

# 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

Mr R. Beard, president, and

Mr D. Malone, secretary, Albury-Wodonga branch, Ulysses Club.

**The CHAIR** — Welcome to the Victorian parliamentary inquiry into motorcycle safety. We are taking evidence from the Albury-Wodonga branch of the Ulysses Club, and we have with us Mr Des Malone and Mr Rex Beard. You will get a copy of the transcript of your commentary today. We invite you to correct any typographical errors and return it. It will then be placed on the web. Evidence taken today is broadly on the public record. If there are any comments you wish to make in camera or confidentially, we are in a position to do that. Thank you for taking the time to appear. We have met with a number of club members from other regions of Victoria. We look forward to your contribution. I invite you to speak to your submission.

**Mr MALONE** — I am what you would call a novice and returning motorcyclist. I had been driving coaches for 20-odd years. Then a friend of mine, a parish priest, had three motorbikes and said, 'I have to sell the little one', so I bought the little one. It was a 250. Then I had to go through the procedure of going through the licensing. I have now had about five motorcycles and have been riding for about 11 years. In that time, through the BMW Motorcycle Club of Victoria and the Ulysses Club, I have received the safety rebate three times.

I did a course on superbikes on the track at Winton, which was pretty scary. I then did a very good course in Melbourne called Chequered Band with a one-on-one police instructor. Chequered Band was the name of the operator; I cannot think of the police instructor's name. It included videos, road rules and hill starts in Keilor and finished with radio-controlled helmets between him and me while on Mount Alexander Road at 5.30 on a Friday night. He would say, 'It wouldn't be advisable to pass that tram now'. It was very good for me, as a country rider, to give me confidence riding in the city, which I do not do very much. The last course was two years ago with Honda training at Oran Park for a Ulysses AGM up in Sydney. A group of about 25 of us did this particular course riding around Oran Park with about six instructors from HART.

All of those have given me, being an older person with bus driving skills, an attitude of safety by watching for people looking through windscreens and just checking out what is happening and, of course, all the rider protective gear all the time. There is no way I would get on a motorbike without the right gear on. Being an older person — I am 70 years of age now — I have done that sort of thing.

With our club, we have club rides. I am usually tail-end Charlie because I am the oldest and the slowest. I have to pick up various people and just see how things are going. Last Sunday I followed a fellow who is returning to riding on a 250; there was no problem at all staying behind him doing 85 or 90 and making sure he did the right thing at corners and things like that. The lead people would be way ahead and perhaps would wait for us at certain spots to assemble things. This is what I can contribute as a Ulysses member and as a BMW member to the road safety thing.

I have spent a lot of time reading some of the submissions to the parliamentary inquiry. The 70-page Ulysses one was a bit of a read. Another that I appreciated was Phil Lemin's from some safety-type thing with an American influence. In fact, an email has come around from Ulysses offering free places to that. I think at our last meeting we had about six or seven fellows who indicated they would like to do that sort of course. The DECA one was interesting. The Maurice Blackburn one was very interesting, because they are the people who sort out all the injuries and bits and pieces like that. The Victoria Police was interesting too. I might disagree with the front numberplates but that seems a minor point compared to what they were saying about graduated licences and checking things too.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Can I interrupt you? May I call you Des?

**Mr MALONE** — Yes.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Do you disagree with the front numberplate or do you disagree with identifying the motorcyclist? If there was a check rather than a plate, would you agree with that?

**Mr MALONE** — It is only a minor disagreement.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — It is just to clarify what is the disagreement.

**Mr MALONE** — Having to pay the toll when I ride my motorcycle through Sydney does irk me. I am happy to use the e-tag on my windscreen in Victoria, but that is New South Wales versus Victoria, isn't it? I would say that the complementary thing would certainly be my V/Line coach driving and all that sort of stuff and town driving and the awareness skills I have of observing and watching what is happening, what could

happen and certainly staying back. They affect my motorcycle riding and I can appreciate the two skills. I have done driving courses in all those as well. I am the tail-end Charlie.

**The CHAIR** — As a committee, we would be very pleased to book you for our next bus trip, Des.

**Mr MALONE** — I am not doing winery walkabouts now. I have done seven of those. I will take my mates. Would you like a town run this afternoon? I start at 2 o'clock.

**The CHAIR** — In a bus or on a bike?

**Mr MALONE** — No, a bus.

**Mr ELSBURY** — We only have 5 minutes.

**Mr MALONE** — It would cost you a fair bit. It is \$1 for a pensioner; \$2 for you!

**The CHAIR** — Very good. Rex, would you like to speak?

**Mr BEARD** — Yes, I would. My name is Rex Beard and I am the president of the Albury-Wodonga branch of the Ulysses Club Incorporated. I have held that position now for five years. I have been a member of the club for eight or nine years, and in that eight or nine years I have seen a lot of changes. As president I am entitled to sit on every one of our subcommittees, which I do. I think over the last few years our branch has come a long way regarding safety. It is like everything else, there are a cross-section of views — a divergence there. We have some members who are in their forties and we have some members who are riding in their very early eighties, and across that we have a lot of different attitudes to riding. The 40-year-olds want to scoot along a bit quicker than the 80-year-olds.

