

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Melbourne — 19 October 2011

Members

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Witnesses

Mr R. Salvatore, and

Ms B. Sorensen, secretary, Victorian Motorcycle Council.

The CHAIR — Welcome, Mr Salvatore and Ms Sorensen. Thank you for giving of your time to present to the committee. We know, Rob, that you have been here in the background for the last couple of days observing proceedings. There are some formalities. One is that those in the back are to turn off their mobile phones and are not to interject. Witnesses will get a copy of the transcript that you can amend as appropriate for typographical errors and then forward back to us.

You have the benefit of parliamentary privilege at the present time. I do not envisage that would be an issue. If there is any information you would like to give in camera, feel free to go off the record. At that time we would clear the room, should that be a requirement. When you speak, I ask you to introduce yourselves and give your background and then speak to your presentation.

Mr SALVATORE — I thank the chair for the introduction and the opportunity to present to the inquiry today. It has been a fascinating experience watching democracy in process, so I feel privileged to be here. My name is — —

The CHAIR — You will give some of my colleagues too much confidence!

Mr SALVATORE — My name is Rob Salvatore. I am the primary author of the Victorian Motorcycle Council's submission. I am a rider of 14 to 15 years experience, having had some dirt also as a young tacker, and I am a qualified mechanical engineer with an honours degree in mechanical engineering working in a petrochemical refinery. I manage many risk programs in the refinery, so I think it is quite a natural fit with motorcycling, as motorcyclists are highly experienced risk managers. With me right now is Bronwyn Sorensen, and I will ask her to introduce herself.

Ms SORENSEN — I am the secretary of the Victorian Motorcycle Council. I have had a licence for four years. I am an everyday rider and I have a honours degree in psychology as well, so that also contributed to our submission with the research.

Mr SALVATORE — The VMC submission covers many motorcycling issues in some depth from the unique and complex characteristics of motorcycles through to discussion about how motorcycle anti-lock braking systems are not the apparent slam dunk they appear to be. The submission is supported by extensive referencing.

Today I intend only to highlight certain key aspects of the submission, so I fully encourage the committee to have a read of our submission. I think you will find it beneficial and invaluable. It almost seems silly to say it, but there is no group with a greater vested interest in motorcycle safety than motorcyclists themselves. From the vantage point of the VMC, it seems that authorities do not actually recognise this fact and they just seem to continually allow old prejudices and understandings to remain. This just emphasises to us or reinforces to us that it really is time for a change.

I might just break away from my prepared text here, because the RACV, of which I am a member, represents the greatest number of road users on the road. I struggle to comprehend that they are not interested in developing a partnership model with a vulnerable road user who shares the road with them. They talk about training and whatnot improving motorcycle safety, but they are talking from a car-centric point of view.

In the UK, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has some different streams, but it has a stream on advanced on-road motorcycle training to bronze, silver and gold standards. When you get to talk with Rob Smith from Motorcycling Australia, he is a gold standard-trained rider. That training is focused completely on understanding the road environment and the behaviours of other road users and using that in a predictive manner to avoid being involved in a collision. Motorcycle training is different from car training. I think car training could learn quite a lot from motorcycle training. I will move on. Thank you for allowing me to step on my soapbox for a moment.

The first paradigm shift that I believe is needed is for there to be truth in statistics. You have heard many times that the stats are a real problem. In the last 20 years the number of registered motorcycles has more than doubled. In fact powered two-wheelers are the fastest growing road user sector in Australia. However, this doubling has not led to a doubling of fatalities. If you look at the fatalities graph, you will see that the top line is the raw count of Victorian motorcycle fatalities. That to me shows a fairly clear decreasing trend in raw count

numbers. That is a trend over some 25 years. I keep hearing that the fatality rate is increasing, but the numbers just do not show that to be true.

When you add that to the fact that there has been a clear increase in the number of registered vehicles, it says without any ambiguity whatsoever that there has been a real-term reduction in the motorcycle fatality rate. The rate has more than halved. The lower line gives the fatality rate per 10 000 vehicle registrations, which clearly demonstrates the strong real-term downward trend. Over the time span indicated on the graph, which is 25-odd years, the rate has dropped to one-third of what it used to be. It was around 10 back in the mid-1980s; it is just above 3 fatalities per 10 000 registrations today. This reduction is not widely appreciated. In fact it seems to be actively underplayed. The prevailing perception is that motorcycling is more dangerous now than it ever has been, which we attribute to the recent TAC ads, the attitude of the media, ongoing Victoria Police public statements, the continued misrepresentation of some key motorcycle statistics and of course the general lack of knowledge or awareness by the public. The common perception is simply wrong.

