr S. HARRIS — I had 11 metal plates inserted into my face.

Mrs HARRIS — He had a haematoma in his neck, which has now caused three nerves out of five to be severed in his neck or right arm.

Mr S. HARRIS — It is the head injury that has been my no. 1 issue. From the haematomas I had in the brain, the right side of my body, besides my arm — my hip, my knee and my ankle — has a lot of control issues. My knee, my hip and my ankle I cannot control as well as I used to, although it is getting better.

Mrs HARRIS — He has had three nerve transfers in his arm through plastic surgery.

Mr S. HARRIS — Four.

Mrs HARRIS — Four, counting the hand. They have gone in and found a good nerve somewhere in the same region as the shoulder; they connect it to the working muscle and over time you start to get movement back. He is starting to get usage of it. It is a very, very slow process. With the nerves that were left in his arm he could actually move his hand and a little bit of his shoulder, but in between was dead, and that is what they are trying to fix.

Mr S. HARRIS — Now with intensive therapy it will take years for it to come back, but they are hoping they will get about 90 per cent of the arm back.

Mrs HARRIS — Which is amazing.

The CHAIR — And what work were you doing before the accident?

Mr S. HARRIS — I was an electrician.

The CHAIR — So you had your full ticket?

Mr S. HARRIS — No, I was a third-year apprentice, so I had a year and a half of my apprenticeship to go. I am unable to do that as of now. I may be able to get back into it in the future, but at this point in time with my hands I cannot work as an electrician. I am finishing off the schooling component of my apprenticeship so that when I am right — if I ever am right — all I will have to do is the practical side of my apprenticeship.

The CHAIR — Did you have any other interests or sporting pastimes that you pursued prior to the accident?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, how far back do you want to go?

The CHAIR — Put it on the record. Let us know what your interests have been.

Mr S. HARRIS — My interests were mainly the extreme sports, I guess, like wakeboarding — —

The CHAIR — What are they, sorry?

Mr S. HARRIS — Wakeboarding, so behind the boat? I did snowboarding and other board sports. I played hockey and indoor soccer. What else did I do?

Mr V. HARRIS — Whitewater kayaking.

Mr S. HARRIS — Whitewater kayaking.

The CHAIR — Whereabouts did you do that?

Mr S. HARRIS — I did that when I was at school, so that was with the school all around Australia. Tennis, which I am unable to play now. What else was there? Anything else?

Mrs HARRIS — I think that is pretty good.

The CHAIR — At the moment what absorbs your time? How do you spend your time? Do you go out to do some study?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, I am doing a lot of study because from the head injury it is very hard to absorb the information I am given. I have to repeat everything over and over again, so that takes up a lot of my time. I have

been working on speech pathology at rehab. I was working for about six months on my presentations, and then I started doing my presentations. Now it is getting to the end of the school year so I am unable to talk to schools, but in the future I am hoping that will take up a lot of my time. What else do I do?

Mrs HARRIS — He has only just — —

The CHAIR — Do you have a PowerPoint presentation you put together?

Mrs HARRIS — Yes. I put that together in my own time, as homework, I guess. I put that together, and I take it along with me.

The CHAIR — It would be good to get a copy of that if you could forward it to the committee staff so we can have a little look at that.

Mr V. HARRIS — Is the committee aware of the presentation that he has been doing or not at all?

The CHAIR — No, we are not.

Mrs HARRIS — Scott has only just two weeks ago finished rehab. He was an inpatient for six months and has been going to rehab three times a week for three years, up until two weeks ago. He is a bit on his own now, although still getting help from the community.

Mr S. HARRIS — I have a physio out in the community now, instead of at rehab, who comes to my house, assesses me, goes through my exercises and whatnot. From the TAC I have a gym membership, so I am required to go to the gym three to five times a week. I do all my home exercises. Those are the things that take up most of my time — pretty much rehabilitating myself. It gets a bit difficult.

