

# TRANSCRIPT

## ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Wangaratta — 29 November 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  
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#### Witnesses

Senior Sergeant W. Gore,  
Sergeant M. Connors, and  
Senior Constable J. Long, Victoria Police.

**The CHAIR** — Welcome to the public hearings of the Road Safety Committee's inquiry into motorcycle safety. We are pleased to have with us a number of representatives from Victoria Police, comprising Senior Sergeant Bill Gore, Sergeant Michael Connors and Senior Constable Jo Long. Thank you for your attendance. As you may be aware the material is being recorded by Hansard. You will get a copy of the transcript and you will be invited to correct any typos and return it to us. We can take evidence in camera as well — that is, not a public recording as such but something that we will just deliberate upon ourselves with the assistance of Hansard's transcript record. You are welcome to speak to us if there is a point when it is appropriate to take evidence in camera. I will say again that we are very pleased that you are here and I understand that Senior Sergeant Bill Gore will give a summary of a north-eastern Victoria report, different from the earlier police submission that we have had, and then we will be leading off with a number of comments.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Firstly, I need to explain that I have had a police motorcycle licence for 35 years and I have had my own licence for 37 years, so I speak both from an enforcement and a personal level. I also need to say that I did not read the Victoria Police submission until about an hour ago and it is amazing the way we have come up with things that are very similar to that submission. They must be fairly switched on if they can keep up with us.

Very simply, what I am talking to you about here is local stuff and I will not bore you. Our area covers from Dinner Plain to nearly Echuca, and, in the south, from Bright almost to Mansfield. The area attracts thousands and thousands of motorcyclists every year. Without putting too fine a point on it, they are the bane of my existence across the summer months, especially when we have the grand prix and the superbikes. There are just literally thousands traversing through that area. On road, we have the Great Alpine Road, which is the conduit across the top of Mount Hotham. It is the conduit down to Bairnsdale. There is also the loop across through to Falls Creek, and in addition to that we have the Mansfield-Whitfield Road. Off-road you can go anywhere. We have motorcycle problems in the bush and we have off-road problems along campsites on the Murray River. In fact our last fatality was seven days ago to the day; a 40-year-old drunk drove a \$300 dirt bike 500 metres into a tree with no safety gear.

The fairest profile of the motorcycle rider that we have up here comes from riders of our farm bikes and our four-wheelers. The lack of training with farm bikes outside the fence is a bit of an issue to us; very few riders have licences and very few have registration. Issues around four-wheelers outside the fence are an issue to us. There is no real definition for a four-wheeler — is it a motorcycle or is it a car? If it has four wheels but it runs like a motorcycle, what is it? Can we force the issue with helmets with the four-wheeler? No, we cannot. Four-wheelers are an issue in themselves — for example, if we pull up a four-wheeler that is unregistered, do we give the \$300 ticket for an unregistered motorcycle or the \$600 ticket for an unregistered car? There is no definition relative to a four-wheeler. Do you understand what I mean by the expression 'four-wheeler'? Okay.

Dirt-bike bush riders generally are our biggest issue. At one stage they made up 70 per cent of our road trauma cases in the Alpine shire. Honda have formed a partnership with our local police here and we have actually got our own dirt-bike squad now, so we will be able to better enforce that.

The Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme, which you have probably heard of, actually works for us up here. People are getting to ride the larger bike instead of sticking to the 250cc, so there is a lot less non-compliance with the larger motorcycles or with failing to ride the smaller motorcycles as there used to be. That being said, earlier this year we had one fatality which occurred with a person who should have been on a learner permit riding an 1100cc. The issue there was that he was riding with a group of riders, he did not have the guts to tell them he was not good enough to ride with them and they did not know he should have been on L-plates. Perhaps both sides would have dealt with it had they known.

It seems a bit silly, and the police department have said this, that you can get a motorcycle licence if you ride a 49cc scooter for the licence test. The other situation we have here is with tourists. We have a lot of people of our age riding motorcycles; people who have not ridden for years and years suddenly decide they want a motorcycle and they can afford one, and they figure prominently in our crash rate. The area does attract many, many of these people who come up here for weekends and do tours, and sometimes they do extensive days. We also have sports bikes, and generally speaking these riders come into our area to test both their ability and their equipment. And it is a test — it is a test for them and it is a test for us.

