

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Wodonga — 30 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
Research Officer: Mr J. Aliferis

Witnesses

OPEN FORUM

Mr R. Beard;

Mr D. Beck;

Mr D. Codognotto; and

Mr C. Maxwell, Christian Motorcyclists Association Australia (Victoria).

The CHAIR — On behalf of the parliamentary Road Safety Committee's inquiry into motorcycle safety I welcome you all here this afternoon for the open forum segment. We have been keen to take on board the firsthand evidence of people's experience and observations. The work of the Victorian Parliament has also been to take on board the opinions of not only people who are city motorcycle users but those who live in rural and regional Victoria.

A question has been asked regarding who has motorcycle riding experience among my colleagues. I point out that we have all attended a DECA course or in the alternative military police or police riding courses. All of us have sat on a motorbike, although I add that my colleagues have more experience than I do in that regard. Some have highly specialised training on motorbikes. You will get a copy of your comments this afternoon by way of a Hansard transcript. You can correct any typos on it and forward it back to us, and we envisage placing it on the internet. That will form the background material for our researchers. This is to be an interactive time, but I would like to give some immediate time for people to contribute directly, following which we may elect to ask some questions. We thank you once again to taking the time to attend.

I would like Mr Colin Maxwell to speak first. Colin, if you could give us your name, address and contact particulars for postage purposes and then speak to the issues you would like to raise. I am reminded that we have allocated up to 10 minutes for individual contributions. I am not sure whether we are about to get a couple of bike clubs walking in the door. There may be some gentle latitude with that. Colin, over to you.

Mr MAXWELL — I am Colin Maxwell. My postal address is <address confidential>. I am here representing the Christian Motorcyclists Association of Australia (Victoria), but what I will be saying is really my own experience and opinion, because we did not even know about this until Monday and have not had time to get anything official together. Firstly, there are a couple of little items. There has been discussion about helmets. I suggest that people look at the current issue of *Australian Road Rider* magazine where there is a fairly controversial three-page article about helmet regulations.

Another aspect of helmets is that I wear a BMW helmet, initially because it was the only one that was fully enclosed, and the wind noise was removed. Before that I used to use AGV helmets; I had to wear earplugs, and it hurt. BMW's helmets are much more comfortable. It is a bit restricting though, because when I am wearing it I cannot turn my head; it catches on the collar of my jacket.

There was discussion about mobile phones when riding off-road. My own experience is that mobile phones are virtually no use once you are outside of town. I know that mobile phone companies say they cover 97 per cent of Australia. That is 97 per cent of the people. With regard to the area of Australia they would cover I would say it would be less than 10 per cent. Certainly if you ride into the hills above Albury, mobile phones are nothing.

I have been riding since I got my licence in September 1954. In 1960 I stopped riding and then resumed in 1964 and have been riding ever since, so I guess I have a reasonable amount of experience on bikes. People will see that I am wearing a Ulysses badge. Yes, I am a member of the Ulysses Club. I joined in 1978. I am not very active at club functions. One major factor there is that most of those club functions take place on a Sunday when I have other things to do.

From my experience of riding, yes, riding a motorcycle is dangerous. I say to people that the two biggest dangers for a motorcyclist are Holdens and Fords. It is really a problem of attitude. There are a lot of people who just do not see a motorcycle if it is there. Back in about 1970, a group in Melbourne conducted a fair amount, I guess, of research. They found that the way to be seen and to be safe was to go to a disposals, buy an ex-air force jacket, wear a white helmet and riding britches and put a handlebar fairing on their bike. They were seen. If they wore DayGlo clothing, people could know they were not a copper, so they were ignored.