The fatality rate in recent times has more than halved, which is a fantastic result, and it was achieved without the benefit of seatbelts, crumple zones, airbags, stability control and other safety devices that are taken for granted in vehicles today. Furthermore it has been achieved on roads that are both more crowded than they used to be and that present greater risks to vulnerable road users. The risks come from larger blind spots in modern vehicles and drivers exhibiting risk compensation behaviours when they are in their safer cars. Maurice Blackburn spoke about the Peltzman effect, which is equivalent to risk compensation behaviour. I need to repeat this: the fatality rate has more than halved. It is a fantastic result. If it were any other road user, it would be big news. It surprises me that it is not. The other feature the graph shows is that Victorian motorcyclists are some of the safest in Australia, with a fatality rate that has been above the Australian average only twice in 25 years. Victoria and Victorian riders are leading the way.

The lion's share of this success belongs to motorcyclists, and this emphasises that riders should be intrinsically involved in any future motorcycle safety programs. The authorities struggle to understand motorbikes, and that was mentioned earlier today by Stuart Strickland. They predominantly do so as a result of sifting through flawed statistics recorded after the event. Their programs can and do put riders offside as a result. Why then do they not create working partnerships with riders? It is time to break the old patterns and encourage a paradigm shift in road safety that takes full advantage of motorcycling's unique characteristics and of the expertise of riders.

It is all over the news, TV, magazines and billboards: motorcyclists are 38 times more likely to be injured than a car driver. I would like to explore this statistics in some depth. The 38-times figure — and this is not well understood — is based on an Australian Bureau of Statistics estimate of vehicle kilometres travelled which the ABS warns contains errors and inaccuracies. The ABS specifically warns that the estimate of motorcycle VKT has a relative standard error of 10 to 25 per cent and that the figure should be used with caution. Perhaps someone has not told the TAC this, because it bandies around that number quite a lot. This error results in a substantial underestimate of the distance travelled by riders, and the most recent ABS report points to an even greater relative standard error in the VKT figures for Victoria of up to 50 per cent.

To me, how many kilometres are travelled by motorcyclists is a professional guess. The true motorcycle VKT figure is likely to be substantially higher than these ABS estimates. Statistically speaking, this 38-times number should be considered unreliable, but that has not stopped the stat from being freely used. After all the 38-times figure comes from an official report and has a level of shock value that makes it a very useful figure in negative ad campaigns. We know that anything that is repeated often enough is eventually seen to be true, but the figure is not truthful.

However, let us take the figure as given. Some years ago it was 30 times more likely, more recently it was 34 times more likely and now it is 38 times more likely. That rising trend has been interpreted by authorities as an alarming increase in the motorcycle injury rate. Their interpretation is that motorcycling must be becoming more dangerous. At best we are not sure, but most likely that is not the case. The 38-times figure is a simple mathematical ratio of the number of rider injuries per kilometre — and we understand there is a flaw in the VKT figure — to the number of motorist injuries per kilometre. It is simply one calculated number divided by another calculated number. Is it a meaningful comparison? Frankly it is if you want to promote driving and discourage motorcycling. Does an increase in the ratio show that motorcycling is more dangerous? Probably not.

The ratio should be understood to be a very cynical estimate of motorcycle safety, since a reduction in the driver injury rate will cause the ratio to rise. The fewer drivers that are injured the higher the ratio becomes. Does that tell you anything about motorcycle safety? No. If the motorcycle injury rate was calculated to be higher due to an underestimated VKT, then the ratio would be higher than it should be. Does that tell you anything about motorcycle safety? Most likely not. The VMC thinks both of these factors are at play. If they are, then the ratio is a significant overestimate and completely unreliable. Its use should be stopped, and I strongly believe that. If we are genuinely interested in measuring motorcycle safety and putting out truthful safety messages, then this is not the figure to use, ostensibly because the ratio does not indicate anything meaningful about motorcycle safety.