We also have skill levels where someone is quite happy sitting along at 110 or 120 and someone might wobble along at 80 or 100 kilometres an hour. It creates a few problems on our rides, but over the last couple of years I think we have come a way because we are always talking about safety when there is a bit of a pickup and some members are complaining. When I said before — when I interjected — about what some people will do on two wheels that they will not do on four wheels, it is a constant reminder to branch members that it is a good idea to adhere to the road rules — unbroken white lines on winding roads et cetera — because while we are on the wrong side of the road it puts us at risk from oncoming traffic. If I could just relate one instance: we happened to be having a ride and we were travelling on the Happy Valley Road from Dederang to Myrtleford. I was at the rear of the ride and I also had my trailer on. I had about 19 bikes in front of me. With that we had a group of riders infiltrate our ride.

We were happy doing 80 kilometres an hour on that section of road and we had a couple of guys go through the ride very fast. Because I had my trailer on I made it very difficult for the rest of these other riders to go through our ride and upset us. As soon as we got to Myrtleford and I happened to see a police car, I made a note that these riders were behaving badly. Having said that, one of our older riders came up to me as soon as we hopped off our bikes and complained about our riders carrying on in such a fashion. I had to reassure him that it was not our riders, it was just another group of riders who happened to be going down the same length of road that we were. However, they were behaving badly, if you want to use that term.

My point there is that some guys tend to think that because they have the power of a motorcycle, which is exaggerated when compared to a car, they have an ability to pass somebody in a short distance and at great speed. I have just lost my way there a little bit, but I just related to this older rider in our group that it was not us and that things would be taken in hand to try to stamp it out. As I said, I spoke to a policeman who just happened to be there and I told him that there was a group riding around and so on.

We do have lots of issues of safety within our branch and it is something that comes up at our meetings almost monthly. We take it seriously. We try to adhere to the road rules in a sensible manner, because it is also the club name that is out there. We do not want to be portrayed as ratbags, whereas the people in here before were talking about middle-aged riders, et cetera. I do not think that is typical of Ulysses. I think that overall our attitude to road safety and road rules is good.

I have to be honest here; I have been very busy for the last couple of months organising a motorcycle show in conjunction with the Wodonga Lions Club. Our branch and the lions club put on this motorbike show on

23 October. On Saturday 22 October we ran a couple of rides around the district. We tried to put on a movie night on the Saturday. We had Doug Sunderland there on the Saturday night and on the Sunday talking about his experiences. Very early in the piece I approached VicSafe to see if they would come up to our motorbike show, and I was rebuffed by them and told to contact Wangaratta. I forget the gentleman's name, but there is a police officer there on a motorbike. Victoria's token effort was to send up this lone policeman to stand there for the day, to answer a few questions and to field a few inquiries.

**The CHAIR** — I might just make a comment in passing that we met with the Wangaratta police yesterday, and there were some outstanding officers there with extensive motorcycling experience under the guidance of Senior Sergeant Bill Gore.

**Mr BEARD** — I do not have any problem with that. I thank the officer for participating in last year's and this year's show. My comment was that our show is growing. This year we had 276 official registrations for our show and shine. We had 43 trade sites from various aspects of the motorcycle industry and we had 2500 people go through the gate. It presented a perfect opportunity for us, and I think we upheld our end of the bargain with our Ulysses stand in promoting the aims of the club. I think a perfect opportunity was missed by the bureaucracy of the state to participate in this show. Because our branch name is the Albury-Wodonga branch of the Ulysses Club, we got onto some contacts through the Motorcycle Council of NSW. They came on board and gave us a whole heap of brochures relating to protective clothing and a few stickers for the top of the helmet. They also gave us some funding for television adverts during grand prix weekend. We had 22 adverts. That was the week before our show and shine. On the Monday after those television adverts, both my phone and the lions club phone rang off the hook. That put our show right out there. There were quite a few extra inquiries about participating in the show.

We are eternally grateful to the Motorcycle Council of NSW and the RTA for providing funding, stickers and banners et cetera. My point there being that we got nothing from Victoria in that respect. That is probably inexperience on my behalf, maybe, in my approach to the Victorian side of things, but I did make an effort to have a greater exposure from the road safety industry in Victoria.

I do not know how many other branches of the Ulysses Club are participating in this, but it is nice to be able to have an opportunity to speak on some issues. We do not have very much to do with off-road motorbikes here in this branch. There are only a couple of us who have got dirt bikes. It is not really an area that affects our branch too much. But talking about the remoteness of accidents, I do not know, but maybe they could address that with some cautionary information about putting yourself out there at risk in isolated instances. I know that if I was way up in the backblocks, skylarking around, I would want to know if something happened to me how long I might lie on the ground before someone gets to me. If they have only got a Commodore to get up some dirt road in the back of Beechworth, you are in a lot of trouble. I think that is an area that they could push for the likes of us.

We have a lot of motorcyclists that come into this area; they stay in various motels around the district, and maybe some of that information could be pushed out through them in a compulsory brochure with their bill at the end of the day. In the New South Wales southern regions they do a pretty good job of putting out some information about roads and conditions, and various rides. You could perhaps have some maps of rides and the like, and I suppose also safety information as well. I am not sure whether that happens on this side of the river.