Mr V. HARRIS — I will just interrupt here. As part of his rehabilitation, and hopefully getting back into the workforce in some time to come, it was considered that the speaking would be beneficial for him to re-link with the community and so forth. With his rehab he put together a presentation, going from the start of the accident to three years down the track, about the progression of how he has come back to where he is today. He is now presenting to schools on not so much ‘Don’t go out and ride your bikes’ but more ‘Think before you do that what the consequences may be of the extreme sports’. That is basically what he is presenting to schools at this particular point in time.

Mr S. HARRIS — I am showing them the risk they are running with their actions, what trauma does to every aspect of your life and how it changes it.

The CHAIR — Before I open it up to questions, I encourage you to put on the record what you think we as a committee should be recommending to the wider world so that other people do not have to experience what you have had to go through.

Mr S. HARRIS — The main point I make with my talks, as Vic said, is not that I want anyone to stop living their lives, stop doing everything they love doing and go around walking on eggshells; it is more just for them to think of the consequences if something does go wrong. If the risk is too large and you take the risk, then these are the consequences of what can happen. It changes your life in every way.

Mr V. HARRIS — Not only the individual but the families that support them. It has been a big change.

Mrs HARRIS — I do not know whether it is relevant to what you are doing at this point. I suppose we are very fortunate in the respect that he had a registered road bike which he was riding. It was a trail bike but because he had registered it he came under TAC. That has been the saviour of our life, basically, as well as Scott’s, because you can imagine the cost that it would have entailed. He has had the best of care.

We know of other friends Scott has made along the way that have had trauma, not specifically road trauma, and because they have not had cover they have had nowhere near the care, the specialists and the team that have helped put Scott back together and make him as great as he is today.

It would be good if there was some way every motorbike rider, whether it be on a property, on a dirt bike, on a road bike or whatever, should somehow be covered so that when you get your licence — —

I do not know how you could do it, but if every person riding a bike, no matter where, was covered, then a lot of people's lives would probably be as good as ours has been. You do hear of others.

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, the horror stories.

Mrs HARRIS — And with all the friends that Scott had been riding with over the past year or two, he and his mate had the only two bikes that were registered.

The CHAIR — How did the other person fare in the accident?

Mr S. HARRIS — Sean still had substantial injuries. He broke his neck, injured his shoulder, broke a rib and punctured a lung.

Mrs HARRIS — He mainly took the impact on that part of his body.

Mr S. HARRIS — Below his neck down, and I took everything from the head up.

The CHAIR — What are his circumstances now?

Mr S. HARRIS — He is a lot better now. He had a year off work. I would not say he is back to normal, but he is a lot better. He has got his pilot's licence now and he is doing very well. He is very fortunate that he has got the opportunities now, within his body, to do those sort of things, whereas I am a bit the opposite.

The CHAIR — You are doing a very good job today, Scott.

Mr LANGUILLER — Thank you very much, Scott, for your statement today. What would you do differently? If we were to draw a lesson from what actually happened and focusing on the collision, pretty much, is there anything that could have been or should have been done differently?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, a lot.

Mr LANGUILLER — Anything different which might help prevent other injuries because, as you know, people will continue to go after the challenges and so the question is can we have a safer system? Is there any lesson to be drawn from that?

Mr S. HARRIS — If we had rules that we rode to, then it could have been prevented. If we were all going in the same direction, you do not have a head-on when everyone is going in the same direction, but when we were riding we just rode; we did not really think about the consequences of all going in opposite directions.

Mr LANGUILLER — If I may interrupt, you would recommend to the committee that in terms of these spaces where you practise this sport, there should be some rules perhaps or recommendations with respect to that; there should be some rules of engagement.

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, definitely.

Mr LANGUILLER — This is totally different from what you do, but I have taken on surfing very much late in life. I was reminded yesterday that I am 54, but given that a mate of mine, Stuart McGee, in the 1970s introduced me to it, I feel very much younger. I went to Torquay, I was kicked out of Torquay and told that I did not belong in that place, so I ended up in Jan Juc. Every sport has certain rules of engagement and games, and if you follow them, in my case I could avoid being struck or striking somebody with my 6, 7 or 9 footer, just about. In your situation, what would be the case?

Mrs HARRIS — Maybe his friends that are riding could make sure before they head out that they have the discussion and make sure everyone is on the same page, that they are all riding this way round the property today. You could never make it a rule, but if at the time they had thought, 'We are going off now to have a good ride'.

