

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Melbourne — 19 October 2011

Members

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Witnesses

Mr J. Buskes, chairman, motorcycle industry division,

Ms K. Gordon, delegate to VicRoads Motorcycle Advisory Group,

Mr S. Strickland, industry consultant, and

Mr M. McKenna, manager, motorcycle industry division, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Welcome to this public hearing of the Road Safety Committee's inquiry into motorcycle safety. The committee has received some 68 written submissions since releasing the terms of reference and inviting submissions. The purpose of these hearings is to obtain further evidence from selected witnesses covering the terms of reference. Thank you for attending this hearing. You are reminded that anything you say before the committee today is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, once you leave the hearing anything you say or publish outside this room is not so protected. Hansard is recording today's proceedings, and we will provide a proof version of the transcript to witnesses so that any typographical errors can be corrected. I am pleased to see a number of observers in the room, indicating the high level of interest this issue generates. We welcome you to the committee and thank you for giving evidence to us.

I invite you to make some opening comments and remarks, should you wish to do so, after which the committee will proceed by asking questions.

Mr McKENNA — The VACC thanks the committee for inviting us here today to discuss our submission to the inquiry into motorcycle safety in Victoria. I will give a brief overview of the chamber. From figures provided to 30 September 2011, the VACC represents approximately 5164 automotive retail members in Victoria. The Victorian motorcycle retail membership comprises a majority of companies retailing motorcycles in Victoria, and we therefore consider it to be a precious resource for gaining information and distributing information directly to motorcycle riders. The executive committee of the VACC motorcycle industry division is a 10-man committee elected from members of that industry sector. It is a properly elected committee following AEC guidelines and prescribed formulas.

Today representing the MID is chairman Mr John Buskes, Ms Kat Gordon and Mr Stuart Strickland. Mr Buskes, chairman of the motorcycle industry division, is also an executive board member of the VACC and vice-president of the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce. Mr Buskes is an LMCT at multiple locations and is also an active motorcycle rider. Ms Kat Gordon is the proprietor of Sixty Degrees Motorcycles in Notting Hill. Ms Gordon is the VACC delegate to the Motorcycle Advisory Group and also an active rider. Also attending today and representing the VACC is Mr Stuart Strickland. Mr Strickland is a former industry executive with over 40 years experience and a great friend and mentor to many in the industry. I now invite Mr Buskes to address the committee.

Mr BUSKES — As Michael has mentioned, the VACC has 5100 members, and that represents 50 000 employees. It is a huge number and a precious resource. We are a touch point for the majority of motorcycle riders because we retail. Over the past 10 years the use of powered two-wheelers — motorcycles, scooters and agricultural motorcycles — has doubled. Accident fatality rates have declined, however, and data collection over the complex range of motorcycle usage has remained poor. Agencies lack the knowledge, and their endeavours to chase this information and data collection are poor. The expenditure of funds created through the motorcycle levy is not addressing the key elements that are addressed in the VACC submission to the committee. I am sure you have had an opportunity to read the submission. Have you all seen the submission?

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Yes, of course.

Mr BUSKES — Fantastic. Motorcyclists are our customers and, as I have said, come to us for advice and assistance with safety. They are influenced by what we say and what we do as motorcycle retailers. Consultation with motorcycle retailers revolves through the division. We would like to see the agencies and government, when they conduct a campaign, undertake some sort of consultation with the industry, because the industry represents the majority of the vehicles that riders are using.

It is often overlooked that motorcycle usage is technical and complex and requires regular fettling — that is, maintenance of the vehicle. We would like to implement a 5-point safety check, whether or not utilising the \$57 levy, that would happen every single time a motorcycle rider re-registers or during a certain period between registrations. The requirement would be to then contact a retailer or repairer — an LMCT — who would ensure that the bike is ready for use and will be maintained. All too often a majority of riders are not using their bikes regularly and let them sit fallow for six months plus, and things as vital as tyre pressures are often overlooked. It is a small but massive part of how a motorcycle behaves on the road. Mechanical maintenance of course is another aspect of the bike's conduct on the road — how the rider then connects with the motorcycle and how it then connects with the road.