I have seen — actually it was a bloke on a pushbike, the incident that I saw — a very large, muscular man wearing a very bright red top and riding a pushbike. He was heading up Auburn Road, and as he went past a vacant parking spot the woman in the car alongside him tried to turn into that parking spot. Being alert, he thumped his fist very hard on the roof of her car, whereupon she stopped very suddenly. I am sure that, if asked, she would have said, 'I didn't see you'. In fact, in profile that very large bloke on a pushbike would have been nearly as big as the profile of a Mini Minor — but he was not a car. Most of the blind spot I think is in the brain, although there are blind spots in cars.

However, I think it would be nice if the police could start putting out decoys, if you like — blokes in ordinary riding gear, riding an ordinary-looking bike — who could suddenly turn on a blue light and produce a badge. This could be publicised to the extent where people would start to think, 'A motorbike; that might be a copper', and adjust their attitude accordingly.

The CHAIR — Are these motorcyclists or motorists, whose attitude might be adjusted?

Mr MAXWELL — I have car drivers in mind, but it does apply to motorcyclists too. There are a lot of motorcyclists who do have a bad attitude. Because they are on a motorcycle, they are classified there. If they were in a Falcon or Commodore with the same attitude, they would say, 'Oh, yes, hoons'. There are a lot of hoon types on motorbikes, I have to admit it, and they need to correct their attitudes too.

I think I have survived this long because I am a devout coward. I go out there thinking, basically, a lot of those people in cars are out to get me, and I want to survive. On the road I make a point of staying as close as I can to the speed limit, preferably in the 95–100 range.

One of my activities for the past eight years has been to organise awareness rides for prostate cancer. I started those in Queensland eight years ago, and then when we came down here. I started them here, and we have had four. I led those rides, riding at 100 km. I had a number of people complain bitterly that I was going too slow. Anyhow, the one I organised a few weeks ago was my last one. Someone else can take it over now.

Really and truly, I think the main problem is to correct the attitudes of drivers and riders. I think a significant amount of the wrong attitude has been fostered by the sensational newspapers and by some of the bad attitude stuff that I see written in motor magazines and motorcycling magazines. I think that is essentially my message. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thanks very much, Mr Maxwell. Colleagues, any questions?

Mr TILLEY — No. That was a very good contribution and covered a fair bit. I have just made some notes.

The CHAIR — David, start with your name.

Mr BECK — David Beck. As I referred to earlier, I have 34 years of motorcycle riding experience. I have ridden in far western areas of New South Wales, I have ridden in mountain areas within New South Wales and also in urban areas. I first got my licence and learnt to ride in city traffic, so I have a really good understanding of the urban environment and the effect on motorcycles of changes within the urban environment. Currently I work for a local travel company. I am a full-time coach driver. In my previous work I was a director or manager of businesses. I have also worked as the executive officer of a government-funded project. So I have a fair understanding across many different areas with relation to the safety issues here.

I honestly believe that one of the major issues at play is the lack of training. Education I think is paramount to good rider behaviour — and also good driver behaviour, for that matter. Over many years I have seen different changes with relation to the culture of motorcycles, the types of motorcycles, and the ability to ride different sizes of motorcycles. With a standard licence you can ride anything from a hybrid-type trail bike through to a 1700 cubic centimetre road cruiser. They behave totally differently on the road, so people need to be educated with relation to the physics of a motorcycle, how it changes in any given environment and on any given surface.

When I was working out in western areas of New South Wales, I was in a remote area. I worked in an area 200 kilometres west of Bourke. We had motorcyclists coming through there on a regular basis, funnily enough. A lot of people were riding trail-type bikes. You would have seen something like the Charley Boorman and Ewan McGregor series, *Long Way Round*, I suggest — that type of motorcyclist. During the period I was out there, in 12 months we had six motorcyclist crashes, and they all required hospitalisation. We cannot take the narrow view that we have access to all the resources, be they police or ambulance, in some areas. We have to rely upon local communities.

Here in some cases you have motorcyclists on trail-type bikes who may have incidents on back roads. There is a plethora of different ways to approach the whole issue of road safety, I suggest.