Mr S. HARRIS — Just watch yourselves and all go the same way.

Mrs HARRIS — Yes, which way they are all going and make sure they are all on the same page. That would be my biggest thing, but on the day they never really had done that; they just all went off on the 30-odd acres.

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, it was just ‘get on your bike and go’ and who can get to the top of the hill the quickest.

Mr LANGUILLER — Thank you for that.

Mr TILLEY — Thank you, Scott, for giving us your time; we appreciate it. I have had a head-on, but I came out of it a lot better than you did. I only broke some toes on my left foot. To see you here today, you to be commended, and we hope you continue with your rehabilitation and reach some of those goals that you may have set for yourself.

Reading from the story in the *Age* — and I believe John Silvester is a relation and writes some good stories — in particular part of that article refers to the TAC. In your journey since the collision they have been there and thankfully, through registration, you have been able to get that help. But in part the article reflects getting and using your message and the relationship that it has been suggested might be continuing with the TAC. What are your thoughts and feelings? What are they saying to you? Part of the story says:

We will be talking to him on ways we can help him tell his story.

But before that it also says:

Now maybe Scott is in a position to repay that investment.

They are referring to the investment from the TAC. I understand that you, as a motorcycle operator, had the bike registered and you had already paid your fee. I am not putting words in your mouth or suggesting anything for one moment, but in your discussions with the TAC is there anything verbal in what messages they are trying to get from you as a result of this crash? Do you have a feeling or an instinct about what sort of story the TAC are trying to put out there in relation to motorcycles?

Mr V. HARRIS — They have not really been in contact with us yet, and I guess that is really a bit of a legal situation. Our representation is through Slater and Gordon, who have been all but saying, ‘Just hold tight for a while’ because what you see with Scott today is not necessarily what we see at home.

Mr TILLEY — No, of course.

Mr V. HARRIS — It could be very easy to just take a look at Scott and say everything is well on-track and so forth. We know for a fact that is not totally the case. Slater and Gordon are just saying to take it easy at the moment. Yes, we want to work with the TAC to get the message across, but those discussions are a bit on hold because we have really got to think it through for Scott’s future. His earning capacity from here on in is very much affected, and as a family that would be our no. 1 concern until we get some agreement. We are talking about the TAC being an insurance body really, and we have got to be protective of that.

Mrs HARRIS — There will be a court case pending. We are just waiting for a date. Once Scott has had his settlement, then he can look at other ways as well. It is a little bit of a conflict of interest to be going off with TAC and spreading the message on that side, when you are already basically suing them on the other side.

Mr TILLEY — Yes, at this stage it is probably a bit premature to be there.

Mrs HARRIS — Yes, exactly; but next year Scott would love to work with them if he can help in any way to tell a story. Once you actually see the presentation Scott has put together, you will get a greater appreciation of the whole thing.

Mr TILLEY — Sure. I appreciate the opportunity.

Mrs HARRIS — It was quite inspiring — very good, actually. We are the parents, but we are very proud of how far he has come from being in a coma and maybe never coming out of it to what you see today. A lot of it is thanks to TAC, I have to say; we have had nothing but really good response from them for anything we have asked for and everything the doctors have asked for. Nothing has ever been knocked back at this point.

Mr TILLEY — I am not suggesting for a moment that motorcycling is inherently risky, but in the circumstances of that day in November when Scott was riding and operating his motorcycle, in contrast to operating it on the road or off-road tracks near forests and parks, the circumstances are a little bit different.

Mrs HARRIS — True. I still think there are a lot of riders out there, though, that do not register their bikes.

Mr S. HARRIS — Definitely.

Mrs HARRIS — That would be my big message from our experience.

Mr TILLEY — Thank you. We appreciate it.

Mr ELSBURY — Even though you do not remember the incident itself, are your mates able to tell you if you were in line of sight of your friends at the time of the incident?

Mr S. HARRIS — I had a friend following me, behind me. Two of my other friends were down the back, and then my mate Sean was coming up over the hill, so I am not sure.

Mr ELSBURY — So you were blindsided by the whole thing?