At any rate it is simply not reasonable to compare apples with oranges. Motorcycles are not cars. A more useful measure would be the rate of rider injury per kilometre. That would tell you something about motorcycle safety. Has this changed recently? We do not reliably know. If we did, though, it would tell us something about motorcycle safety. The bottom line is that we need a better range of metrics to help understand what is really going on and to also depoliticise the statistics. It is time for truth to enter the statistics and for the cynical approach to be dropped.

Another example of flawed statistics — and it pains me — was demonstrated by the RACV just now and in several key submissions to the inquiry. The run of discussion goes like this: the percentage of motorcycle fatalities is increasing, which indicates an increasing fatality rate. The rate has increased the point that riders now represent 17 per cent of the state's road user fatalities. The inference is that 17 per cent, or any percentage, is unacceptably high and that something must be done about it.

The 17 per cent is correct, and the trend increase is correct — that is the red line there — but the suggested implication is absolutely incorrect. It is wrong. What they are referring to is a mathematical artefact that does not actually indicate a high or rising fatality rate. To those in the know it indicates a rising lack of comprehension of statistics. I ask the committee to reject any recommendations that flow from such a flawed understanding.

I will explain. When Victoria Police and the RACV refer to an increasing fatality rate they are referring to that red line. It is rising and it looks scary, but it is just a simple percentage. The dash line on the bottom is actually the motorcycle fatality number, and we know that there is a slightly decreasing trend there. The other dash line on the graph is Victoria's total road-user fatality count, which is clearly declining, and that is to be lauded.

The motorcycle fatality count is becoming a larger portion of the total count but is not itself becoming a larger value. Clearly the percentage has increased, but this is not indicative of a rising fatality rate. How can it be? The fatality rate has actually decreased. It has more than halved, and the fatality count is displaying a decreasing trend. The percentage measure is important, but it is not the important measure of motorcycle safety. I encourage the committee to encourage our authorities to use truth in their statistics.

I will move on from statistics. There is a second change that is needed, and to riders it is clear that it is time to stop blaming the rider. VicRoads, the TAC, Victoria Police, RACV and MUARC all clearly demonstrate the blame-the-rider thinking. In the interests of time I will not go into how each demonstrates this thinking, but I will table this section of my presented speech for the committee. I will return to it if we have time. I think it is important that the committee appreciate just how blinkered some key stakeholders actually are.

I will divert. Since RACV has just presented to you, I think it is important that I raise this impression. The RACV represent the largest body of road users, myself included, and they seem to represent an anti-motorcycling view. Amongst other things their submission calls for the TAC premium charge to eliminate the cross-subsidising of motorcycles. You heard that just before. We find this particularly offensive given the involvement of motor vehicles in motorcycle crashes. Furthermore the RACV wants the motorcycle levy to remain in place and for it to fund more engineering improvements to the roads. The VMC research and the MUARC that RACV just referred to, and that Bill Tilley was making a point about, show that all road users experience reduced crash rates on levy-treated roads. In effect riders are cross-subsidising motorists' safety, but that is acceptable because, to RACV, motorcycles are a problem. The hypocrisy of the RACV calling for an elimination of the cross-subsidy has not gone unnoticed. This is an example of blame-the-rider thinking.

The common denominator in all this is, despite the safety gains that are being made, motorcyclists are seen as a problem and not part of the solution. This is where another paradigm shift is needed. We have to break out of the blame-the-rider game, because the real problem is somewhat more sophisticated. That is not to say that we are not to carry some blame. Motorcyclists are not perfect; they make mistakes and show errors of judgement, but the evidence suggests that as riders become better motorcyclists, by taking additional training courses, developing riding networks and communities, sharing tips and skills, and looking out for each other, they reduce their intrinsic risk and their fatality rate. The lion's share of rider improvements has been achieved by the best safety device a motorcyclist can employ — that is, themselves. Motorcyclists therefore have a key role to play, and this needs to be formally recognised. However, there is another mostly untouched area that could reap significant safety benefits for riders, which was described yesterday as the 'elephant in the room', and that is related to other road users.

Studies have shown that half of all motorcycle fatalities involve another vehicle failing to heed the rider's right of way. This is a common statistic in many jurisdictions. CARRS-Q, the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland, reports that two-thirds of all motorcycle crashes involve another vehicle, with more than half of those vehicles failing to see and heed the motorcycle's right of way. That is a really important statistic, and that was supported earlier by Maurice Blackburn. Victoria Police would have you believe 70 per cent of all rider fatalities are the rider's fault, but this is out of step with results from around the world, including the EU's MAIDS, the Motorcycle Accident In Depth Study, and the much vaunted 1980s Hurt study from the US. Frankly the Victoria Police figures need to be viewed with some caution. As an aside, we do not even see the negative spin any more. The police come out and say that 70 per cent of motorcycle fatalities are the rider's fault. What is the percentage of drivers at fault in their own fatalities? Why is that not being bandied about in the same kind of politicised way? That is worth thinking about.

