

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Wodonga — 30 November 2011

Members

Mr A. Elsbury

Mr T. Languiller

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Mr M. Thompson

Mr B. Tilley

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Witnesses

Mr S. Dumesny,

Mr T. Devereaux,

Mr P. Kennelly

Mr R. Ludlow, and

Mr A. Stojanovic, Wodonga TAFE.

The CHAIR — I would like to welcome everyone to the afternoon session of the Victorian Parliament public hearing and inquiry into motorcycle safety. I would like to thank the representatives of Wodonga TAFE for attending this afternoon.

Before lunch we broke for a short time. There was a person who wanted to put some evidence on the record. I would like to read his comments on the record, which will just take a minute or so. We will then commence by inviting you to speak to our terms of reference as appropriate. Then we will be happy to ask you some questions about your insights regarding the issues that we are contending with in relation to improving motorcycle safety in Victoria.

A gentleman who is the president of the Ulysses motorcycle club gave evidence on behalf of the club and wanted to put his own views on the record as well. He is Mr Rex Beard, and he is a support worker in the disability sector. He is 57 years old and has been riding bikes since the age of 16 years and 9 months. As a rider he has hit cars, eagles, deer, wombats, birds, gravel and just about everything else. He has been a member of the Ulysses Club for nine years.

Some members own show bikes which are immaculate and which they might ride to a coffee morning, but that is all. Their bike may not match their skills. For safe riding a wide range of skills is required. Rex has ridden many miles and experienced a lot of riding conditions. From a safety perspective Rex advocates consideration being given to the mandated use of TCS, or traction control systems. If the back wheel of a bike is moving faster than the front wheel, a traction control system will regulate the speed of the bike by retarding the engine, which will bring the bike under control.

Rex noted that Colin Maxwell spoke of attitude and road conditions. A good attitude, according to Rex, will not help if the road conditions are bad. Broad experience is required. Some secondary schools run driver education programs, and Rex has put the question: why not also motorcycle training? A couple of years ago there was a forum in Benalla run by VicSafe at which there was talk about mentoring of younger riders by experienced riders. This opportunity is predicated on dollars and the availability of experienced riders, but Rex regards it as a good opportunity.

Rex is opposed to the riding of scooters with inappropriate safety clothing. The bikes could range from 50cc to 750cc, and the wearing of workday clothing is not adequate protection. Rex supports lane filtering until traffic starts to move. He noted in passing that there are a lot of four-wheel lane splitters. He also noted that the Ulysses Club has a ride committee which constantly reinforces the obligations to the laws of the land and good riding habits. Rex himself encourages compliance with the law. He noted that people can and do use phones to report offences. He always encourages riders within his circle of acquaintance to be aware that they can be observed by Mr Citizen who, in turn, can make a report to the police.

In years gone by the type of bike allowed to be ridden by learners was 250cc, but now it can be up to 650cc. While there are a lot of options for learners, a larger bike is beyond the skill level of the novice. Rex supports a graduated licensing system. He cannot see why a person can buy a larger bike without the requisite skills. Rex has been riding since the early 1970s. Two years ago he went to Sandown and hopped on a Honda Four. He got a big shock at what these bikes are capable of. One of these larger bikes is an accident waiting to happen, and Rex was absolutely gobsmacked at what they could do.

Rex has observed differences in riding skills in age groups. Members of his club range in age from 40 to 80. Some riders forego travelling on gravel. On wet days a number of people are deterred from attending club events. Just because a person holds a licence does not mean that they can ride a motorcycle without infringing on another person's safety.

Rex's final comment was that if a person has a limited riding season and parks their motorcycle in their garage for nine months, they are only riding under optimum conditions. Not being accustomed to riding in a range of road and weather conditions limits experience and the building of skills.

Now over to Wodonga TAFE. Who would like to open the batting?

Mr LUDLOW — My name is Ross Ludlow. I have been with the National Industrial Skills Training Centre for a bit over 12 years. The centre started motorcycle training back in about 2006, so it has been operating for approximately five years now. We have probably put through in the vicinity of 1000 people. We are certainly

not a big training provider, but we service the local area. We offer the learner permit training and assessment and also the motorcycle licence permit. We also offer Begin to Ride programs which are very poorly patronised. Most people seem to believe that if they are enrolled in a one-day course, that will be adequate. Admittedly there are some very experienced riders who have come through and have gained their experience through race clubs and off-road environments.