Mr S. HARRIS — I think we were; I am pretty sure we would have been. There is no reason I would have run into him if I had seen him.

Mr ELSBURY — The other thing is you turn left, he turns right and you both end in the same space. It does not work all that well. I am just wondering, because in open water you are supposed to pass port to port, whether or not there needs to be some sort of — —

Mr S. HARRIS — Rules and regulations.

Mr ELSBURY — Rules. Not necessarily a law, but a rule that motorcyclists on an open paddock should pass — —

Mr S. HARRIS — To the right.

Mr ELSBURY — Yes, on the right side of each other, so that it is consistent with road laws. Of what quality was the helmet that you were using?

Mr S. HARRIS — I am not sure of the number on it. It was a very good helmet.

Mr ELSBURY — The price?

Mr S. HARRIS — The price would have been, I think, \$600 or something.

Mrs HARRIS — Maybe a bit dearer. He actually imported it from America; he bought it online from America.

Mr S. HARRIS — The regulations were all to Australian standards. What was the name of it? Troy Lee Designs helmet. It was quite a good helmet. I would definitely say that it saved my life; no doubt about it.

Mr ELSBURY — After the accident happened, were any of your friends who were out there that day, including yourself, trained in any sort of first aid at all?

Mr S. HARRIS — I was, but I obviously could not — —

Mr ELSBURY — It would have been a little bit hard for you. Physician, heal thyself! No, that is not going to work.

Mr S. HARRIS — Through my electrical apprenticeship I was, but I was not aware that any of the other guys were, no.

Mrs HARRIS — They seemed to do the right thing, though. They did not move him.

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes.

Mr LANGUILLER — What does that mean, if I may interject? What does ‘do the right thing’ mean effectively? I appreciate you may not remember, but do you know what they actually did?

Mrs HARRIS — As in they did not panic like they could have. They immediately went to phone 000 to get all the help they needed. I think one stayed with Scott.

Mr S. HARRIS — He was checking my pulse.

Mrs HARRIS — They did not try to remove his helmet. They did not try to do anything other than call for help.

Mr LANGUILLER — They did not remove your helmet?

Mrs HARRIS — No.

Mr S. HARRIS — No, it was the paramedics.

Mrs HARRIS — I guess to me they did the right thing.

Mr LANGUILLER — Sure. No, I was interested in — —

Mrs HARRIS — Scott was unconscious. I felt they did not panic. I panicked at home.

Mr ELSBURY — You are a mum; that is what you do.

Mrs HARRIS — Yes. Through their quick action — getting 000, obviously — the police came and the ambulance came. They could not get him out; they had to air ambulance him out. As luck would have it there was an open space they could land in. It all happened and he got to the Royal Melbourne Hospital in time to do what they needed to do.

Mr V. HARRIS — Just adding on to that, he was very lucky in that the air ambulance could get to him. If I put myself in the position of some of the trail bike riders in the Victorian high country and so forth, I wonder whether or not that access would have been there. I know that he would not have survived had there been reliance on the road ambulance, because they could not get in. It was the air ambulance that basically was the saviour, and it was lucky too that that air ambulance was en route to somewhere else and was diverted. There were a lot of things that came into place.

Mr S. HARRIS — Fell into place, yes.

Mr PERERA — Scott, I guess you were a fully licensed rider at the time.

Mr S. HARRIS — On my Ls.

Mr PERERA — You were on your Ls, so you underwent training before you got your Ls?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes.

Mr PERERA — If the training regime was different, do you think it would have made a difference on the day?

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes. The training that goes on with your licence is all to do with the road; there is nothing to do with dirt bikes. It is all about the road rules, how to ride on the road and everything to do with that side of motorbike riding, whereas there is nothing in the licence that suggests any help with trail bikes. If there are any recommendations I would make, it would be more trail-bike training and to go through with riders some of the rules that could take place in situations like this.

Mr PERERA — If you had one or two recommendations, what would they be?

Mr S. HARRIS — It is very difficult. My message is for those on private property. If you know who is riding, all go the same way, but it is very difficult to go in the same direction as everyone else out in the bush. I forgot what I was saying.