Personally I think that you now have the scooter culture, which is becoming larger and larger in the cities. That is having more of an impact on traffic and also other motorcyclists. The physics required to engage a scooter is

totally different to that of a normal motorcycle. You have got weight differences and you have got size differences. You have got the ability to be able to change lanes very quickly.

The policeman spoke earlier of that filtering process. On motorcycles travelling in traffic there is the lane splitting side of it and also the filtering side of it. I think the lane splitting side is a dangerous practice, but the filtering side is also a dangerous practice because as soon as that traffic moves, you are effectively lane splitting. It is not a matter of just riding up into the stationary group of cars. As soon as the light changes to green, you are then lane splitting. So there is a cause and effect there obviously that is going to have impacts on both riders and drivers. I think either of them is a dangerous practice. The motorcycle should remain in its lane, and there should be a law brought out to stop that sort of practice.

I have been witness to a death on a motorcycle. I was riding with that particular person when they were killed on a motorbike. That was in a mountain area. My brother-in-law also has been impacted long term by a motorcycle injury. He is now disabled down the left side of his body as a result of a stroke he had from a motorcycle accident. Ironically the motorcycle accident which he had was due to branches on the road, which no-one could have foreseen. So, strangely enough, no amount of education is going to change the outcome of that particular situation. In the other instance it was an older rider, and I think that certainly education goes a long way into shaking the attitude of riders coming back into motorcycling. Had he had more education, then he may not put himself in that predicament which ultimately killed him, which was very sad.

I am now in the process of setting up my own motorcycle rider tour business, based here. I have been approached by the local TAFE to do instruction there in motorcycle riding. I am now engaged as a student of Wodonga TAFE and will take on a workplace training and assessment cert IV soon to heighten my skills as far as the teaching side of things is concerned. For the most part it mainly comes down to attitude. There are some people you can rectify and there are some people you cannot rectify.

The broadbrush approach has to be broken down into individual segments. You have got situations such as your road barrier. No-one has spoken about that today. Your Armco and wire rope fencing is still a problem. It is one thing to educate riders, but if they get put into a position as a result of the actions of a car driver or another road user, then I think the wire rope barriers are just farcical in some respects. They obviously serve a purpose for cars, but for motorcycle road users they are extremely dangerous. The problem with them, from just studying them myself over many years, is that on the inside of radius curve they are tensioned and on the outside of radius curve they are tensioned. If a vehicle hits a road barrier on the inside radius curve, that removes the tension from those ropes straightaway, and potentially the arc which the road barrier is on is able to move the full distance in the opposite direction. I think that is ultimately a potential hazard for motorcyclists. On the outside of a curve it is a different scenario because the ropes are still held in tension. But on the inside of the curve, once that tension is compromised, there goes the effectiveness of that fence. It is purely there to aid injury in some respects. That is only my view of it.

As far as rider education is concerned, I believe there should be a convergence of road user education generally. I would like to see the introduction of learner riders with experienced drivers in a combined environment. That would certainly aid to improve the skills of a learner rider should they be put into that before they go out into the street or the road user environment.

The CHAIR — Could you clarify that point a bit?

Mr BECK — I am just saying that potentially where you have the likes of rider training, I think there should be cars involved in that rider training. For the most part, I know that locally the rider training that is given, especially over the border by the RTA, does not involve any on-road assessment. Basically it is a car park assessment by virtue of geography and population. The nearest road use learner assessment you can have through the RTA is in Wagga. Currently you can go down to the RTA in Albury and you can complete the 40 question questionnaire. They do a brief assessment in the car park and then they hand you your licence. That provides nothing in protecting the safety of motorcycle riders at all. It is making the situation worse.