**Mr MALONE** — I think there is one for Tumut and then Corryong, and that is as well as one of these things that are put out. Have you seen these ones? On the Hunter regions — they are very well done.

**Mr BEARD** — There is a lot of information that is coming out.

**The CHAIR** — Are these booklets for the secretariat, or would you like to take them back? Are these your copies?

**Mr MALONE** — No, you can have them. They are for general motorcycles. We have got 15 or 20 copies and we give them out at various clubs.

**The CHAIR** — We can pass them through to our secretariat.

**Mr BEARD** — That is only two of several. There are quite a few of them across New South Wales.

**Mr MALONE** — There is definitely a Tumbarumba-Corryong one as well, but I do not know where it is. It is a very popular road, particularly at grand prix time.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you.

**Mr BEARD** — For next year I will definitely be making a better effort to get some involvement from VicSafe regarding our motorbike carnival in October.

**The CHAIR** — I might point out that I think next May there is a motorcycle conference in Melbourne. Is that something you would go to?

**Mr BEARD** — It depends on how much information we get. If we are not made aware of it, we cannot be there. Between the branch we have got 50 very active members, and usually for a retired person if someone has got a bit of an interest and we have received that information we can normally get someone there to participate in it.

**Mr MALONE** — We got early notification from Kylie through the website; I am secretary of the Ulysses, but then we saw the ads in the paper and some of our members asked if we were going and I said we were.

**The CHAIR** — Yes, good.

**Mr BEARD** — You talk about middle-aged motorcyclists coming back, and I suppose that is where a lot of the Ulysses fit that bill of having finished with the midlife crisis and coming back to motorcycling.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Having finished or having started? Did you say having finished a midlife crisis and then you get onto riding a bike?

**Mr BEARD** — It might be the tail end.

**Mr MALONE** — It depends on how much money you want to spend.

**Mr BEARD** — A lot of these guys do come back to motorcycling very late in life and some of them might not have ridden for a long time. It is a problem because normally they will go out and buy a big motorbike, and sometimes that motorbike is not suitable.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — At this point, can we talk about training: advanced training, additional training, your views on training, is it good, should it be strongly encouraged? What does your club do in terms of encouraging your members to undertake training and at what point? All of that. Can you please take us through it?

**Mr BEARD** — Yes, I will. The Ulysses Club encourages training, and the Ulysses Club will subsidise members to participate in training. I could not tell you exactly what that figure is, but they will give you a reasonable subsidy. They will not pay for the whole course.

**Mr MALONE** — There is a rebate: \$60, I think is paid for the first aid course and the other bit.

**Mr BEARD** — They do make an effort to encourage our members to participate in it. I do not know whether I would say it is ad hoc, but we do get the occasional information that comes down from our national committee about courses. They do not have a timetable as such — we are here in Albury — to say that there might be one on in Wangaratta or Wagga, but we do get information, it is encouraged and it is supervised. I have participated in a couple of them. You have just heard Des talk about a couple he has participated in. I think they are good value for money, and in the course of our meetings it is encouraged that members at least have a think about taking up the option. We cannot always get them to do it, but it is out there and it is encouraged.

**Mr MALONE** — Some of our groups have contacted HART and done particular courses with them with the Ulysses group and some of our BMW ones — off-road people have done the specialised off-road skills with HART — but you need the numbers to go through that. The subsidy, of course, really helps. It is \$60 for the first aid course, which is every three years, and \$60 or \$80 for the rider training course. I would certainly agree with you that you definitely need training.

**Mr BEARD** — Yes, it is encouraged. When you talk about protective clothing, here in this part of the country where we have extremes of heat and cold, if you have got a fairly substantial jacket and pants, in the peak of summer it is very difficult to ride in that sort of gear. Some guys ride in leather and I have got no idea how they do it. Then during winter you need that extra layer of protective clothing to keep you warm. That, in itself, is an issue.

I have got a pair of jeans with the brand name DriRider, lined with Kevlar. I have given up riding in them in summer because it is just too hot. I encourage everyone in the warmer months of the year to carry a bladder on their back with water or whatever to assist with rehydration because on a motorcycle you are exposed to the elements.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — I am sorry to interrupt, but we heard evidence yesterday when I asked the same question, and I was told very certainly that there is the appropriate gear for summer: trousers, jackets and you name it, and as I understood it pretty much, short of the issue of financial resources and affordability, there should not be any excuses for anybody not to wear protective gear. Is that a fair summary?

**Mr MALONE** — I have got two lots of these Draggin Jeans; a heavy set for winter and a light set which is a khaki colour, and it is quite okay. It is 40 degrees with the bitumen sometimes, it gets a bit hot, but so is coming off too.

**Mr BEARD** — I have a multitude of jackets and pants.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — The reason why I am asking you this question is because in Western Australia, in Perth recently, we heard from FEMA, which is the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Associations, that put a point of view to us, and I am not sure whether it would have the confidence of private individuals — I cannot remember — but I certainly recall the comment made that there are times when wearing certain gear, with the best of intentions in terms of safety, can in itself become an impediment to riding safely. True or false, I do not know.