If half of all fatalities involve another vehicle being in the wrong, then how does blaming the rider actually help? It does not. Clearly there is a sizeable contribution from other road users to the 38 times figure, if we just take that figure as given. To me, to the VMC, this is perhaps the final paradigm shift that is required. If we can work towards improving driver awareness of motorcycles and other vulnerable road users, then we can expect the incidence of collisions to reduce. Drivers not seeing motorbikes and failing to give way occurs so often that there is a term for it — SMIDSY, 'Sorry mate, I didn't see you'. The Maurice Blackburn presentation covered SMIDSY and some key strategies for its reduction, which we support. But I would like to put an alternative, win-win proposition forward for the committee's consideration. The VMC recommends legitimising a common motorcycle practice called filtering. You have heard it many times during the hearings so far.

Overheads shown.

Mr SALVATORE — The picture that you see on the screen is a photo from the *Age* showing the Eastern Freeway in Melbourne. Filtering is the movement of a motorbike between queued or queuing slow-moving traffic, and you see in that photo filtering actually in train. This practice is already commonplace in most metropolitan areas in Australia. It is a practice conducted safely around the world, notably in the UK, where it is a required demonstrable motorcycle skill and it is fully supported by the UK police. In fact it is expressly permitted in some 25 countries. You can see that there is a very clear gap for filtering to take place. Does filtering improve motorcycle safety? Absolutely, yes. A recent report from America demonstrates how California has a lower rear-end motorcycle crash rate than other comparable US states, primarily because of filtering. The prime benefit is that by being in between the columns of traffic, a rider avoids being injured in a nose-to-tail collision, which is one of the most common traffic crashes. Also, by being in between the columns of traffic riders reduce their likelihood of being merged into. I will say that again, because it is counterintuitive: by being in between the columns of traffic riders reduce their likelihood of being merged into. In heavy traffic cars do not change lanes frequently, but interestingly in this picture there is one dunce driving a car there, trying to change lanes into a space that does not truly exist. It does happen, but if you look at the full picture and extend that forward and back to the front of the screen, cars are predominantly remaining in their queue of traffic. The space between the streams of traffic is generally safe.

The CHAIR — Mr Salvatore, just to hold you up there. That is an interesting picture you have got there of a car changing lanes at that point. Is he under any legal obligation not to change lanes? Or, if we reverse the process, if there was an exit coming up to the left, every now and again you do get cars legitimately trying to change lanes. If there was a practice of filtering, if you were queuing on the freeway that is sometimes called the

‘south eastern car park’, there could be 10 kilometres of queuing traffic where there are certain exit points. That would represent a danger, would it not, if a vehicle was changing lanes?

Mr SALVATORE — That driver is legally changing lanes there. Whether it is good etiquette or a good practice that he is doing that, I would say not necessarily. But yes, drivers do need to change lanes and filtering riders, with their greater vision and awareness, are actively looking for car body language that would suggest they are going to change lanes.

Ms SORENSEN — I will just give you a rider perspective. If you are travelling down these two columns of traffic, as a rider you are always looking. If there is a car next to a car, then that gap is likely to remain static; if there is a gap, a car here and a gap, then that is a high risk of lane changes, especially if you have got an exit coming up, so it is something that you manage. You are always going at a speed at which you can stop if that car changes lanes.

Mr ELSBURY — Just like in the second left-hand lane you have that little blue four-wheel-drive. It could easily slip into the gap in the third lane, and that is what you would be looking for?

Ms SORENSEN — That is exactly right.

Mr SALVATORE — Bronwyn and Andrew, I thank you for the Dorothy Dixier, because I actually had a point to make.

Mr ELSBURY — Do not worry about it. It was well done.

Mr SALVATORE — If a gap were to open up in the traffic as a rider is filtering, a rider could anticipate a car wanting to change lanes into that gap, and so they allow for that likelihood, thus avoiding the merging conflict. They allow for the likelihood by perhaps rolling off their throttle, setting up their brakes or maintaining a greater vigilance. It is uncommon for a filtering bike to be merged into in heavy traffic. We may present some stats from the department of transport in the UK that show that at the end of our submission.