As far as information is concerned, I think there should be more communication between the police, local motorcycle clubs and also local government. They are all stakeholders in the safety environment, and I think there should be some way of having a particular group set up to facilitate that coming together of those particular groups within the community to aim for improvements. From what the sergeant had said here, and he

is responsible for his 8.75 people, his attitude was that all motorcyclists speed, they really are not equipped, and they do not have the resources to cater for maintaining a presence on the road. Obviously that is going to have its impact on other road users, and therefore motorcyclists as well. That is something that is monetary. I think Rex pointed out earlier that having 8.75 people to accommodate an area of 9000 square kilometres is just ludicrous. There must be other ways that we can make the situation better.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, David. You mentioned that you had seen a motorcyclist die. What was the context of the accident that occurred?

Mr BECK — The environment?

The CHAIR — Yes, the road environment.

Mr BECK — We were on a country road, admittedly not a particularly wide road. It had a dirt shoulder. We were going up around a bend. We were heading back from a local Ulysses Sunday afternoon ride. Visibility was good. It was a dry day. We came up around the corner. I noticed something just out of the corner of my eye on the edge of the road, which I believe to this day that he may have hit and which may have caused the accident. He came up around the bend, got onto the shoulder of the road, backflipped and then ironically hit a stockpile heap of gravel that was on the side of the road that had been there for quite a long time because it had grassed over and he was killed instantly, but not to our knowledge. We spent the best part of 10 or 15 minutes prior to a doctor or any medical assistance arriving trying to revive him. We did not know at the time that he had already gone, but we did our best to try to revive him.

Earlier there was mention of training riders in first aid. I think that is certainly a great idea, but there are so many single-rider incidents out there, and it is a bit hard to perform CPR on yourself! I am being facetious. It has its benefit in a group rider situation, but certainly it is not something that I deem should be mandatory. I think it is something that should be a personal choice. Most people know how to respond in that situation. We contacted an ambulance and police straightaway, and we did our best to get the support we needed as quickly as we could. Perhaps if the training had been in place and he had more skills. Certainly he was someone who was only a weekend rider; he was not riding daily. That certainly would have impacted on his ability to be able to control a bike in that environment, too. I think education is a key aspect to the long-term outcomes here.

Mr ELSBURY — In relation to David's presentation earlier, you were talking about the difference between scooters, motorcycles and even the higher-end motorcycles. Would you be supporting a further graduated motorcycle licence system, separating out each category of vehicle, rather than the current single-licence scheme that we have in Victoria?

Mr BECK — Each culture requires a different set of circumstances. A person that is riding a scooter around town is not going to go on a long-distance weekend ride with the Ulysses Club. That is just not going to happen. Some do, but it is very rare that that does happen. In all my years of riding, I think I have only seen it happen on one or two occasions, or a few occasions, but it is very rare that it happens. I think it should be designed to the type of riding, and obviously the ability for that rider to then go and buy another motorcycle, so that then changes the whole aspect of the delivery of that education. I think it is easier to generalise the process, but there need to be areas within the process that identify those individual cultural groups within the motorcycle community and within the training. I think they should be identified, yes, certainly, but the training can still be across the board. It still needs to identify the specific differences between each of those rider groups.

Mr LANGUILLER — I have a question for Colin. One of the things that has come through quite consistently in the submissions we have received from all around the state is that by and large, I think, your clubs are pretty good. I think that would be the observation commonly made, including by Victoria Police. You are not the issue, so to speak; you do a lot in terms of safety and training and all of that. The fact that more needs to be done is always the case, and I am sure more can be done. But I am concerned about the younger riders, the ones that are coming in early. In what ways do you think your clubs can help institutionally with that, and is there a role for clubs like yours to provide a mentoring type of role or exercises with other riders? Is there anything more you think you can do in that institutional sense?

Mr MAXWELL — By 'my club' I take it you are referring to the Christian Motorcyclists Association. We do not have many younger members unfortunately. When we get younger members they are quickly absorbed into group activities, so there is no formal training about motorcycles or anything like that. We are actually

Christians who happen to ride motorbikes. But young people are not just treated as young people. If any advice is thought to be necessary, it will be offered, but that is the extent of it.