I am not really allowed to speak about our crash data; however, I will talk about some of our initiatives. We set up speed camera sites — and do not let anybody tell you different, speed cameras work — specifically in our areas where motorcyclists are causing us problems. We set them up in the speed zones, the areas where they accelerate and the areas where the motorcycle crashes are happening. Recently our division bought a 1200cc marque BMW motorcycle and trained two other riders, so we now have three riders. That is very visible and is having a visible effect up there. Do not ask me where our superintendent found the money!

We also have the alpine off-road strategy which I spoke about earlier. In the first four months of next year we have an operation called Operation SDV, which will put highway patrol members from Bairnsdale and Wangaratta on Mount Hotham every weekend. We hope that will break the cycle of the speeders and people who are testing their times on Mount Hotham and so on so we can break the gap, do some roadblocks up there, slow them down and produce the presence that we think we need.

I will speak quickly about some of the initiatives that I would like you to consider. Front numberplates need to be reintroduced. Sometimes we get people on the camera that we just cannot prosecute because there are no front numberplates. I am throwing this stuff out there; obviously it needs to be researched and so on. I have not done a great deal of work as to how to do this, but I do have ideas.

Full safety gear is a must. I heard Mr Languiller asking questions of the second-last rider. They do make summer gear. It does not have to be leather, as long as it is Kevlar. The police department is testing one at the moment which is basically netting with Kevlar in all the spots, so they do make safety gear for summer. In my own case I ride with a leather jacket which has holes drilled in it so that the air fills through the holes. That was provided by the police department in a past life.

**The CHAIR** — They were regulation holes; they were not bullet holes, were they?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Yes. They would have been very small bullets, if that were the case. They were provided by a company in Melbourne as a test, and we went with that.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Wear and tear.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I was thinking very big moths.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — I am happy to produce it if you would like to see it, because it was the article we used, but of course we are now about four generations past that jacket.

We need a proper definition, registration and licence category for four and three-wheeled motorcycles. We find it very difficult at this stage to police the four-wheelers and we have had fatalities in regard to the four wheels. Just to give you an idea of the things we do, the only way we can police helmets on a four-wheeler is: (a), if it is outside the fence; (b), if it is registered; and (c), if it has a category of registration that requires a helmet. It is not a motorcycle at this stage, and it really needs to be.

Here are a couple from outside the fence. Persons who have lost their licence for speed or drink-driving perhaps should be required to deregister their motorcycles so that it takes away the temptation to ride and the likelihood of them reoffending is reduced. Perhaps you should not be able to have a motorcycle registered in your name unless you are licensed to ride that size and type of motorcycle. This again would take away the temptation. Perhaps there could be an offence category for failing to identify to a person that you are either unlicensed or disqualified if you are borrowing the motorcycle. We quite often have people who we book and then we go back to the owner and say, 'Did you know that this person was unlicensed?'. They say, 'No. If we'd known that, we wouldn't have lent it to them'. Perhaps we could have something that said 'Failed to identify to the owner that you were unlicensed'.

If a person does not have a motorcycle registered in their name for a period of approximately five years, compulsory licence retraining should be considered. Research should be undertaken into management of group rides. We have a real problem here with people when there are, say, 5, 10, 15, 20 or 30 in a group. I do not know whether you have ever heard of the elastic band syndrome. If the first guy does 100 kilometres per hour forever and the back guy does 95 kilometres per hour for about 2½ minutes, he is 2 kilometres behind the group now. You find that the guy at the back is always doing about 130 kilometres per hour just to keep up with the

first guy who is doing the right speed. We call that the elastic band syndrome. Whether we could manage that in some way I am not sure. It certainly needs some work.