**Mr BEARD** — I would agree with that.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — I just put that thought to you. It leads on to the other proposition that has been put to us, that we should be making it mandatory, and that is why it is important that you, as riders, explain to us and take us through this issue of whether there is protective gear that can be safely worn or does it in itself become a safety issue because of not being comfortable, because you are overheated, because you dehydrate, or whatever. We are looking into protective gear; I am visiting places and Mr Elsbury has become quite an expert to this committee on the subject. But that is why I am interested in having you explain to us what is the situation in the real world, in the market, so to speak.

**Mr BEARD** — Okay, we only talk about the layers of protective clothing, and when you get to the stage where you are dressed up like the Michelin man, movement becomes an issue, not only your arms and legs, but your digits. Once you have got a substantial pair of gloves on for winter then your movements are restricted there as well, so do you wear a light pair or a heavy pair? On a cold day you want a heavy pair. On a hot day you want a light pair. Just operating the various controls on your handlebars can become an issue.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — If you are in Melbourne you have the four seasons in one day; you have got four pairs of gloves.

**Mr BEARD** — That is very true.

**Mr MALONE** — If you are old, like me, you have got guards on top of the extensions of the guards and heated grips anyway!

**Mr BEARD** — Not everyone has a set of heated grips on their bike. Not every bike comes with that. Protective clothing can be an issue for the pluses and minuses. On a hot day what is the use of being all rugged up in protective clothing if you are not rehydrating yourself? Because you can be on the verge of heat stroke or heat exhaustion and be dressed up adequately, but your mind is not functioning. Having been there and done that with heat exhaustion and a lack of awareness of your surrounds — I have not ever done it on a motorbike — I would hate to go down that path where you are not hydrated properly, because the amount of

protective gear in that instance would not really save you, so it becomes an issue. When we talk about a jacket and a pair of pants and gloves, on a hot day should you not have a CamelBak bladder to keep yourself rehydrated?

Driving a car is a very different experience nowadays. Most cars have got air conditioning, but you can reach across to the console and grab a can of Coke or a bottle of water or whatever. You cannot do that on a motorbike, so should a CamelBak be compulsory during summer? There is an issue for you: heat exhaustion on a motorbike.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Is that common?

**Mr BEARD** — Yes, it is.

**Mr MALONE** — For an off-road rider, yes.

**Mr BEARD** — No, not just off-road riders. We have had a couple of guys in the last couple of years in our club who have suffered on hot days riding. It happens.

**The CHAIR** — Bill, I think Telmo has explored the protective clothing aspect. We have got some other questions to ask, perhaps in relation to being mandated.

**Mr TILLEY** — I am probably just going to finish up on the protective clothing issue. There is a question through this inquiry in relation to mandating or not mandating. Can you express a view in relation to mandating protective clothing?

**Mr BEARD** — I do not know if I would like to see that mandated. I think that comes back to an education issue. As I say, there is a lot of information coming out now, but I do think the protective side of things could be addressed initially by education.

**Mr TILLEY** — You mentioned just there VicSafe in negotiations. I have got to say it is a good show they have put on; it is terrific.

**Mr BEARD** — Thank you. There is a lot of hard work.

**Mr TILLEY** — Absolutely. You said negotiations were with VicSafe. Is that North East RoadSafe, the committee, or is it —

**Mr BEARD** — No. I could not tell you who I spoke to. It was a telephone number from Melbourne that I sourced and got through the various channels to somebody, and there was a lack of interest there, but I did make an effort.

**Mr TILLEY** — There was some conversation, Des, when you were talking about how you would take up tail-end Charlie. We heard yesterday in some evidence that with recreational group rides and things like that when you have got a number of motorcycles you have got your spread and all that sort of thing. We heard that the leader of the group there travels consistently at the speed limit, whereas the tail-end Charlie often has to keep catching up. Is that your experience?

**Mr MALONE** — They should not have to. If you do, you are a mug, because you would be doing 130 or 140 kilometres an hour to try and catch them. What a good rider who is the leaders usually does — the ride we had on Sunday was down to Glenrowan, but he kept stopping at various points, so they would assemble. Then they would go ahead and then stop. The person who actually marks the corner has to wait for the tail-end Charlie to come down. There might have been an accident; he might be an hour afterwards. Another responsibility is the rider in front of you should keep your headlight. So someone protects —

**Mr TILLEY** — There is a bit of military discipline there.

**Mr MALONE** — Someone protects tail-end Charlie. We had an experience last year where we had gone for a ride. Someone joined the group, and I was at the tail end. They were going to Beechworth. I thought, 'You're going to go to Beechworth', but the tail-end Charlie at the Yackandandah turn did not wait, so I went a little bit further, and the riders were not ours. I went a little bit further and a little bit further down the Buckland Gap, and

I turned up in Myrtleford before the leader. They were not very impressed about that. The tail end should have stayed; he should have waited.

**Mr BEARD** — What can happen on a ride is if you have a competent rider at the lead of the ride sitting on the limit — 100 kilometres or 105 or whatever — then you have a degree of skill sit on the speed limit for every corner, because the skill level is such. Then you get somebody who will come to a corner — they might have been doing 100 — they slow down, and then they get around the corner and will speed up again. That distance opens up, and it encourages a little bit of speeding at the back of the ride to try to catch the front of the ride. It is a little bit of trouble because of the skill level. Some can, some cannot, some go a bit faster and some go a bit slower. It is a problem, and we do try to make an effort to regroup on a regular basis so that speeding from the back end of the ride does not happen. It does not always work, but we try very hard.