We suggest that there be a campaign on tyre pressures rather than — I heard previously a question on the TAC ad — a negative picture being painted. For instance, we could have a rider on his knees with a tyre pressure gauge in his hand checking tyre pressures prior to a ride. We would rather see something like that in a campaign than a rider wearing a T-shirt, saying, ‘This is not what you do’.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — I wish to clarify a couple of the comments you made. In terms of the board members, how many did you say there are? Could you quickly run through their CVs in terms of the backgrounds of your members?

Mr BUSKES — We have a committee; it is not a board.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Okay, a committee.

Mr BUSKES — The chamber has an executive board. The VACC has 15 different divisions, and they range from agricultural vehicles, used cars, new cars, radio repairers to the recyclers division. The motorcycle division is one of them. It has a committee and those 10 committee members are elected through the Australian Electoral Commission; I am sure you would be aware of them. Their CVs, I guess, would best describe them as retailers. So every single one of those members is a retailer and, again, has a touch point with motorcyclists every single day.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — You have referred to agencies lacking the knowledge.

Mr BUSKES — Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Which agencies are you referring to?

Mr BUSKES — We are talking about TAC and VicRoads directly. We would also like to suggest — and this is a wonderful opportunity for the chamber — when a government wants to make a choice about road furniture, when a government wants to make a choice about grids or when a government wants to make a choice about the way it wants to decongest its city, that it considers powered two-wheeled transport.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Mr Buskes, are you not engaged with the agencies you have named?

Mr BUSKES — Absolutely. The chamber is regularly engaged. What we believe is — —

The DEPUTY CHAIR — In what format?

Mr BUSKES — We have David Russell.

Mr McKENNA — We do meet bimonthly with VicRoads’ registration and licensing division. We also meet under the auspices of a licensed federal tester group which meets quarterly with VicRoads to discuss issues that will affect the actual trade. So if there is any new procedure or policy that VicRoads wish to implement, they will come to us with this from time to time; whether they listen to what we have to say is a totally different question.

Mr BUSKES — Our concern is that none of these agencies are seeing the big picture. Very few of these committed entities are motorcyclists and therefore they miss the understanding of how two wheels interact with the road.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — I think you said that there was no consultation or a lack of consultation.

Mr BUSKES — Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Can you elaborate further on that, because given that in your submission you state that you do engage with the agencies — —

Mr BUSKES — Yes, we do.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — I am trying to put a picture together in terms of where the lack of consultation comes in.

Mr BUSKES — Great. TAC has not contacted us. Although we have had TAC members as guest speakers at executive board meetings, et cetera, the consultation is simply not there. We would certainly love that consultation, especially when we are talking about media-derived campaigns. That is where we would like to have input.

Mr TILLEY — In relation to your submission, I want to refer to rider access in the state forests.

Mr BUSKES — Yes.

Mr TILLEY — In particular it says there are some recent changes that have occurred which have restricted that rider access. Can you elaborate on that point and give us some detail as to where there are restrictions and what is occurring?

Mr BUSKES — Right now, and rightly so, there are a lot of areas that are sensitive. We, as retailers, are often suggesting to riders not to conduct their own chicken track, because it is so easy for a motorcyclist, when a road or a track is closed, to abide by that closure and to adhere to that. We understand that today, even the riding style — how a descent is attacked with a relatively moderate use of braking and a moderate use of acceleration — affects the degradation of that track. We talk to our customers. In the off-road scenario those closures are all too often warranted, not just from an environmental aspect but from a safety aspect as well.

Mr TILLEY — I am also interested in off-road and the increased incidence of injuries coming from off-road incidents. It goes to training and the use of off-road and how those experiences of riding off-road can cross over to road craft.

Mr BUSKES — Absolutely. We advocate, as you would see in the submission, the introduction of a junior licensing program. It is a wonderful program that we believe is where a rider learns the nuts and bolts of riding. The fundamentals and the skills that keep him upright are actually learnt on the trail. In those formative years — we are talking about from 12 to 14 years onwards — we have a system that allows young riders to ride and be educated and tutored alongside experienced trail riders with a registration program that allows that support. I do not know whether you are aware of the off-road recreational registration that VicRoads has developed in consultation with us which enables a trail bike to be able to be ridden through daylight hours. They do require a licence to be ridden in daylight hours but do not require full registration for a full roadworthy motorcycle, only a trail worthy motorcycle.

Mr TILLEY — I have probably got about three more questions. That leads me to when you are talking to the younger riders and specifically to some detail in relation to junior off-road licensing requirements.