The CHAIR — I will interrupt here. We have another 15 minutes or so for the time. How are you tracking through your presentation?

Mr SALVATORE — Yes, that will be fine. We will be knocked off in about 5 minutes.

The CHAIR — Because we want to ask questions too.

Mr SALVATORE — I would appreciate the questions. If the rider were instead to remain in the queue of traffic, the probability of a merging conflict actually increases, because to a driver the motorbike appears to create an apparent gap in the traffic. Any driver changing lanes into a perceived gap is therefore merging directly into a motorbike, with potentially devastating consequences. Remaining as part of the queue of traffic is not necessarily the safest place for a motorbike to be. The bike is left open to a rear-end collision and merging collision. On the other hand filtering, despite the common opinion, is actually safer, and this is one of the reasons why it should be legitimised. But it is not really the key reason. The key reason that we should legitimise filtering is that we believe it would result in a base reduction in SMIDSY. Regulatory change allowing filtering would need to be accompanied by improved training information and a public education campaign. Drivers would then look out for and expect to see motorbikes filtering in heavy traffic. But this awareness would not only be limited to heavy traffic. Having become aware of motorbikes, we expect that drivers would recognise and see them in all types of traffic, leading to a significant reduction in the incidence of SMIDSY, which is a big win. By legitimising filtering there are some consequent flow-on effects that benefit the road system and motorcyclists particularly. We hope the committee appreciates and seizes the opportunity to recommend that filtering be legitimised and therefore capture all the consequent benefits.

I have two final points to wind up. We invite the committee to review the structure of the Motorcycle Advisory Group, and see whether it can be modified to better serve motorcycle safety. MAG reports to VicRoads, as opposed to reporting directly to the minister, so the concerns and insights of motorcyclists may never actually make it to the minister. Furthermore MAG is scheduled for one 2-hour meeting per quarter, with a tendency to have an overfull agenda. This does not sound like an efficient meeting structure. The members are also restricted from communicating with their various networks and communities and the advisory group has no

stewardship over the TAC motorcycle levy, leaving the levy in the hands of VicRoads to administer. One has to question whether the priorities of VicRoads would reflect the safety priorities of riders and hence what messages would be relayed back to the minister, so we ask the committee to review the running and the charter of the MAG.

Finally, I want to mention the motorcycle levy. Almost 80 per cent of it is being used to implement engineering improvements to roads. All road users have benefited from the engineering solutions because a road that is safe for motorbikes is safer for all road users. Riders do not begrudge the better roads, but should not these fundamental engineering improvements be funded by all road users? They are fundamental improvements. If the motorcycle levy has to remain, we think it should be retargeted, thus re-engaging motorcyclists in the safety dialogue. In addition to roadworks, a much larger portion should be turned towards better and unbiased data collection and research, positive and constructive community awareness campaigns, subsidised training, and to fund motorcycle advocacy. We discuss that in some detail in our submission. Riders would then see value in the way their levy was being applied, which leaves the way open for a more receptive dialogue. I thank the committee for the opportunity to present and look forward to your questions.

The CHAIR — In your submission you say that motorcyclists are often forced to consider their safety first with adherence to the law a secondary consideration, and overtaking is an example. Can you elaborate further on that?

Mr SALVATORE — The road laws are written around the lowest common denominator and vehicles that take up most of the road space. Motorcycles are unique, they are very manoeuvrable and they have greater acceleration and whatnot. Forcing motorbikes to behave as a motor car puts them in the traffic, puts them in the proximity of other vehicles and exposes them to collision. We believe if the road laws could reflect the unique characteristics of motorcycles, they would also be catering to the best advantages that motorcycles present.

Mr LANGUILLER — You state that motorcycles are unique and require a different safety approach to cars. What would this approach look like?

Mr SALVATORE — A fundamental understanding about motorbikes, to begin with, would help to feed into what that program would look like. When it rains, riders get wet. If it is dusty, riders will get a speck of dust in their eye. The safety strategies are all seemingly punitive rather than being encouraging or proactively looking at how motorbikes could be used to their full advantage. I would happily take that question on notice and think about it a little further, but most road programs are focused on the predominant road user. Motorbikes are not cars; they behave differently and counter intuitively, too, so the common understanding applied to cars does not necessarily always fit motorbikes.