**Mr MALONE** — Particularly with the roads we go through sometimes. They are fairly dangerous, like that river road is a really dangerous road. People think that is 110 km all the way, and it is not exactly that.

**Mr BEARD** — Sorry. One other point that we do make on a ride is that no-one is encouraged by the ride leader on the day to break the law, because at the end of the day we all have a licence and we all know our responsibilities. For instance, if the front of the ride is getting away from you, there is no obligation on you to speed to catch up. You ride at your own pace, because the tail-end Charlie will pick you up as we go around the corner — all stages. That is how we deal. There is no compulsion to break the law. If you break the law and get stung, that is your fault. It is not my fault or the club's fault.

**Mr MALONE** — The other thing I see a lot with tail-end Charlie is people stopping to put glasses on or stopping like that and then trying to catch up again. There is also the way they approach corners. If there is a person in front, they watch his brake light. No. You should be making your own decision about which way you go around that corner, because some people go into a corner very deep and some people go around like that. If you are talking about the driver training thing, it is about two different points to go through it, like a racetrack-type thing. That takes confidence, and it takes skills. I said it to this older driver on Sunday. He was brilliant on his 250. He did exactly the right thing. I complimented him, and two or three other blokes complimented him. Good to see him back again on his little 250.

**Mr ELSBURY** — In relation to your membership base, we hear about your friend on the 250 who has come back to motorbike riding. You have also got people who suddenly decide it is time to buy a bike — they have always wanted one. They want to have a great big hog under them and thunder along the road, besides which the jackets are pretty cool that you guys wear. When someone comes back into the fold, like your friend with the 250, do you suggest to them any refresher courses, or do you say to them, 'We will take you for a bit of a ginger ride around the place just to see how you handle the bike'?

**Mr MALONE** — I have not done that officially with them, although I said my priest friend suffered me for about two years on my little 250 and went all around Lockharts Gap and all this sort of stuff on his big 1000cc BMW. He just put up with me for so long. I passed that on to two or three other people, and other people pass it on too. If you just ride on your own, you then have to get in a ride with other people too, and you have got to sort of survive that too. Our ride down to Glenrowan and back to Moyhu and Milawa was a perfect ride. There is not much in the way of hills. It is pretty good, straight open. There is a bit of highway going through Wangaratta that was a bit complicated, but that was a good ride to do with a group of people. Otherwise you have got to learn it yourself, because there is no-one telling you what to do. Then you sometimes do make mistakes going into corners a little bit too quick. You think, 'Lucky there!'. That is my mentality, as a coach driver and bus driver for many years. You just do not make the mistake before it happens.

**Mr BEARD** — I have to say in an official capacity at the club when a new member comes in in that circumstance that you are talking about, no, I do not think we do that. But in being part of a club and being bombarded with this little bit of information about rider training et cetera, in our riders brief we have prior to a ride we always point out to the rest of the riders if we have a new person with us to look after him, give him a little bit of room and take him under your wing as such. There is a minute amount of looking after him, but on an official basis of taking him for a ride or the likes, the branch or the club does not do that.

**Mr MALONE** — There is probably no stigma in going down the back either. Some people want to be up the front, so we are actually running two lots of rides for each event. We run a longer ride — about a 300 or 400

ride once a month — and then a 200 ride, which was this Glenrowan one. The 200 ride was 10 Murray bridges, which was 350 or 400 kilometres.

**Mr BEARD** — We cater for both the experienced and the less experienced rider.

**Mr ELSBURY** — If tomorrow Telmo decides to walk up to your club and says, ‘Can you recommend me some rider training? How much should I do? What should I do? Which group should I go with?’, what do you advise him?

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Middle-age crisis, you see. That is what you are talking about.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Yes. That is why I picked you; I could not use myself.

**Mr MALONE** — If we could find that fellow in Chequered Band, an ex-policeman, I would put them straight onto him, because it is one on one, but he has got to get to Melbourne. Then you have got HART and a few other things. I think the NCI — what do they call themselves?

**Mr BEARD** — National Skills.

**Mr MALONE** — National Skills runs some kind of returning rider course as well.

**Mr BEARD** — If you are talking specifically about our district, there is a lack of training organised like that. That is going to change when Wodonga TAFE take on their new complex out at Barnawartha. They are going to put in a track out there of 1.6 kilometres, which will enable not only the TAFE to run courses but I would assume DECA and maybe even the Honda Riders Club of Australia would be able to do that.

There is a lack of training here, but if someone comes to our club in the circumstance of having returned to motorcycling, we have the information to give them to say, ‘Here is what our national club, is offering’, et cetera. That would be passed on. We would also mention that there are other private organisations around that run training.

**Mr MALONE** — But Telmo, they also have to have an attitude to appreciate motorcycles. If he goes and buys a big Road King and comes along, if he did not have a licence, he would not be able to get that, because he would have to go through the LAMS procedure for a start.

**Mr ELSBURY** — How much training would you expect someone to have before they come out with you on the road?

**Mr BEARD** — A licence.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Or you would like them to have.

**Mr BEARD** — I suppose it would be a good thing if someone went off and did at least one course before they recommenced riding and/or with us. That would be the ideal situation.