Also, on roads like the Great Alpine Road at Mount Hotham perhaps consideration needs to be given to summer speed limits. At this stage we have a default of 100 kilometres per hour. As an example, the Bogong High Plains Road up to Falls Creek has a 60 kilometre-per-hour limit and we have very few motorcycle crashes on that road because 60 kilometres per hour is the limit. At one stage the winter limit of 80 kilometres per hour used to remain, but that has now gone and the limit is back to 100 kilometres per hour. We might get them falling off at 90 kilometres per hour, and they are not speeding, they are just saying, 'I'm doing the speed limit'. Perhaps if we could restrict them, that might give us a little bit.

An emerging issue for us, which may or may not be outside the purview of this committee, is electric pushbikes which are really becoming a problem. We effectively cannot police them because of the legislation that says 200 watts or more than 200 watts. Everything is 200 watts, but 200 watts can do 45 to 50 kilometres per hour now. If you see them around, they look more and more like electric motor scooters nowadays. They are getting better, and that needs to be addressed early before it is a real problem to us.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer questions.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. Are there any other freelance comments you want to make?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Let us see what questions you ask. At the end of the day for us, motorcycles are a big problem. We spend a fair bit of time working on them and a lot of our strategies are directed towards saving motorcyclists' lives. As a motorcyclist, I will say straight up that when they wake up to themselves and realise that when they fall off they are going to get hurt, perhaps their behaviour might alter. A lot of motorcyclists just do not realise that when they fall off they will get hurt. That is just a personal comment.

**The CHAIR** — Senior Sergeant Gore, in addition to your other comments, are there any other motorcycle safety initiatives being undertaken currently in the district?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — I have really told you just about all of them. We worry more about enforcement from our perspective. Our road safety council is working on an initiative locally. The local Ride Smart man, George Talbot, is working with our road safety council on an initiative in regard to training, but I am not really the person to speak to about that.

**The CHAIR** — You mentioned issues in relation to enforcement earlier on; one, by targeting the trouble spots; two, the speed cameras working.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Yes. In addition to the enforcement of that operation I spoke about, Operation SDV, we also spent time stopping and talking to these guys. Part of the operation is that if we see 20 or so motorcyclists having a cup of coffee, we will pull up and have a cup of coffee with them, explain our crash data and explain our problems and get ideas from them. We also have a situation from an enforcement perspective where we intercept people towing dirt bikes and we explain the law to them. A lot of people do not realise that they are not allowed to ride unlicensed and unregistered in the bush. When they get told, they do not unload their bikes. Perhaps we need to work on that a bit more. They just think they are out there and it is not a problem.

**The CHAIR** — You mentioned that you had access to a couple of bikes. Were they on-road or off-road bikes?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — We have one on-road motorcycle, which is the BMW 1200cc. Senior Sergeant Doug Incoll from Bright has the dirt road capability, which is the two dirt bikes; and I will say dirt, not off-road, because their problems are still on-road, they are just dirt roads. He will have by February next year a team of four people on dirt bikes that can enter the bush.

**The CHAIR** — Whereabouts do you use the BMW?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Anywhere within our division, and our division is from Corryong down to Echuca and south from Wodonga to nearly Benalla.

**The CHAIR** — What is the nature of policing patrols that use the bike, noting that it is one out?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — I am sorry, I do not understand the question, but let me just explain what we do. We task that motorcycle to our crash locations. It is fully fitted with a mobile radar. We tend to basically use it as a car. It is a little bit hard to explain. I am sure Mr Tilley would understand and he can explain it to you later. A motorcycle that is moving is a lot more visible and has a lot more impact than a car. It moves around where our problems are. It moves around with displays, it moves around to our towns. It is a little bit hard to explain the strategy, but it just goes where the action is.

**The CHAIR** — Does the person do any direct enforcement either with a radar gun or pulling drivers over?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — All of that. He would pull up 15 to 20 cars per day.

**The CHAIR** — I mentioned that it was one out. My understanding was that most times these days people work in teams.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Sir, if you would like to buy us another motorbike, we will do that, but at this stage we only have one on-road motorcyclist and he works alone. That being said, there are three qualified motorcycle riders, but that motorcyclist works by himself.

**The CHAIR** — How much of the week is that bike out on patrol?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Five days out of seven.

**The CHAIR** — What number of shifts are worked in that time?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Five days out of seven. He would work one shift per day. It is one of the drawbacks of the motorcycle.