Mr LANGUILLER — David, you talked about an interesting concept — conversion. Getting bike riders together with car drivers. It is interesting because we have heard that there are motorcycle shows and rider shows. Separately you read in the paper that there is a car show and there is another one that is for trucks. They do that on weekends and so on. Is there not room in this region to do one thing together on one day, the aim of which being to bring to each other's attention awareness and education? Have you thought about strategies of that kind? Would that be helpful at all?

Mr BECK — Certainly. I think there is potential for it. It is just that people have to look outside of the square. They have to look at different avenues that they can approach it from to come up with these sorts of ideas. That is only my personal view. It is not the view of any club I might be associated with. It is just something that I believe potentially could be of benefit, to put those different groups together. I was speaking from a training perspective though — bringing a car or cars into a motorcycle training environment so people understand the physical aspect of a car being there on the road, and what they have to do to negotiate a car. If they are parked between cars or if a car stops more quickly, what do they do? You can do any sort of braking example with lines marked on a piece of paper, but that does not show you the potential hazard. It shows you lines on a piece of asphalt. It does not show you the true situation as such. From what I was saying earlier, it was more targeted at a training level. I can see your point. You could broaden it to the local Ulysses Club hooking up with the local classic car club on occasion to discuss those sorts of things. Information is good, obviously. Communication is great.

Mr LANGUILLER — It is about convergence.

Mr BECK — I would not see the local Ulysses Club out for a ride with the local car club. From what you are saying, I would see it more from an information-sharing perspective. It would be looking at ways to improve road conditions, issues with policing or other issues.

Mr MAXWELL — On the question of bringing together car drivers and motorcycle drivers, I would love to see some way in which learner car drivers could also do a spell on a low-powered motorcycle to discover the sorts of things that the rider has to do on the road. These are such things as swerving around a pothole instead of driving through it and what happens if they hit a little patch of oil. It might not worry a car, but if a bike comes down — crash! It is things like that.

Mr ELSBURY — I have to say, Colin, you have taken the words right out of my mouth. I was just about to ask you something along the lines of, 'Do you believe, when someone is going for a learners permit, they need to be made much more aware of motorcyclists by some form of training?'. I can say from the limited training I have received over the last couple of months that your spatial awareness goes up considerably and your paranoia increases tenfold. Certainly I was going to take on the claim you made about being a devout coward. I have to say I am rather happy with all of my skin exactly where it is and would not intend on ever collecting the road. It is just the others out there driving around who I have to worry about. You have basically just said already that you advocate an experience for young drivers.

Mr PERERA — David, I think you are not an advocate of filtering. If we make filtering illegal, do you think a lot of serious riders, not recreational riders, will be very discouraged to use motorcycles, because by filtering, lining up a set of traffic lights, you can go to the top, and if you are riding from A to B, filtering will make your trip go very much quicker than if you are driving in a metropolitan area?

Mr BECK — I can see what you are saying, but I still believe there is a potentially higher risk by doing that. I think anyone could be sitting there in their car, talking on their iPhone at a set of traffic lights or listening to their iPod and jiggling on the steering wheel. It only takes a slight movement of the steering wheel to send the car off in a different direction from where it was parked. I have seen situations where cars have moved off the line on leaving the lights, and potentially that is a hazard. Where do all those motorcyclists go? What number of motorcycles can you have in a filtered situation? What is the spacing between that number of motorcycles you can have in that given situation? We can probably look at the likes of going to Bangkok and studying traffic movements there or something, but we are not in Bangkok. We are here, and we try to preserve the people we have here. Those situations are void of the governance that we have here and they are void of the rules we have

here, and as a result of that they have a much higher rate of injury. Why create more problems when you do not need to? They are culturally different.

The CHAIR — Just one moment. We have a comment from the floor. Damien Codognotto, come up.