Mr BUSKES — Yes.

Mr TILLEY — Can you expand on that?

Mr BUSKES — Sorry, your question is?

Mr TILLEY — Specifically about the ideas in your submission in relation to providing some details on the junior off-road licence proposals.

Mr BUSKES — I will let Stuart answer that.

Mr STRICKLAND — If you look at off-road motorcycling, off-road motorcyclists start using the 50 cc mini-bike. There are mini-bike clubs — not enough of them — situated throughout Victoria. Kids that ride mini-bikes will do so at club level up to the age of 10 or, maybe at maximum of 12. Then we have this gap between that age and the age to acquire a full licence. What do they do? Motorcycles are available. A wide range of motorcycles are available for these young people to ride, but they cannot ride legally. They cannot get the licence and they cannot get the registration, so they ride illegally.

If you have a look at the graph that was provided within the submission you will see that motorcycles are reported through the federal chamber at the moment. The legitimate importers or the historical importers capture these figures, but these Chinese motorcycles that are coming in and being sold through non-traditional channels are not captured. The motorcycle market is a lot larger than is published. Of course a lot of these motorcycles are very cheap and, as we heard yesterday, their quality is improving. They are used by young

people and they are being used illegally in a lot of areas, which is causing nuisance value for councils and for police.

This is a huge area, and one of the things that has irritated me for many years is the inability of the agencies and government to really focus on the big picture. As a very small example, why has Australia produced so many motorcycle champions on the world scene? In terms of producing them, it is because they start riding dirt-bikes from a very young age and they acquire skills, which enable a guy like Casey Stoner to win the world championship? Off-road motorcycling is huge, and we are the largest per capita off-road market in the world because we can ride all year round. But this is not understood; this off-road area is really underdone in terms of catering for the requirements. Here we are with a population of 22 million having land closed down. How ridiculous is that? Why is it that off-road riders cannot ride in those areas? Why are areas not made available for off-road riders?

Most of the kids that ride mini-bikes are pretty well equipped. The fathers buy them the full gear, so all of a sudden they start thinking about things like protection. It becomes second nature. Kids that have ridden from a young age that go through the off-road, and then might go on the road, have good gear. It is just part of what you do. You do not question it; you just buy the good gear.

You also acquire very good skills. From time to time a motorcycle will move around on the road as it does on the trail, and it is a very handy skill to have ridden off-road. The training that is conducted to get a motorcycle licence is road-based; it does not really cater for off-road. Then of course you get the ATV area, which I really have not heard much about. I was only sitting here yesterday, but it is something I would like to address maybe later on, because that is a huge issue too.

Mr TILLEY — The ATV is separate from this inquiry. We are dealing with two-wheelers. Going to training, I have a two-part question. First, in your submission you say that some training providers teach students to pass the test but do not train them so that they are competent. I have a supplementary to follow up on that.

Mr STRICKLAND — Competency-based. I have a list of things. It has got out of kilter here because Kat something to say as well. It is probably important that she covers that. In the end obviously competency-based training leading to the issue of licence should apply across the board, including ATVs. Because in the end common sense is that if you are going to train someone, why are you training them? Why do you train an aircraft pilot? You train them to fly a plane competently so that it does not crash. In terms of issuing a licence, is it not part of issuing a licence to make sure that someone goes out and is competent to manoeuvre in traffic or whatever situation they are going to use the motorcycle in?

There are wide-ranging issues. Talking to the country dealers about their experience of people who get their licence and then come down to Melbourne, obviously the riding in Melbourne is quite different from the riding in the country. They are different. Is someone who has trained in the country competent to ride in the city? How do they handle Melbourne traffic and the very aggressive drivers that we have in Australia?

Mr TILLEY — What is the silver bullet to resolve the issue? How can we rectify it?

Mr STRICKLAND — It has to be done through the training regime, obviously. There is enough knowledge out there within the training regimes to make sure that a motorcyclist can be turned out as competent. There is plenty of motorcycle training expertise within Australia. There is a company I used to work for that has plenty of that.

Mr PERERA — Do you think the responsibilities should be separated, the training regime and the testing?

Mr STRICKLAND — Probably common sense would dictate that they should be, because you do not have the fox looking after the chickens, do you?

Mr ELSBURY — Given that we have a fairly limited amount of time, maybe it is better for the presentation to be completed and we should hear from Ms Gordon.