**Mr MALONE** — We do not take them for a test ride or anything like that. It is sort of the embarrassment factor too, but you soon know.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I also mean you are brand new and can 9 times out of 10 identify which part of the bike has to be kept on the road and which part of it has to be kept upright. Someone comes along who is brand new to motorcycling. How much training do you reckon someone like that should have before they come out on one of your rides with you?

**Mr BEARD** — Before they can join us they have to have a motorcycle licence.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Is that a full licence?

**Mr BEARD** — Yes, because we are talking about 40-plus-year-old people. To join the Ulysses Club, yes, they have to have a motorcycle licence, so I would assume to get to that stage that person has done some minor training somewhere, whether that be at National Skills, at TAFE or at DECA, to get a licence, or they have taken that to tone up their skills from their youth.

**Mr ELSBURY** — You were talking about the checked band and again raised it during the last couple of questions I posed to you. Can you tell us more about that particular experience, whether or not you think that could be adapted to on-road training for people who are moving from learner to probationary rider and whether or not it would be worth it?

**Mr MALONE** — I got onto him through the BMW thing. It was an ad he had there. He was a retired police motorcycle inspector of about 14 or 15 years. It was a one-on-one thing. I knew I was getting a subsidy from BMW, and I knew I was getting a subsidy from Ulysses, so it was not going to cost me terribly much. It was about \$150 to \$200 or something. It was my bike, and I was to meet him in Keilor. I was going to go riding, but when I got to Keilor he said 'No, you've got this video presentation you've to go through', and he showed me bits and pieces of road rules, observation skills. It was a bit like a DVD you put out about safety things. I think some of the \$80 levy was used for that a while back. We are talking in Victoria. There were a couple of things I did not pick up, a few other things I did pick up, and he made me go through it. That was the first 1½ hours; it was a full-day job. Then we went for a ride doing figure of eights and all that sort of stuff on my bike through a culvert in a sort of a non-housing estate or something in Keilor. Then we started these hill starts. Keilor has got some very steep hills up that way and down that way.

**Mr ELSBURY** — It is a great part of the world.

**Mr MALONE** — I was not that impressed about it. We also had radio contact. I had a clip-on radio here, and he had one too so he could talk to me and tell me, 'Good idea', or, 'Not such a good idea'. The final thing was city traffic manoeuvring, which I knew a little bit about. I hated crossing tram tracks and things, and 5.30 p.m. on Mount Alexander Road is a place I do not want to be when I am on a motorbike if I can help it.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I am going off with HART in a couple of weeks time. It will be me and three others plus the instructor. It will not exactly be one-on-one training but certainly as close as you seem to be able to get to it at the moment on road.

**Mr MALONE** — HART do a very good job.

**Mr BEARD** — For the money, yes.

**Mr MALONE** — They did the Oran Park thing. We had about 20 there at the AGM. We had six instructors from New South Wales and six from Victoria, so that was pretty intensive. Going round Orrong Park was interesting. At the end we had to laugh because the fellow said, 'Any questions?', and I said, 'What about towing a trailer?'. The fellow said, 'How many of you blokes have trailers?'. About 10 of the 20 had trailers, and he said, 'That's a completely different operation', compared to what we were doing with single things. But you have towed a trailer for years. I have never towed a trailer; I do not want to tow a trailer.

**Mr PERERA** — You mentioned that protective clothing is not suitable because of the different weather conditions. Apart from the helmet, do you think any other protective gear should be made mandatory?

**Mr BEARD** — Mandatory? I do not know. Gloves are a good thing because of the digits. There is a variety of clothing out there that is available. There are summer jackets that are made up of netting with various pieces of armour. That does help, but hot weather and protective clothing is a hard hurdle.

If I can just go back to Damien, a couple of years ago he was on his way through here to Canberra and pulled up at the service station out at Lavington. It was a fairly hot day, and seeing all these motorcyclists hop off their bikes in the mid-afternoon — I do not know what the temperature was, but it was summer — with red faces and the like, they could have all done with a CamelBak. As I said, the protective clothing is good, but physically if you are not there, it would not matter what you wear. It is not just protective clothing; there are a lot of other things that come into play.

**Mr PERERA** — You do not think any protective gear should be made mandatory?

**Mr BEARD** — I would have to say in that instance, no. That is my personal point of view. I am pretty happy with the option of riding with gear. I make that option depending on where I am riding and who I am riding with. If I am by myself sometimes, I may just wear a T-shirt, a pair of jeans and a pair of gloves. On other days I will wear the whole lot.

**Mr PERERA** — What other specific outcomes would you like to see from this committee's inquiry?

**Mr BEARD** — I might hand that one to Des, because Des has read the whole lot. I have been away for a month.

**Mr MALONE** — My first concern — when I knew it was coming I looked at it, and then I contacted Natcom, and they gave me this 80-page thing called the national strategy for road safety. It says 2011 to 2020. I thought, 'That's a national one. What's the Victorian parliamentary committee doing, and what's New South Wales doing?'. There has got to be some integration between the various committees doing something on road safety, with television and things like that too. Someone else — I think Tony Ellis — sent me bits and pieces, and I looked at all these 30 or so submissions you have had to look at. RACV, I looked at that one; I looked at DECA; I looked at Victoria Police and Maurice Blackburn and then read that a lot of people had put a lot of time into giving you information. But what are you going to do with the information? One thing I can see you are talking about is: are we going to mandate that people wear protective clothing? I am a bit like Rex; I always wear protective because I am old and I just do it.