Mr CODOGNOTTO — Thank you, Chair. I usually do not do this; I like to observe. But on the point of traffic filtering, in the city it is really important. It helps traffic flow, and there are two points to note. One is that if we are going to make decisions on legislation, then we need to have it evidence based.

Too many laws are made without good data, good science, and, as we have heard, the way they collect data on road safety in this state and this country is inadequate. The first point I make is that the statistics we have do not show an injury rate or a fatality rate when traffic filtering is applied, and the second point to make is that our laws currently encourage bicyclists in heavy traffic to do just that. They even paint lines on the road to show where they can pull up in front of the cars. There are two things that need to be really studied before we go to legislation on traffic filtering — not lane splitting; that is a different issue. There is no evidence that people are getting injured doing it. What is the experience of the cyclists who are encouraged to do it? A car moving into a lane-splitting situation has a limited amount of space to move in and usually you can see it coming. I do it myself. The ones that are the real deathtraps are the right-hand turns in front of you at an intersection. They are the ones that really nail you, especially if they are not indicating. You cannot tell when they are going to move. So David and I will disagree on traffic filtering when the cars are stationary or going very, very slowly up to the lights.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Damien.

Mr BECK — I respect what was said, but in the situations where I have ridden in city traffic — I did so for many years — there is no way that you can tell that the car beside you is going to change lanes when you are parked beside it. If you are adjacent to the front blinker of that car, you cannot tell whether or not that car is going to turn toward you.

Mr PERERA — But what if the cars are stationary at a red light? That should be okay.

Mr BECK — If you are, say, filtering and you ride up between cars and the driver at the last minute decides they need to be over in that lane and they put their blinker on, they are doing a legal manoeuvre and they turn into you.

Mr PERERA — The question is about when the red light is on.

Mr BECK — No. It is sort of a catch-22 situation really if you are talking about whether the red light is on.

Mr TILLEY — I just want to go back to a statement you made. You spoke in the context of developing your skills as a motorcycle instructor in the future and performing some of those duties with the newly established National Industrial Skills Training Centre down at the LOGIC centre as it is finishing construction. Just in relation to the statement, expressed as an opinion of yours, that some people can be rectified and some people cannot, is that specifically in relation to training? Are there some people who would never be able to achieve the capacity, the ability or the skills to pass a test and be a competent road user on a motorcycle?

Mr BECK — I believe there are people out there who do not have the capacity to be trained entirely, and they need to be identified. In the policing sector they call them repeat offenders. There is a situation with some people out there who we could try to educate but it would be very hard to, but I think they are in the minority for the most part. It was really a throwaway line that I used.

Mr TILLEY — The evidence we have been receiving is quite broad and comes from a range of training providers, and there are certainly some differences of views and opinions about whether some providers are training people just to do a test or whether they are actually providing skills to make them competent operators of a motorcycle on the road. If this committee were to make certain recommendations to address training for motorcycle riders throughout the state of Victoria as best practice, where do we find the level playing field to ensure that they are attending a number of hours of training or recommend what the training comprises of?

Mr BECK — Would you recommend the processes of introducing a psychological assessment?

Mr TILLEY — These are the sort of ideas that are open to discussion.

Mr BECK — Yes, I am just saying, is it feasible? Obviously the trainers who facilitate these training programs are out there on behalf of the government because they are put in place, and they need to be accredited to roll out this training. Again, it is a matter of resources. I respect Sergeant Roberts in that he has to command or look after an area that size with that number of people. I certainly respect him for that. He is obviously frustrated by the lack of resources that he has.

Mr TILLEY — He is not on his own. The committee has heard from a number of different areas around the state, and it has been very similar.

Mr BECK — But that works hand-in-hand with the capacity of the people you put on the road and their ability to handle any vehicle, be it a motorcycle, car, truck or whatever.