Mr TILLEY — Rob, just going into your submission, I do not think we covered a great deal of it, but specifically talking about countermeasures research, in your submission you say that countermeasures research is seen as a continuation of the non-encouragement policy of government organisations. Could you expand on those organisations and what your view is in regard to that?

Mr SALVATORE — A perfect example of that is the VicRoads GLS proposal. Many of the proposals in the GLS come from MUARC research and MUARC have said specifically in their research that these countermeasures have been listed as ways of preventing motorcycle uptake or reducing motorcycling exposure. That is not my interpretation, it is actually their wording, and a lot of those countermeasures have actually appeared in the proposed GLS changes. They are not evidence based. VicRoads cannot even tell you what is wrong with the current GLS in any depth. They are proposing solutions and those countermeasures coming from MUARC, which has actually stated that they are about reducing motorcycling, are proposed to be implemented as the new GLS for motorbikes. Other MUARC countermeasures involve using technology to take decisions away from motorcycling. It is just more examples of 'blame the rider' thinking.

The CHAIR — What sort of technology?

Mr SALVATORE — Intelligent speed adaptation; a lot of the ITS — intelligent transport system — technology that is being explored in the EU, which MUARC has some research relationships with and which involves merging assistance, collision assistance, intersection assistance, automatic braking coming into curves, GPS digital speed maps, and all manner of technological solutions to do something which a motorbike rider should be able to do — merge collision, no cars? Look, change lanes. I am not a fan.

Mr TILLEY — Thank you.

Mr PERERA — Your submission is critical of the Monash University Accident Research Centre. Can you explain why in detail?

Mr SALVATORE — I think motorcyclists in general, if they are in the know, have a concern about MUARC, because they are generally producing research that has been requested and paid for and seems to be to prove a specific point, and a lot of it seems to be anti-motorcycling or negatively focused against motorcyclists. They do do some great work; in fact I have referenced one of their papers that highlights that motorcyclists are aware of hazards up to 4 seconds faster than car drivers. They have also done some work, which is fascinating, which indicates that training actually improves safety. They have done it for AAMI, and we have referenced that in the paper too. However, the body of their work, if you have a good look at it, ranging from 1995 to the current day, is effectively all negative.

Mr PERERA — In your verbal submission you pointed the finger at a number of agencies and said everybody is ganging up against the motorcycle. What is the reason?

Mr SALVATORE — Because it is true. That is the perception.

Mr PERERA — Why do you think they are doing that?

Mr SALVATORE — Okay; very good question. I do not completely understand why. The point was made earlier about a prejudice against motorcycles, as in the 1990s example that was mentioned earlier today. There seems to be a new prejudice — motorcyclists are seen to be freer on the roads and have advantages that other vehicles do not have, so let us hang it on them. It seems to be institutionalised. I do not understand why. We should be part of the policy mix on the road and the solutions for congestion. That is just starting to happen with the powered two-wheeler strategy and the 2008 Motorcycle Safety and Scooter Safety Summit. But still there is clearly a sense that motorcycles are not to be encouraged.

Ms SORENSEN — I will just add to that as well that if you look at the policies the agencies we are talking about have for cyclists or pedestrians, they seems to be, 'How can we stop cars running into cyclists or pedestrians? What can we do to prevent that from happening?'. When it comes to motorcycles it is, 'How can we reduce the number of motorcycles on the road in order to improve their safety?'. It is completely inconsistent. The groups are all classed as vulnerable road users, but there is a difference between encouraging one group and discouraging the other. We do not understand that.

Mr PERERA — Is it a recent phenomenon or an upward trend all of the time?

Mr SALVATORE — In the last motorcycle safety inquiry VicRoads said in black and white that they have a policy of not encouraging motorcycling. That policy is not official anymore, but some think it is still there informally.

Mr ELSBURY — Just as a comment, your nemesis, the RACV, actually acknowledged that drivers who ride have a greater perception of motorcyclists and are much more aware. Considering that I have asked this question of almost everyone and you have been here through the entire proceedings, I would expect a very good answer. Would you support learner drivers having experience on a motorcycle or receiving additional training in being aware of motorcycles?

Mr SALVATORE — First I will say that the RACV cannot get it all wrong, so they have said something that is quite truthful, and I fully support them in that statement.