**The CHAIR** — So it is one shift for five days.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Yes, one shift each day.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Thank you for your submission and for attending. By way of background, my colleagues may not be aware but in the 1970s I worked in Echuca. In those days there were tobacco plantations and we used to ride motorbikes, always on the farm, never on the road. I have noticed when I have been driving around in the last few years that this region has grown enormously. I understand there are jazz festivals and blues festivals and you name it, so there is a lot of tourism and huge growth. The question I put to you is in relation to your resources. How do you quantify the region you cover? How many highways are there? How many thousands of kilometres off-road and on-road? What resources do you have, because I am not aware of how many officers you have to cover the roads and off-road areas. What resources do you have available to do the very good job you do, by the way? We sincerely mean that — the community thinks that; we think that.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — Sir, to be absolutely fair I need to be fairly careful about how I answer this question.

**Mr TILLEY** — This is your time to shine. Do not worry. Can I say that the point of the question is that we have heard evidence from other PSAs about resourcing and the numbers over the last decade.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — Mr Tilley, you know me well enough to know I will answer from the heart.

**Mr TILLEY** — Absolutely.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — I just need to qualify the situation — that this is an answer from Bill Gore and not necessarily from the police department.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Can I interrupt you and remind you that the information you provide to us is absolutely important to the reference that we are currently covering. The chairman offered you the opportunity to speak to us off the record, so if you want to do that, then say so. The important thing for us is to receive your information.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — No, I am happy to be on the record.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Thank you.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — You just need to be aware that I am not necessarily speaking for Victoria Police here.

At Wangaratta highway patrol we have a senior sergeant, a sergeant and nine. We have had a senior sergeant, sergeant and nine for about 30 years, yet the area has grown by something like 50 per cent or more. The highway patrol used to answer to what we call 'T' district, so we were responsible for traffic policing. In 1988 — I will give you the date if you give me a minute — we did a thing called 'integration', which means that the highway patrol became answerable to the local inspector. At that time the highway patrol — I am using the term 'highway patrol'; we have had several different names, but 'highway patrol' is the most recent, and you understand that, so I will not go back to the old names — became answerable to the local inspector and became a resource. Suddenly we were answerable to the jazz festivals, the peaches and cream festival, the hot rods at Bright and so on.

The staff are spread fairly thinly. There is no question about it. From a resource perspective, in 2003 we lost a motorcycle and a car, and I am only talking about highway patrol here; we went to only three cars. We had all that area with just three cars. Through lies and deceit and a bit of conning I managed to get that back to four cars and a motorcycle.

**The CHAIR** — You mean that in jest, don't you?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — Yes.

**The CHAIR** — We do have our friends from the fourth estate on board here at the moment, so we had that in good faith, so to speak.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — I must confess I was being humorous there.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — But we have managed to get back up to four cars and a motorcycle. On 1 July last year our borders were enhanced by the taking over of the Moira shire, and there are four members and one car there. The actual tasking and targeting of those members are the responsibility of me and Sergeant Connors. Largely we work towards our crash data and our aim is to try to stop our road trauma. That said, if 50 000 people come into town, we are basically the resource, so we might find ourselves doing crowd control or we might find ourselves doing foot patrol or something like that as opposed to doing traffic work. Without putting too fine a point on it, the general duties do not have that many members either.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — In summary, would it be fair to suggest that your on-road resources are not adequate?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — That would be a fair statement in my opinion.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — In terms of off-road, you indicated to us that in the order of 70 per cent of road trauma happens to be off-road. You would be aware that about 50 per cent of Victorian road trauma happens off-road. What specific resources do you have for the purpose of off-road, if I may ask you again — right now?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — Right at this moment, zero. Absolutely none.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — How do you patrol off-road, given that 70 per cent of trauma happens off-road?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — The best that we have been able to do is to target the dirt bikes before they go into the bush, which is what I said earlier. We intercept the trailers and the people who are heading into the bush, look at their gear and tell them what they can and cannot do. Quite often we have driven into the campsites, but our cars are not designed for going off-road, for want of a better word. From time to time we get what we call the Special Silos, the road safety task force off-road motorcycle section, to come up here at times like cup weekend, Easter and so on. But there are a lot of people competing for those resources and we cannot always get them; we just do our best. As I said, in I think it is two weeks time we will have two bikes and those two members qualified to go off-road, but right at the moment we have none.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — That will be seven days a week?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — No. They are general duties members and they will be called to do the off-road task from time to time. There will be nothing specific for off-road; it will be just two bikes, and when the staff can be freed from other tasks that is what they will do.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — If I may say so, I do not get the impression that things have changed much since I last worked in the region in the 1970s, in terms of off-road anyway.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — I would like to suggest that your statement is probably accurate.