Mr V. HARRIS — You have different groups and so forth, so you are interacting with different sets of rules, I guess.

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes.

Mrs HARRIS — I guess your other message would be, which Scott might say, make sure they wear the protective gear.

Mr PERERA — Or have a discussion before you ride.

Mrs HARRIS — Yes. He had the good boots on and the good everything else on. The helmet, as much as we complain about it coming from America and the cost of it — which he paid for, obviously — safety is life, no doubt. It cracked; it did have one crack in it after taking the full weight of Sean's bike.

Mr ELSBURY — That is what they are designed to do; they give out, not your skull.

Mr S. HARRIS — Yes, exactly.

Mrs HARRIS — That is exactly what it did. The haematomas were, I think, more from the whack, and then they had to get the helmet off, but that helmet is at home in one piece, basically.

Mr ELSBURY — Again, in relation to first aid, do you think there would be any advantage in motorcyclists being trained up in some sort of basic trauma first aid different from the standard CPR; because if they had done CPR to you, good night, Irene.

Mr S. HARRIS — I guess just what to do in the situation of trauma. So if someone has had an accident like this, what to do with them. Do not pick them up, put them over your shoulder and take them out.

Mr ELSBURY — No fireman carry-out. Yes, no worries.

Mr S. HARRIS — Exactly. I would not say that would be a recommendation, because it is a bit obvious, but things like that — just precautions to take. Like with CPR, DR ABC. Danger is the first thing you are taught to look for, so make sure there is no danger around the person; it is things like that. In the way of trauma, as Mum said before, do not move them. I am not a paramedic or anything, but if people were more aware of things not to do and how to handle the situation, it would probably be more beneficial.

The CHAIR — With your presentation, is it something that can be observed just by looking at it, or do you need to speak to it to take people through?

Mr S. HARRIS — No. It is just saying they can be watched. Just pretty much I want to be out of my presentation — what my presentation is, what it is about — —

Mrs HARRIS — Is it on your website as well.

Mr S. HARRIS — No, I have not put it up yet.

Mrs HARRIS — We will get a copy.

Mr V. HARRIS — His first presentation to Eltham College was done in front of the teachers, and they could view and see whether it was applicable to the presentation of the year 12s. John Silvester was out there at the day and it was filmed, so somewhere we have got a copy of that presentation as it is given with maybe minor changes to however he has refined it now. It is available to have a look at it.

The CHAIR — It would be of interest for us. We can discuss with Kylie the best way for us to look at it overall. Do you have any contribution you would like to make or any comments?

Mr V. HARRIS — Probably not. I guess you are looking for ways and means of instructing or putting out to the motorbike communities and so forth rules and regulations perhaps.

The CHAIR — Ways of improving safety.

Mr V. HARRIS — Ways to improve safety. From our point of view we are looking at it from how these accidents affect families and so forth. I would only have to add along those sorts of lines. I do not think that is all that relevant.

Mr S. HARRIS — I think one good point is that it is not the individual is affected. It is like the smoking ad that has just come out with the guy who is breathing and who has lung cancer. He says it is not just him; it is the family that is affected. It is exactly the same in trauma — exactly the same. It is not just me. I am the head of it and the one who is living the rehab every day, but it is every one around me who is living with the guy who is doing the rehab.

Mr V. HARRIS — And it is sometimes living with a different person, because the hit to the head can change personality. It has changed Scott's personality to a degree. We are dealing to an extent with a different person to what we had prior to the accident, and they are challenges for the families, extended families and very much the friendship group that he had prior to the accident that is now dramatically changed since the accident. It is a completely different peer group that Scott relates to than was the case prior to that accident. They have moved on with their lives, and Scott is sort of stationary at the moment, in limbo.

The CHAIR — With the head injury is there any epilepsy as a consequence?

Mr S. HARRIS — No, not at all.

Mr V. HARRIS — The memory loss is the — —

Mr S. HARRIS — Short-term memory loss is the main issue, and my cognitive skills — working things out definitely. Seeing other people's point of view I find quite difficult.

The CHAIR — You should go into politics.

Mr V. HARRIS — Yes, everything is black and white; there are no grey areas.