The other thing is that the BMW Club have a little triangle, and they say 'Safety is an attitude, not just a word'. If you have not got that attitude, no matter what you do, you are going to take a shortcut. They say, 'You are going to take a shortcut, and you will run into something on the shortest trip. It will not be your big trip over to Alice Springs or anything like that; it will be on the little local ones where you will have your problem'. I do not know how we get that message about attitude to people. I am very keen on motorcycling. My wife is not as keen now and will not come. 'Secret men's business. Go on your own'. She used to come, and she is concerned that when I get there I contact her and say what has happened. She will not even let me out without a visibility vest on. That is why I am always tail end. I have the fluoro vest on the back. Everywhere I go I have always got that on. I am not riding today; it is too wet.

**Mr PERERA** — Would training help to change attitudes?

**Mr MALONE** — Training would get the attitude in. Yes, it would. I can remember my first course at Winton. They put a couple of bikes in front of me to make me go around the corners properly because I was not doing it properly. I was going around gently like in a car, and that is not the way you do it.

**Mr PERERA** — So it is fair to say that one of the outcomes you would like to see some more training?

**Mr MALONE** — Yes, there is talk about a graduated training scheme somewhere, isn't there? Then again I am thinking of two other things. Motorcyclists need specialists, but when I look at some of the stats from Victoria Police I think the motorcyclists had about a 23 per cent contribution and cyclists had about a 33 per cent contribution; definitely not at the same speed. Cyclists seem to get a fair bit of money. They seem to get a lot of attention. They seem to get special lanes and things and do not pay registration or safety levies either, do they. A few of you have heard that one.

**Mr BEARD** — You have talked about training. Des has just mentioned that the BMW Club subsidises training; the Ulysses Club subsidises training. Not everybody is a member of a motorcycle club. I do not know what the Harley's Angels group do in relation to training. Whether or not it subsidises it, I do not know. It comes back to expense. Some people do not have that discretionary spending to allocate to it. We now have a workforce; we all work at different times. Saturday and Sunday have disappeared. To be able to say, 'We will run a course on Saturday' might lock it out for a lot of people. There have to be a lot of options if you are going to provide training. It cannot just be Saturday and Sunday. It has to be available to people at reasonable times that suit today's lifestyle. It is an expense.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — If I may, I will draw your attention to this matter. I and committee members have heard conflicting views about new technologies that can enhance — or otherwise — riding safely. Can I draw your attention to two articles you have in the newspaper. There is one in this one; the other one is in this other one. I mean the one on wind noise. I will clarify that: we are not talking about the one on the bottom but this one. It says, 'Stop wind noise — hear music'. Can you comment on that?

**Mr MALONE** — I wear those ear mould plugs all the time but have no music. Some people have got iPods going all the time.

**Mr BECK** — It sort of contradicts the whole thing.

**The CHAIR** — We can take interjections from the back row, but we need your name and your contact particulars. Your name, please?

**Mr BECK** — David Beck, PO Box 18 Lavington, New South Wales 2641.

**The CHAIR** — I might get you to give your telephone details to our executive officer afterwards.

**Mr BECK** — In relation to the likes of iPods and things like that, modern technology impacts on all aspects of road safety. Like Des, I have been a coach driver for many years. I have been a motorcyclist for 34 years. I have held a motorcycle licence from the time I got my licence. I am a current member of this local Ulysses Club. I have been a member of the Ulysses Club in the central west of New South Wales.

**The CHAIR** — I will just check a couple of things, David. Are you here for the open forum session at 12.30 p.m. or as part of the Ulysses delegation?

**Mr BECK** — No, I am here for the open forum session.

**The CHAIR** — I suggest then that we save your full commentary for the open forum, if that is okay. We will be commencing that shortly. I want to take your interjection, though, so to speak.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — If you can make a comment on the use of GPS — we have heard conflicting views — and the ‘hear the music’ type of gadget that presumably your magazine, or this magazine, is encouraged to be used by motorcyclists?

**Mr BEARD** — Talking about hearing aids for motorcyclists, I also use those. They seal out a lot of the wind noise, and, yes, you have the option to put an MP3 player through. I use it; I do not use it all the time. I must admit that when riding between here and Melbourne the music or a radio station is an added bonus. It breaks the monotony of sitting on the freeway. I like to think that I use it responsibly. It is not only those ones that provide you with music communication; just an ordinary phone earplug, I think, is essential on a motorcycle because of the wind noise. It has an effect on your hearing, but I think you just have to treat them responsibly when you use them.

In terms of some of those gadgets that you can get — I do not have them — you can put a GPS unit through the earphones. You can put your music through them, and then you can put a bike-to-bike communication through them.

**Mr MALONE** — And a phone.

**Mr BEARD** — And a phone. You have an option to put a lot of things there. They are all distractions and have to be used accordingly.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — What about the GPS?