**The CHAIR** — But I would like to assure you that I am sure my colleague had a front numberplate on his bike.

**Mr PERERA** — I have two questions. One is: what are your thoughts on filtering and lane splitting?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — We do not have that problem here, because as I understand it the only time filtering and lane splitting is an issue — jump in any time, you guys — is in times of heavy traffic, and we have very little of that here. It is not an issue for us; it is not something that really causes us concern.

**Mr PERERA** — Do you have a view that it should be made illegal or not?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — You should not be allowed to do it. It is dangerous. I have been a motorcycle rider. To be absolutely fair, 35 years ago when I did my police motorcycle courses I was taught how to do it. I would not do it today. I hesitate to say this, but I have just come back from Canada and it is illegal there, and it works.

**Mr PERERA** — Filtering is illegal in many countries.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — Yes. It is just a dangerous practice. Cars do not look for you.

**Mr PERERA** — All right. The other question is: what are your thoughts on the best way to encourage people to wear protective gear?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — There is only one way, and that is to make it law and give us something that we can enforce. If you make it voluntary, as it is now, you will not change what we have; it will be up to the individual. In my case I always wear the Kevlar trousers and my leather jacket. When I am on the police bike it goes without saying that I wear the normal stuff. I never wear short sleeves; I always wear long sleeves. Until you legislate for it, nothing will change.

**Mr PERERA** — You are supporting making it mandatory?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — I think the words are, 'Hell, yeah'.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Just on the protective clothing issue, I am wondering whether you have anecdotal evidence, not necessarily with facts, figures or anything like that to back you up, of how many incidents or what percentage of incidents that your members attend would involve people who are not wearing protective gear. You said here that you had a rider seven days ago who was in an off-road incident, who was wearing no protective gear.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — He would be alive today if he had been wearing a helmet.

**Mr ELSBURY** — So he did not even have a helmet?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — No. He had nothing.

**Mr ELSBURY** — He had absolutely nothing. How many incidents would you expect to come across where you have someone seriously injured because of the fact that they have come off their bike without gear?

**Snr Sgt GORE** — I cannot quantify that. Jo, would you know?

**Snr Const. LONG** — No.

**Sgt CONNORS** — It is hard to put a quantity on it. Officers in our office have at times been specifically tasked to intercept motorcycle riders, and on occasions they have intercepted them because they were wearing inappropriate clothing. By stopping them at that time we are unable to tell whether we have avoided a serious injury or collision down the track.

**Mr ELSBURY** — You are stopping them because they are not wearing appropriate clothing, even though — —

**Sgt CONNORS** — Just to give them education, to tell them.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Education; okay.

**Sgt CONNORS** — It is not enforcement, because we cannot enforce anything. It is just to pass on the message that if you come off, this is going to happen to you.

**Mr ELSBURY** — You are going to go splat.

**Sgt CONNORS** — I take it you have seen the TAC ads on the freeway, the motorcycle rider standing in the kitchen with all his skin missing? It is real.

**Mr ELSBURY** — That is why I have Kevlar and gloves and the whole shooting match.

**Sgt CONNORS** — That is why we want our officers to pull these riders over to tell them, 'That can be you'.

**Snr Sgt GORE** — You just answered your own question. It is an attitude thing.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Yes. I can just hear my wife if I ever did come off. I would never hear the end.

**Sgt CONNORS** — It is all about harm minimisation.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Exactly — from my wife!