Mr ELSBURY — Trying to start a barney here. Okay, let's go.

Mr SALVATORE — I actually like the RACV.

The CHAIR — So does Jude.

Mr ELSBURY — He loves Jason, but that is another story.

Mr SALVATORE — I think it would be extremely worthwhile for brand-new road users to be exposed to all the other road users and the way that they might behave. If we could get every car driver onto the back of a motorbike for 1 hour, even half an hour, just for the experience, that would be an amazing, eye-opening situation for them.

Mr ELSBURY — John is up for it. He is quite happy with that idea.

Mr SALVATORE — There are over 300 000 licensed riders in Victoria, and there are over 5 million people in Victoria, so not many people have motorcycle awareness or experience, but that is really a key to motorcycle safety.

Ms SORENSEN — Another thing is that research has shown that families of motorcyclists have a greater awareness as well. The proximity to a motorcyclist is really helpful in motorcycle safety.

Mr ELSBURY — Just one last question, what specific outcomes would you like to see from the committee's inquiry? We understand that the issue of filtering is something close to your heart, but are there other aspects that you would like to see?

Mr SALVATORE — Truth in statistics, and perhaps more positive awareness campaigns about motorcycling. There are a host of benefits that come associated with motorbikes, including mental health and physical health. There is a study that shows the typical commuter on a train or in a car arrives at work far more stressed than the motorcyclist, so motorcyclists are generally far more productive at work. The advantages are pretty significant. I would love for some of these messages to actually get out there.

Mr LANGUILLER — In passing, I am working this out, given your commentary on the Motorcycle Advisory Group. The broad membership of the MAG ensures that its advice is balanced, contemporary, well informed and representative of the views of the motorcycling community. There are three representatives that I could work out on a 14-member board who would have an allocation of 8 minutes and 57 seconds per speaker. You would be entitled to 25 minutes multiplied by four in the course of 12 months.

Mr SALVATORE — That is not enough.

Mr TILLEY — Go to the top of the class, Telmo.

Mr LANGUILLER — You will have 8 minutes and 57 seconds.

Mr SALVATORE — Then I appreciate the full 45 minutes I have had today.

The CHAIR — We have had 44.5 minutes and we are closing that rapidly.

Mr TILLEY — It would be a bit remiss not to bring this up. When we started our conversation you mentioned ABS. I would like to cover that with you, walk through the dynamic issues of ABS and any experiences that you may or may not have had.

Mr SALVATORE — To be honest, my only direct ABS experience is in a motor vehicle. I have had some exposure to how ABS performs at a Honda training day. But I have been looking at motorbike ABS for the last five years, since it is just now starting to come into its place with sports riding. As an engineer I have been looking at it closely and its history. ABS has its place, and it does what it is designed to do, which is to stop the wheel from sliding.

Mr TILLEY — Great on aircraft.

Mr SALVATORE — Yes, it is fantastic, and that is actually where it began. The original trials were on aircraft landings. But ABS can upset the dynamics of a motorbike. Particularly in a LAMS motorcycle, which is designed to a price, the ABS package is actually quite cheap and quite coarse. When ABS is engaged the pulsations could cause a dynamic instability, particularly if you are going into a curve.

Also, if you do not use good braking practice and you apply ABS — so if you think you do not need to and you know how to brake and you just slam it on — your braking distance is likely to be far longer than if you applied good braking practice. ABS interferes with the weight transfer. It is the technology: you shock the wheel, it

senses the wheel has stopped, so it lets it go and you continue on. The weight transfer has not come forward to flatten the wheel to give you the greater traction required to bring the bike to a stop.

ABS has its place. Sports riders have not taken to it because it interferes with the motorbike so much. BMW and Honda in only the last year or the year before that have introduced ABS packages that sports riders are starting to appreciate, but they are highly complicated pieces of technology. You will not see that on a LAMS bike. The Honda package weighs 20 pounds, so 4 or 5 kilos. That is a significant weight disadvantage.

Mr TILLEY — It is on the front end now.

Mr SALVATORE — There is a place for it. If there is more research, fantastic, but do not mandate it. If it is mandated, put a switch on it, because it is not applicable to all road conditions either, off-road conditions particularly.

The CHAIR — Mr Salvatore and Ms Sorensen, thank you very much for your contribution. We have got some good material that will enable us to place different opinions one against another to see where we filter through to.

Witnesses withdrew.