Ms GORDON — One of the terms of reference asks us to consider the effectiveness of the safety levy. I do not know whether there has been much discussion around the additional levy that motorcyclists have imposed

on them. At page 35 our submission notes that we believe it is discriminatory towards motorcyclists. We do not support it and I think that sentiment is fairly agreed upon amongst motorcyclists. The fact is that the levy is not imposed on any other road user. The TAC is supposed to have a no-fault scheme but motorcyclists have a levy imposed on them that no-one else has to pay.

The other part of the levy is that I think two-thirds of it is used to improve road conditions, which benefits all road users. So we are looking at accident black spots. A lot of times from my personal experience they are caused by trucks carving up corners of roads and you end up with potholes. So it is not motorcyclists who are causing the damage to the roads, although we are crashing on those parts of the roads, but the levy that we are having to pay is used to partly fund repairing the roads, which benefits all road users.

I think it is one of those things that is a bit of a thorn in the sides of motorcyclists. In 2007 Tasmania looked at imposing a safety levy on motorcyclists and actually chose to impose it on all road users to fund ongoing key initiatives in the Tasmanian road safety strategy. I guess part of it for motorcyclists is that we do not believe we should be discriminated against with the levy but also that our levy is not going towards things that are specifically motorcycle related. One of the things with regard to the levy as well is that it is used to fund initiatives that are punitive towards motorcyclists. That is one specific thing that we wanted to bring up in the submission.

Mr TILLEY — Can I just go to your comment that in Tasmania the levy applied to all road users. Would you have a position on that? We are just exploring.

Ms GORDON — Yes. I think if you are going to impose a levy — —

The levy is a TAC safety levy and the TAC is supposed to have a no-fault scheme, but it would imply that motorcyclists are being targeted as being at fault. If it is not going to be discarded, then levy all road users.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Can I just put to you that the TAC submitted to this inquiry that it collects \$53 million per annum, which constitutes 3.5 per cent of TAC revenue, but that in 2010 in compensation they paid out \$152 million, which constitutes 20 per cent. Would you care to comment on that?

Ms GORDON — I have heard those figures as well, a couple of times. I guess what I would ask is that those figures be actually drilled down to show whether the fault was predominantly with the motorcyclist or with the car driver. I know that I actually pay a higher TAC premium on my motorcycle than I do on my van. So I am paying a higher premium and I am paying a levy. Am I in all cases 100 per cent at fault? The implications of just throwing around those figures or statistics without actually drilling down into them is that it looks like the motorcyclist is 100 per cent at fault in those situations.

Mr TILLEY — Currently the regime has a safety levy for motorcyclists, but if we are exploring the hypotheticals of it applying to all road users, what about those who have a number of registered vehicles, who own both a motor vehicle and a motorcycle?

Ms GORDON — Originally they were imposing a levy per motorcycle, so if you owned multiple motorcycles you had a levy imposed multiple times. Now we get levied on only one single motorcycle, so you would suggest being levied on a single vehicle. I guess you have to remember that the TAC is covering a person rather than a vehicle.

Mr McKENNA — The government could also alleviate some of that pressure on the consumer by introducing a six-month registration renewal practice in Victoria, which is the only state that does it not have it currently.

Mr STRICKLAND — The other thing that is not commonly understood is that motorcyclists own multiple motorcycles. I have three registered in the garage at the moment, plus another three vehicles, so I am contributing quite well to TAC funding. Just following up on the TAC, one of the frustrations that I have always had, being around the motorcycle industry for a long time, is the complete inability of the agencies to understand what motorcycling is all about. There are 17 different categories of motorcycling and you can talk to people within the 17 categories and they are all thinking differently, so one solution does not fit all.

With the agencies, it is just appalling. When you are talking to them, they just do not understand motorcycling. They do not employ people. Okay, you can employ someone who rides a road bike. So what? What about off-road, mini-bikes, agricultural — all these other areas where motorcycles are used? They just do not understand, and these people are creating legislation for motorcyclists. The TAC advertising is appalling. That ad that they have been showing recently of a guy falling off and going underneath a four-wheel drive, as a motorcyclist you look at that. If it had been around a corner, it might have had some degree of reality, but looking at that, on a straight stretch of road, everyone is going, 'What's all that about?'. That is just ridiculous. It is insulting, it is stupid, and it is doing nothing for motorcyclists' safety.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Stuart, could you succinctly provide a bit of your personal background?