**Mr BEARD** — I have got a GPS on my bike. I use it now, because I am absolutely petrified of a speeding ticket. The GPS gives me 100 per cent accuracy on my speed. I use it all the time.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — It does not distract you? We heard it can be distracting. On that basis, you only have to look down and whatever and then suddenly you have just missed something. I am just asking your view in terms of your experience of riding.

**Mr BEARD** — I just returned from Queensland having done 1500 kilometres, and I used it. I do not think it created a distraction for me. I look at it if I need it. A lot of that was on country roads. I could not give you an experience of riding through Melbourne city, but I use it. I treat it responsibly.

**Mr MALONE** — I have one in the car, which I use in a limited way. I have got the ear moulds which I have to use because of the wind noise on the bike.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — But you are listening to music?

**Mr MALONE** — No.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Why not? It could be entertaining.

**Mr MALONE** — I don't like it much.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Do you think it safe? I must tell you that I have tried wearing ear plugs in the car. It makes a big difference in terms of listening to music when the plugs are right in my ear and I am listening to the radio from the car's speakers. There is a difference in terms of my capacity to detect potential issues and noises. Whether that is the case or not on bikes, I do not know. I do not ride a bike.

**Mr MALONE** — We see a lot of people, from the buses just walking across roads. They do not need it; they do not hear. I have actually got an iPod. One earplug is broken, so I have one plug in and one ear open. I find that is quite good. I have the music here, and then I get the birds and the tooting here. With those earplugs, by the way, you can talk at about the same volume I am talking now, and you still can hear. It just keeps the wind noise out. They are not completely dead — the ear mould ones that you were talking about in those ads?

**Mr BEARD** — In regard to those particular ones there, yes they put the sound right down into your ear canal.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Can I finally ask you, what is the percentage, from your observation, in your club? How many riders use it? Is it 1 in 10 or 5 in 10, do you think?

**Mr BEARD** — There are quite a few riders. It might be 5 in 10. There are quite a few members in our branch who use ear protection — a lot; probably more than 5 in 10.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — I am not referring to the protection one; I accept the protection one. The question is about listening to music that is potentially loud. That is the one I am talking about.

**Mr BEARD** — There would be a lesser number than that. Not everybody has an MP3 player. Maybe on a long ride you might get a few.

**Mr MALONE** — They have the headphones in the bikes they sell, the big Harleys and the big BMWs. There would be music coming out of them if you want to listen to music.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Even the small BMWs.

**Mr MALONE** — If you want to pay 40 grand for that.

**The CHAIR** — Rex and Des, thank you for your comments to our inquiry. We appreciate the time you have given and the time you have spent reviewing the documents. We trust you will find our report of some interest when we deliver our findings.

**Mr BEARD** — Thank you very much for allowing us the opportunity to speak and participate in this. I will just make one more point. Here we are in 2011. If you remember back to the early 1970s, the *Sun* newspaper in Melbourne used to put on its masthead that there was 1032 people killed on the roads in Victoria per annum. Things have changed big time. We are now down to around about the 330 per year mark being killed on the roads across all vehicles, including bikes, trucks et cetera. In that respect, I think every Victorian should be given a pat on the back. Cars have become a little bit safer, and bikes, even though they are less safe than a motor car, have benefited too from some of the developments — ABS braking et cetera — over the years.

I look at the population of vehicles on the road and the amount of kilometres some people drive. A taxidriver has more chance of having an accident than I have, because he is on the road all the time like a truck driver. There is this big push from the bureaucracy; I think it is trying to achieve the impossible of a zero road toll. In relation to today's population on the roads, 330 is not a bad effort.

I would not like to be traumatised; I have had a couple of serious car accidents, but they have not involved deaths. I think in one respect, where we are today with the amount of cars on the road, at 330 we are travelling really well. If you looked at that graph, if it had continued from the 1970s, hypothetically, to where it could

have been today, we should be killing thousands on the road every year. I think at 330 we are doing a pretty good job.

**The CHAIR** — Thanks, Rex. I think the toll in 2010 was 288, so it has gone down. We are trending towards that roughly at the present time. There was also an article in the *Age* in relation to a cyclist who had been doored in Glenferrie Road. The cyclist's mother said she had joined a club that she never wished or sought to join and is going to be a member of it for life. So there is that slight salutary aspect that one accident is one accident too many. Our task is to try to find those law enforcement measures that strike an effective balance so that there are not more people like Dr Martin and Dr Cross being parents of cyclists killed.

**Mr BEARD** — Yes, but you talk about the law enforcement side of it to try to curb those numbers. You had the constable here this morning talking about 9000 kilometres and 8.75 persons to police them. How can you do it without extra people on the ground? I have seen instances here in the region where we have been out for a ride and there has been an unmarked police car, and if he used his 305 rule, he would be able to cover a fair distance because we have seen him in several locations on the one day. I have seen incidents happen in front of him, whereas if it had been a candy car, those incidents might not have happened. If that police presence had not been there, it may not have happened, but because it was an unmarked police car people were still doing fairly foolish things. It comes back to men on the ground and a police presence.

**The CHAIR** — And also individual — —

**Mr BEARD** — Responsibilities.

**Witnesses withdrew.**