Mr TILLEY — I am interested in the concept of something that can be classified as a psychological assessment. It goes to the very point we have been discussing. We have heard from pretty much everybody across the range today about changing the attitude not only of motorcyclists but also of drivers of motor vehicles. Certainly we can explore that a little bit more as part of a training package. The attitude is that training is to operate the vehicle or the motorcycle.

Mr BECK — It may be something as simple as, 'What would you do in this given situation?', 'How would you respond in this situation?' or, 'What would you do?'. The questions are there, but they are not specifically targeted. Be they to motorcyclists or car drivers, the questions are there but they are more formalised in relation to the law.

Mr TILLEY — Wodonga Institute of TAFE is a big training provider. We have heard some evidence in relation to simulators. Do you have any view about that, or have you seen any simulators in operation?

Mr BECK — I personally have not, no, but I understand the concept of simulation. I think it is about potential relative to cost. Is it cost-effective to do that? You have to ask that question at the end of the day. You cannot go out and buy \$1 million worth of simulators and assume that is going to solve your problem. I feel some good training and some good on-road monitoring could aid a lot better and more productive outcomes than a simulator.

Mr LANGUILLER — Can I interrupt? Are you saying on-road training or monitoring?

Mr BECK — In-the-environment training.

The CHAIR — I think the on-road monitoring was someone monitoring the on-road training. Is that what you are saying?

Mr BECK — Sorry?

The CHAIR — Good road training and on-road monitoring.

Mr BECK — Yes, essentially. That is where we are lacking the skills that are required. As I said, you ride through a given set of parameters in a car park, and then they hand you a licence. You need to be out there on the road. You need to experience that environment.

Mr LANGUILLER — We accept that for cars, don't we? There are training providers for cars, trucks and buses, you name it.

Mr BECK — We certainly do. Look at the time an L-plater has to go through in the P-plate process to learn those skills. For the most part they are generally with someone. With motorcycling experience you are solo. You are on your own, so it is up to you to make those judgements out there. If you do not have the ability to assimilate what is in front of you, then it could be a difficult set of circumstances.

Mr ELSBURY — There are certainly times when I wish I had my Kevlar on, and it is about now I wish I had it on because I am about to ask a question of both of you. Do you agree with the motorcycle levy?

Mr BECK — Please explain.

Mr ELSBURY — The \$50 that is put on your registration in addition to your normal registration every year.

Mr BECK — It is like asking me do I agree with income tax.

The CHAIR — We will take that as an answer for the moment. Colin, do you have a view?

Mr MAXWELL — Firstly, I should point out that my motorcycle is registered in New South Wales. Regarding the levy, if that money is being used constructively for safety, then, yes, I agree with it.

The CHAIR — Thank you. I think we ought to have a comment from Rex as well.

Mr BEARD — I was a bit concerned that I was not going to get a chance to have a bit of a chitchat like these gentlemen. Do I have a few minutes?

The CHAIR — We have taken on board a fair bit of information.

Mr BEARD — Yes, but this is a public forum, isn't it? Can't I speak as a member of the public? I realise I was here before.

The CHAIR — There are a range of issues. We have Hansard staff who need to have a break. We have other submissions.

Mr BEARD — It is a bit of a pity, because you are going to cut me out of the picture, and I reckon I have a fair bit to contribute to the public side of it.

The CHAIR — Yes, that is not our intention. The reason we have this forum is to enable people to come in. But we have another group that is coming in shortly, and while I would like to take matters on board, we can take written submissions and general comments.

We were dealing with a question a moment ago in relation to the levy. We have had a comment from David and from Colin that it would be okay if it was for the public safety. Are there any other comments or questions in relation to that?

We might draw this to a close for people who have come along for the forum. I have the welfare of staff and appropriate breaks to look after. Rex, I am happy to take some notes from you for 5 minutes, and I will send them through to the staff. I would like to thank everyone for attending — David, Colin and Rex.

Witnesses withdrew.