Mr STRICKLAND — I grew up on a farm, and I still have farming relatives, so I am well aware of what goes on in the farming community. I came to Melbourne in 1971 and worked for Milledge Brothers, which were the Yamaha distributors, along with Harley, DKW, Ossa, Hodaka, Sachs — heaps of motorcycle agencies. I worked with them for 10 years.

I joined Honda in 1981 and progressed through various areas. I got involved in the car business, motorcycle business, power equipment business and ended up being managing director for Honda, the only non-Japanese managing director in the world. Why did that happen? It probably happened because I got a reputation for using every single product that Honda ever built. I used every one. So I have wide experience in the motorcycle community and have been battling with agencies and agency experience for years. From time to time they have had some good staff, like Ray Newland who worked for VicRoads and went on to be motorcycle manager for the federal chamber. Ray had a really good handle on motorcycling because he was a motorcyclist. Once again, he is a road motorcyclist; he did not know a lot about off road. I have put together some points and I will quickly step through them.

Data is a problem — the accuracy of data that agencies throw up. Data can be used for illumination or support. Some of the data that the agencies provide, you just do not understand where it has come from; it does not match reality. Again, the agencies are not open in providing the data to the whole motorcycle community so that we can evaluate it.

Competency-based training we have already covered. I believe the levy should be paying for a motorcycle facility funded by the levy and government within close proximity to Melbourne where track days can be run. Young males on sports bikes want to use the performance. The solution is not on the roads; the solution is track days. Phillip Island is a car and motorcycle track. Broadford is not quite suitable. A huge space needs to be created within an hour of Melbourne that can cater for all types of motorcycling at a reasonable price, including track days. There needs to be some investment by governments to get some of these young guys that want to squirt their motorcycles and get them off to a facility where they can do it safely.

Duty licensing and registration has to happen. Teaching young people how to handle motorcycles from an early age is really important. Introduction of quality standards for the importation of off-road motorcycles — all these Chinese off-road bikes that are coming in with no standards, absolutely none.

Mandatory dialogue between agencies and the motorcycle community on all regulations issues affecting motorcycles. Agencies employing motorcyclists with a working knowledge of the three key areas of motorcycling — road, off-road and agricultural — with whom the motorcycle community can have sensible dialogue. Trying to have sensible dialogue with VicRoads or the TAC is just frustrating.

I sat on VMAC for a while and I ended up handing my tag, when I was at Honda, over to Mark Collins, who is a leader, and Mark was in here yesterday because he could feed back on the rider-training issues. Now I am on the Motorcycle Advisory Group, and I will be talking to politicians who appreciate my background. But I was sitting on that thinking, 'Where is all this going?'. No. 1 is that I think a lot of the members that have been chosen out of the motorcycle community are deadwood, to be blunt. With four meetings a year of 2 hours duration, what is going to happen within that time? It is just — I am going away, sorry.

Mr TILLEY — Do not apologise.

Mr STRICKLAND — This is crazy stuff; it really is.

Mr BUSKES — Not enough.

Mr STRICKLAND — We have got to find out what the 17 categories of motorcycles think? What do they need? What do they want? Are they going to behave responsibly? What training do they need? It all varies. A kid on a mini-bike and the fathers, the parents, have a whole lot of ideas, right up to the older guys that are riding touring bikes. It is so diverse and it is definitely lofted in the roof of the agencies. All these agencies do not want anyone to crash; they do not want anyone to be injured. And that is absolutely wonderful stuff, it really is. But in reality is that possible? Probably not. Great steps could be made forward but only together. Motorcyclists are the best people to address motorcycling issues because it is so complex. I have said my bit.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Thank you for that. Before we proceed, Ms Gordon, have you finished your submission?

Ms GORDON — I have, yes.

Mr ELSBURY — I hesitate to ask this question, considering it is about your two favourite government authorities, but are you aware of the work that VicRoads and the TAC are doing on protective clothing?

Mr STRICKLAND — Yes, I am aware of the work that they are doing on protective clothing and, once again, they are struggling with that, as are a lot of others. The worldwide basis is: should it be mandatory or not mandatory, and the quality of clothing. A motorcyclist appreciates the fact that when you have been riding for a while, or you have any experience, or you have come from a mini-bike background, you appreciate that good gear is really important because at some stage of your career, off-road or on-road, you are going to take a tumble, and having good gear is a really important part of protecting yourself.