Mr S. HARRIS — My comprehension and my ability to work things out has changed. It is getting better, I guess, every day. The more things I do, the more of life I go through the easier it gets.

Mr LANGUILLER — What is the prognosis long term?

Mr S. HARRIS — Long term I will never be back to normal; that is a fact. They cannot really give me a prognosis. People do not really know. People really do not know much about the brain and what its ability is. At rehab they just told me keep working at it. I will pretty much have to work for the rest of my life at getting things back to normal. They cannot tell me how much better it is going to be. It is not going to get to a point that you are better. It will not get to that point. It will just keep growing, growing and growing over my whole life. At what pace, nobody knows.

Mr V. HARRIS — One example of that would be with nerves from the back into the arm. If you have got an itchy back, he is not going to scratch here, but basically at the moment he will touch his — —

He has had nerve taken from this side over to here, so scratch here and he will feel here. It is really that for his arm to work again.

Mr S. HARRIS — It has to relearn everything.

Mr V. HARRIS — The brain has got to learn what that nerve function was, and now that it has got a different purpose. We can transplant all of the nerves and they will be effective, but the brain has got to tell them to do it. That is walking, talking; everything about his life is a relearning exercise now.

Mrs HARRIS — But then the brain is a pretty amazing organ. It has done a lot of things. 'I have had to learn to eat and talk, do all of that again', and it did it.

The CHAIR — Mrs Harris, are there any other comments that you would like to make?

Mrs HARRIS — No. I think I have pretty much covered all of what I can think of that might have been of help.

The CHAIR — If there are any other thoughts that you have that you could put on the record, feel free to keep in touch with our staff and you can come back in. We will be having other hearings at different times.

Mr S. HARRIS — One thing I could add — and I was thinking about it the other day — would be if there was more training for your motorbike licence; if there was more training in general and more training on trail bikes. I think to get your learners permit on a motorbike is not a difficult task. You do not have to do 120 hours of training; all you have to do is rock up to a couple of hours session, answer a few questions and you have got your licence. Then it only takes six months to get your Ps. I am not sure of the rest of it, but if there was more training that was required for your licence and more training on trail bikes, it would be beneficial.

Mr V. HARRIS — A lot of it is taken for granted too — us included. We have had a country property for as long as the kids have been on this earth. As Scott said, he was riding a peewee at the age of five. It might have been just down the road to the gate and back again and so forth, so he got those skills. The training as such — going out and looking at the track that you are going ride on before, recognising the hazards that are there before you take off and do whatever, that might be very difficult in a state forest, because you are going from A to B. You are not going to go that full distance and check out the track before you go, but you should be feeling familiar before it is full run and gung-ho on those particular areas.

Mrs HARRIS — I have just had a thought. Is there a separate licence for trail biking and road?

Mr ELSBURY — No.

Mrs HARRIS — It is just the one licence. There is another area that perhaps could be considered, like your automatic licence and your manual licence. If you are driving a manual car, you get the manual licence, but if you only want auto, you go for auto. Maybe there could be somewhere along there that, perhaps if it is specific to trail bike riding they want to do, they get registered and they have a trail bike licence that covers all those facets that Scott is talking about, or a combined one. We have all got our boat licences, and to get your PWC you have to have your boat licence. To drive a jet ski, you cannot get that without having your boat licence. It is a bit of an add-on that you can get. Perhaps there really needs to be more looking in the licensing form.

The CHAIR — Mr and Mrs Harris and Scott, thank you very much for coming along today. Thank you for your preparedness to put your thoughts on the public record. I trust we can make full use of your insights into the area to ensure that other people do not have to go through the travail that you have had to experience. At the same time we wish you all the best in your journey. Feel free to follow our program. You are very welcome just to observe some of the other submissions that we have got. You will get a copy of what has been covered today. Look at it, sign off on it and get it back to the committee. We will placing it on the Web. We look forward to having a look at your presentation as well. Thank you very much.

Mr S. SCOTT — Thank you very much.

Mr V. SCOTT — Thank you for inviting us.

Mrs SCOTT — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Might I add I hope Mr Silvester wins a writing award — a Quill award — for his piece. It is a very good piece of writing.

Witnesses withdrew.