**Sgt CONNORS** — They are going to get hurt if they fall off, so let us give them the best possible chance.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Considering that you are giving your evidence today, what would you like to see as an outcome from this particular inquiry?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Would you like a copy of my notes? There are so many things that could improve the motorcyclist's lot in life. You cannot fix the issue, because the issue is the attitude of the motorcycle rider — that we have up here. But if you can give us the tools to amend that attitude, then that is what I would be asking you to do. If you were able to say to me, 'From tomorrow these people must wear motorcycle gear', we are not able to quantify how many lives we would save, but we would save our road trauma. People would bounce off the bitumen and get up, whereas at the moment they might not. If you are able to fix that definition of four-wheelers, that would be very helpful. With the farm people on the side of the road with their unregistered four-wheelers, we just do not know how to deal with them at this stage. It is by bluff mostly.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Would you see any point in high-visibility gear, especially along the Hume. The Hume would be the place where you have got the majority of your traffic moving at speed.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Again we come down to rider attitude. I do not wear high-visibility on my own motorcycle, but if the law said I had to, I would have no issues with it. I wear high-visibility on my police motorcycle. I have spoken to George Talbot. He runs the local motorcycle school here, and he says it is a no-brainer. He lights himself up like a Christmas tree. Look, we had a fatality in Katamatite three weeks ago, and that guy was in black on a black motorcycle at night; I do not think high visibility would have saved his life. It was night-time. His headlight just fell into the streetlights at the back, and he rode into the side of a truck. Does that give you the answer? I think the high-visibility gear is a no-brainer — it should be there, but I really do not know whether you can do that.

**The CHAIR** — Just taking angle and high visibility, there has been some evidence that we have received here and elsewhere about the attitude of some motorcycle riders. No. 1, being 100 per cent in the zone — 100 per cent concentration; no. 2, having a view that every other rider or motorist on the road is out to get them.

They have a defensive strategy. It has been commented to me that one fellow says he is not worried about being in fluoro lit up like a Christmas tree when he is on the road, but rather he has a defensive attitude in order to be able to elude and escape those other hazards on the road.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — It is interesting that you say that. In regards to this fatality at Katamatite the other day, I actually made a comment at the scene, ‘Why did this bloke ride into the side of the truck?’. There were avenues that I would have been able to get out of. Probably the best way to answer your question is my dad used to have a saying. I would say, ‘I’m going out on my motorcycle’, and he would get all upset. I would say, ‘I’m going to be fine’, and he would say, ‘I’m not worried about you, son; I taught you. I’m worried about everybody else’. Really that is where we get back to the attitude of the bike rider. You probably have heard that a lot of bike riders blame the car. They need to be aware that the car is out there, just the same as the car needs to be aware that the bike is out there. It is a two-way street.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Just out of interest, how many prangs do you reckon you have endured in your riding career, both professional and privately?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — On Elvis’s birthday, 1996 — not that I remember the date — I was knocked off my police motorcycle at 9 o’clock at night. I am lucky to be here today. I had a broken leg. The rider who was riding beside me had eight months off work. What happened there was it was dark and a car coming towards us got in the dirt and spun round in our path. It was that simple. I am lucky to be alive here today. I had the safety gear; without the safety gear I would probably be dead.

**The CHAIR** — You were ‘all shook up’?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — That was Elvis’s birthday; I get it. I sit here today, and I could have produced a photo. I actually thought about bringing the photos today. I am lucky to be alive, but I am back on a motorcycle. It all comes back to the attitude of the rider. There was another motorcycle rider, who actually works for me at the moment, who did not ride a motorcycle from that day. It all comes back to the attitude of the rider.

To answer the rest, I am also off-road pursuit qualified. I fell off an XR600 doing 145 kilometres an hour and spent five days in hospital. I was off work for a month. I fell off because I was stupid.

**The CHAIR** — At what speed were you going?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — It was 145 kilometres. It was part of training. We were actually practising to pursue. Again I was pushing myself beyond my limits, but that was part of the training.