We are aware of it, but once again it is a complex issue because primarily all the focus at the moment is on road riders. What about all the off-road riders? What about the guys on ATVs? I know this is somewhere else, but you see stuff on the television about ATVs and some guy that has nearly killed himself, and he is back on TV riding around without a helmet or anything.

Mr BUSKES — Yes, it was an Akubra.

Mr STRICKLAND — What is happening here?

Mr ELSBURY — I do not know about the impact standard on an Akubra.

Mr BUSKES — Pretty good.

Mr TILLEY — I had a friend killed as a result of an ATV crash — a primary producer.

Mr STRICKLAND — Some 11-year-old kid was killed the other day riding an adult ATV — written all over it that no-one under 16 should be riding it — with no helmet. What is happening? Why is all this happening?

Mr ELSBURY — Also in your submission you mentioned that returning riders are more crash prone. Would you support a separation of driver and motorcycle licence renewals and a retesting requirement for those wishing to return to the road?

Mr BUSKES — Not necessarily retesting, but certainly a training requirement so that they need to be ticked off if there is a hiatus of a particular period. Do not ask me what that period should be. What we would like to see for people who have not remained in contact regularly with their motorcycle is for a retraining aspect to be ticked off and certificated. Not necessarily relicensing, but they need to be retrained and there is another option for that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Ticked off by whom?

Mr BUSKES — To be retrained by any one of the training providers. There are quite a few training providers here in Victoria.

Mr ELSBURY — But would not ticking off — I know we are ticked off with TAC and VicRoads — suggest that there is an assessment component to the retraining?

Mr BUSKES — Not necessarily. I think you would be talking about a four-year-old being treated like a novice and that would be inappropriate.

Mr ELSBURY — A 32-year-old with 6 hours experience on a road bike?

Mr BUSKES — Certainly in your circumstance the fact that you have got your learners permit and hopefully you did not waddle out of the car park?

Mr ELSBURY — No.

Mr BUSKES — Hopefully you were trained appropriately and you did leave with a semblance of professional training and an understanding of the dangers and an understanding of the skills and the fundamentals.

Mr ELSBURY — I feel I still need some more experience before I take on the world.

Mr BUSKES — Absolutely. That is a necessity and the necessity is out there in the wild.

Ms GORDON — I think you will find a lot of riders — John and I are in the thick of it dealing with the end-user at the end of the day — realise that it is not a case of, ‘I just get on my motorbike and that is the end of it’. They do realise that riding with more experienced riders, getting training, is a very important part of their motorcycling career. You have already recognised that for you to get on a motorbike and ride through the middle of Melbourne is probably not appropriate at this point in time. We have to remember that there is always going to be a component of cowboys and the guys that ride around in their singlets and shorts that almost become the focus of the motorcycling community, whereas they do not actually represent the broader community.

Mr ELSBURY — One more question, if I may. Even on the road to work today, I observed this: the driver with their brain in the glove box, when a motorbike doing exactly what I got taught you should be doing, positioned himself exactly where he should be, but the driver threw the indicator on and moved and almost took out the bike. Do you think that an increased awareness of motorcyclists in getting your probationary licence or even an education campaign is required?

Ms GORDON — I read an interesting UK study done recently where they set up a simulator, basically sitting in a car with a windscreen, rear-view mirror and side mirrors, and they tested novice drivers, experienced drivers and dual car-motorcycle riders. They tested how long they actually spent looking for hazards and looking for motorcycles. They also tested attitudes, so the attitudes towards other road users, prior; and they did the simulation which showed that dual drivers spend more time looking for hazards. Someone who rides will actually see a motorcycle and spend more time recognising what it is. A simple thing like a simulated situation like that, looking out for motorcyclists or pedestrians or any of the other ones classed as more vulnerable road users, actually made a difference at the end of the day to the person’s attitude as well, so they have re-tested the attitude. The attitudes of non-motorcycle novices and experienced riders had actually changed. So a simple thing like that included in your car licence phase would make a difference. I got hit by a car; I had been riding for eight months. It probably would not happen now, but a car just changed lanes — —

Mr STRICKLAND — I have a slightly different slant on this. I think the judiciary is ridiculous. Why should you be allowed to cut across a motorcyclist and knock them off and get virtually no penalty? Victoria Police from time to time harass motorcyclists. They do; it is a fact. So here we are; we have motorists doing all sorts of crazy stuff. Now there are two people killed by the constabulary. Okay, that is tragic for them and tragic for the families. But there are virtually no penalties. One is still to come up. This really drives motorcyclists nuts. Why does this happen? I think car drivers need to understand if you run over a pedestrian, or you knock a motorcyclist off, there is some severe penalty rather than this slap on the hand from the judiciary.

Mr ELSBURY — I am very sorry for taking up all this time, but there was a suggestion by one of the submissions and one of the presenters yesterday for people riding mopeds not necessarily needing a separate licence from a drivers licence due to their low-power, low-speed abilities and that that would increase people’s

awareness of two-wheel vehicles simply because Katie is riding one, my daughter is riding one, my sister is riding one, my brother is riding one and I am riding one.

Mr BUSKES — I am aware of two-wheeler transport.

Mr STRICKLAND — And the other thing is an LA category scooter with lights and brakes is a damn sight more stable than a bicycle that will do basically pretty much the same speed. That needs to be considered as well.

Mr PERERA — You make a number of calls for data on rider experience to be collected throughout the first three years of riding. Can you provide further details on how this would work and what that would achieve.

Mr BUSKES — We are looking for regular surveys on keeping motorcycle registration renewal. This would be a survey that needs to be completed. It would be mandatory. You do not get your registration; you do not get your sticker sent out to you. We are also suggesting a separate sticker. We are in regular dialogue with VicRoads about that scenario so this would be a survey that needs to be conducted prior to the registration label being set out. 'Yes, you are registered and thank you very much for your input over the first three years'.

Mr STRICKLAND — Can I add to that?

Mr BUSKES — And the collection of data that we are also talking about is the collection of accident data, what Kat referred to beforehand, when an accident has taken place. Were the time pressures right? Was the bike sound and absolutely roadworthy? This would be a genuine forensic inquest into every single two-wheeler mishap. That data collection — —

Mr PERERA — So this is three years from the date they get a first-time licence, is it?

Mr STRICKLAND — Really there is a lack of common sense about so much to do with motorcycling. In the end if you collect data on what happens in the first three years of riding, what do you do with the data? I asked Kieran Walshe this, who looked at me with a blank look on his face. You can take the experiences back into the rider training regime to train people. If people are riding, why are they crashing? They are crashing running wide on corners. They cannot brake correctly. What do you do? You take it back into the rider training environment and you enhance the rider training environment. The rider training environment curriculum has remained pretty stagnant.

Yesterday we heard about this ridiculous situation in a country of 22 million people where we have each state with a different rider training regime. And then you get an organisation like VicRoads that is trying to analyse what is happening in Victoria with a pissy little bloody registration base when it really needs to be done across the whole of Australia.

Mr BUSKES — There has been no information.

Mr STRICKLAND — There needs to be one rider training curriculum for the country and we need to collect the data on why people are having accidents and then bring it back into the rider training environment. Does that not make sense?

Mr BUSKES — Yes, this rider crashed because he certainly was not aware of the change in the road surface. He has not been informed as to how that affects him, especially in the first three years. There would be a novice stage up to a competent stage, understanding the fundamentals that appear intangible but clearly are tangible because they affect the way that the bike will remain upright.

Ms GORDON — And also I think there seems to always be motorcyclists overlaid with car drivers, so what works for car drivers should work for motorcyclists. Whereas motorcycles, as Andrew would know, are a very different beast. I see a lot of bikes come in where a rider has taken evasive action and they have crashed. It is counted as a single vehicle accident where the rider is at fault. I have had riders who have had pedestrians walk out in front of them, or where they have swerved because a car has done a U-turn or pulled out in front of them. They are classed as a single vehicle accident. We could possibly wear that if there was that data collection that showed that there were mitigating circumstances. Yes, it was a single vehicle accident but there were mitigating circumstances. Then we could come back to the training side of things. This is a big area where motorcycles are crashing and so we put it into training regimes.

Mr STRICKLAND — We heard from, was it Andrew? The young guy who got — —

Ms GORDON — Matthew.

Mr TILLEY — Matthew Zammit, yes.