**The CHAIR** — You went into a slide?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Very simply, I came around the corner and there was a no-entry sign in the middle of the road. I had nowhere to go, so I did everything that I was taught but still hit the bank. Again, I am lucky to be here today. I am still riding motorcycles; I do not ride too many dirt bikes any more. But again, I have fallen off lots of times but only hurt myself the two times, and it is safety gear that has saved me every time.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — If I might come back to you again. You said speed cameras work. Do you have the data to that effect? Can you actually establish that? Respectfully, if I may, is there any evidence?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — You would need to go to the traffic camera office for that, but I would say this: speed cameras were introduced in about 1993 or 1994, and the police proved the concept over five years. At that time we were killing about 700 people a year. Now we kill 230. Speed cameras work. For every life we save the community saves \$1.5 million, so speed cameras make \$1.5 million for every life they save.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Much discussion has taken place, and evidence has been given to our committee in relation to speed per se. Much discussion occurs around that. I do not want to put words in, but I imagine you mean inappropriate speed more than just speed per se. Is that what you mean when you talk about speed?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Yes. When I talk about speed cameras working, it means that, generally speaking, the speed from 30 years ago is a lot slower now. Generally speaking, people travel at the speed limit. In regard to motorcycles, what we have there is, they might be trying to do 90 kilometres an hour when they should only be doing 60, and they will fall off. It is a little bit hard to explain. As far as road trauma goes, how fast you go

determines how much you will get hurt; so if we can slow them down, they will not get hurt as much. So speed cameras are saving lives. The average speed of your average motorist is coming down, which is why we try to put out these speed cameras where the motorcycles are — to change that habit.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Just one final question. You talked about the front numberplate. As you know, objections have been put in relation to that on the basis of safety, but what you are saying is you want to be able to identify every rider. Whether it is a numberplate or whether it is metal, plastic, Teflon or a chip, the issue for you is the question of ID.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — Again, I think I said earlier, this is a throw out. We need to be able to identify the person from the front. Whether it is plastic, Kevlar or a sticker on the front mudguard, I do not know — that is something that needs research. My understanding is that New Zealand is trialling stickers at the moment, so that may be something for you to look at.

**Mr TILLEY** — I will make mine very brief, because I have placed on the record that in a previous life Senior Sergeant Gore was the divisional road safety senior sergeant and I was one of his troops. But I have enormous respect for the work and the commitment to road safety in this area, so I would need to keep my conversations brief. And also my former colleagues are here; I have known them at work.

**Sr Sgt GORE** — He just doesn't want us to tell the stories that we've got!

**Mr TILLEY** — With other jurisdictions, the north-east of Victoria is part of a boundary with New South Wales. I know that you have a good liaison with the other states. Is there anything you can offer to the committee that you may have seen or heard that might be occurring in other jurisdictions that might be able to assist this inquiry in its deliberations?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — The quick answer is no. The long answer is that other states use different motorcycles. I sometimes query why we do not appear to be trialling the other motorcycles, from an enforcement perspective. Yamaha produces a police motorcycle. Kawasaki produces a police motorcycle. I do not want a Harley-Davidson, so I will not talk about them. We tend to go with a BMW. I am not sure what would make New South Wales use the Kawasaki rather than the BMW, but that is more of a personal issue. As far as the task itself goes, New South Wales is not allowed to put mobile radars on their bikes, but we are. That gives us that tool that makes us a bit better than New South Wales. I think generally speaking we are not doing too badly.

**Mr TILLEY** — That leads me to the next question, particularly from other evidence that we have heard, which is in relation to ABS and motorcycles. Have you got any thoughts in relation to ABS?

**Sr Sgt GORE** — All I can say there is that the police motorcycle has ABS. My own motorcycle does not have ABS. Again it comes down to the attitude. You do not need ABS until you get into strife, and I try not to get myself into strife. But to use the ABS on the police motorcycle certainly gives you a much safer stop. If we are able to go down the ABS track, that would be fine. It all comes back to that attitude issue.

**The CHAIR** — On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you very much, Senior Sergeant Gore, Sergeant Connors and Senior Constable Long, for your evidence this afternoon. It has been refreshing to have those original keen-minded insights that you have been able to provide us with, and I trust that it will benefit us as we prepare our report. You will get a copy of the Hansard transcript. Peruse it for typos. It will be placed on the web in due course. We thank you for your attendance.

**Witnesses withdrew.**