Mr STRICKLAND — I think if you followed through Matthew's accident in terms of the police reporting or maybe the gentleman that the surgeon mentioned, the 50-year-old, that would be a classic one to follow through. If you follow through on that and have a look at the police reporting, it is abysmal. You get a copper who does not ride, rocks up to an accident and then tries to figure out what happened. Hello, good luck. The stuff that comes back is just — —

Mr PERERA — You made some comments before that police are discriminating towards motorcyclists. Do you think the whole judiciary system discriminates? Do you think it gives lenient sentences to car drivers as opposed to motorcyclists?

Mr STRICKLAND — There is a perception in the community if you are a motorcyclist that you are a temporary Australian because you ride a motorcycle. It is there. If we were to walk down Elizabeth Street and ask 10 people what do they think about motorcycling, safety would come up with probably 8 of them. There is this perception and that is carried right through the community, unfortunately.

Mr BUSKES — To answer your question, yes, there is a bias in the judiciary. If you are a motorcyclist and you are in the Magistrates Court, you are behind the eight ball because you are a motorcyclist; absolutely.

Mr TILLEY — I will just very quickly go back to the subject of returning riders. I fall into that category. I still retain my motorcycle licence.

Mr BUSKES — Do not say 'fall' in that category.

Mr TILLEY — No, I should say 'upright'. I have had a registered motorcycle in my name probably for the last five years, but I have probably only ridden twice a year when I have borrowed friends' motorcycles. Going back to when we were talking about the coaching aspect and the number of registrations to the number of licence holders, potentially something could be connected there for coaching before returning, say, if you had not ridden a motorcycle, by some kind of declaration or affidavit.

Ms GORDON — There are always punitive measures it seems rather than an education process where we should encourage returned riders to seek training. I have had motorcycle riders who have been 15, 18 or 20 years off motorcycles who get back on and find that the technology has changed. The bikes go faster; they stop quicker. The entire technology that we are riding on now was not being used by racers 10 years ago. The technology has completely changed. Rather than just the Drink, Drive, Bloody Idiot campaign, we should have something to encourage motorcyclists. Rather than, 'You are 38 times more likely to be seriously injured', we should say, 'What a great thing to go and get training. What a great thing that you want to get your motorcycle licence back again and that you are coming back to riding'. The dealers should encourage riders when they come in to buy their motorbikes to go and get training. So rather than it always seeming to be a punitive action in relation to motorcyclists we should actually educate them about their options.

Mr TILLEY — I just want to go back to the subject of accident investigation and police. I have to declare I am a former member of Victoria Police, a member of the highway patrol in north-east Victoria, and responsible for many of those white lines around Walwa and Corryong and for air detection. I saw some incredible things from interstate riders coming into the state, particularly for the grand prix. It was not harassment; there was an enforcement measure there that we were targeting. The crew that I was working with were all riders and we engaged with the riders. It was not about harassing them; it was about getting them to their destination safely and getting them back out. But during one particular operation we lost two return riders. People lost their father, their husband; it was an absolute tragedy. They are the things that governments have a responsibility to try to protect.

Ms GORDON — We feel that as motorcycle riders as well. If somebody has an accident, such as when a teenager dies in a car, everybody in the community feels it. As a motorcyclist, when a motorcyclist dies, the motorcycling community does feel it.

Mr BUSKES — On the understanding that Kat touched on then, the change of the dynamic of today's motorcycle — that is, what is happening with anti-lock braking systems, the AVS, traction control and the tyres that are now growing, and how the new rider is getting used to developing his riding conditions now with traction control — this is all brand new. It is in the last 12 months that we are starting to see this develop, so in two years time we will see it being more prevalent across the range of models, and we will see how vital that is for them to then contact and be a touch point again with their dealer to ensure that those things remain correct and behaving correctly and are operative. If you then have a traction control vehicle and you are using the vehicle in a sports mode and you are using that traction control and it is not working, that will cause accidents. We want to see these regular, 12-monthly, five-point safety checks. That is what we want to see.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — I thank you on behalf of our committee for giving evidence. I encourage you, should you have additional evidence or documentation that you may wish to furnish our committee with, to liaise with our secretariat. We thank you so much for coming again.

Mr BUSKES — Thank you.

Ms GORDON — Thank you.

Mr McKENNA — If you ever have the need to address the industry as such, VACC is happy and willing to avail its membership to you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.