We also used to offer what we called a roadcraft skills program, and we encouraged people who had come through and done their learners permit and motorcycle training for their licence to take advantage of that. While it went okay in the early days, it has gotten to a point where it basically does not exist anymore. We cannot get enough participants to run the course and operate it viably. The courses that did run earlier when we first offered them were very well received. We received tremendous feedback indicating that the participants had gained a lot from that particular riding day, but unfortunately we just cannot get people to do it — and we certainly cannot force them to. Whether it is the dollars or they think they do not need it, I am not sure.

The CHAIR — What was the costing for the day?

Mr LUDLOW — It was around about \$200 for the day at the time. We engaged two riders, a lead trainer and a tail or sweep trainer, who would stop and provide briefings and feedback to students during each stage.

I will introduce Paul. Paul Kennelly is one of our motorcycle trainers. He has been training for approximately six months. Thomas Devereaux has been training for around about the same time. Alex Stojanovic is our senior motorcycle trainer. He has been with us for three years. Steven Dumesny is the senior business facilitator, who oversees training and business coordination. I will hand over to Alex.

Mr STOJANOVIC — As Ross said, my name is Alex Stojanovic. I am the business facilitator for the transport department of NISTC, and I am an authorised VicRoads trainer and assessor. I have got some dot points there, and I am happy to expand on them if you want me to. The cost to L and P participants is \$230 for a day's course, plus a VicRoads fee of approximately \$26 — two lots of those fees and they are fully licensed. Currently the Ls and Ps testing is conducted in what I consider to be a sterile environment. Out the back of NISTC we have our hard area where they do the riding. The lines are all marked. While we are conducting training it is a no-go zone for any pedestrians and the public. None of our other training vehicles, such as forklifts and trucks, are to go out there. It does not represent on-road riding. That is what I want to stress to you: it is very sterile training. At no time does the L or P student ride out on the road.

The courses are not compulsory, so a person does not have to do a day's course. They can come and do the test only. We simply do the correct paperwork, take them out there and say, 'This is what you're going to do. You're going to have to swerve left and right, do two stops, a right swerve and a left swerve. Off we go'. For some who can do it I suppose that is easy, but for a lot of people it is difficult. What I am trying to say is that people have the option of not even attending training. It is not compulsory to do training.

Mr LANGUILLER — I am sorry to interrupt you. Where do you take them to?

Mr STOJANOVIC — Out the back of our area, which is a hard area. It is an enclosed area, so there is no on-road riding at all.

Mr LANGUILLER — There is no on-road testing?

Mr STOJANOVIC — No on-road testing at all. Currently our pass rate would be at least 95 per cent, because we simply keep training them until they pass. The standards of VicRoads are for us to abide by; it is not our decision how we say, 'Andrew, you can ride' or 'No, you can't, so we won't give you that'. If you meet that criteria, which is quite low, it is a pass. We do not have that flexibility to say, 'Yes, you can do that' or 'No, you can't'. We are required to pass as per VicRoads.

Currently in the testing, both through the Ls and the Ps, the maximum speed that riders are required to do is between 20 and 25 kilometres an hour. It is no more than that that you have to do for any of the test. If, actually, during the Ps test you exceed that speed, that means that you have to have a rerun, so it does not even allow you to do that speed. That is my point. If you want to ask me about the testing — I do not know if you are aware of how the test is conducted — you can certainly ask me some questions.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Alex. Speak on. We have a colleague who has recently done his training, so we are familiar with what you are referring to.

Mr STOJANOVIC — I will hand it over to Paul next.

Mr KENNELLY — Not only am I a trainer and assessor at NISTC, I have been a rider recreationally and also commuting for about the last 16 years on a motorcycle. Just a quick comparison between Victoria and New South Wales testing and assessing: in South Wales, for an Ls licence, it is actually conducted over a two-day period between two 4-to-6-hour sessions. The skill sets that you learn in the New South Wales system better prepare a rider for actually entering the road, whereas the Victorian skill sets that you will learn on the day do not really prepare you sufficiently to be going out directly onto the road. With the P system there is a one-day 4-to-6-hour session, and that actually has an element of a road ride, which is about a 40-to-45-minute road ride with the trainer taking point in the road ride and coming in behind the riders as well out on the road and getting a good idea of whether the person has a good idea of a concept of road positioning of their bike on the road and has a perception of what is up ahead, whereas by comparison in Victoria I think if somebody turned up to do just an assessment only, they could be assessed within about 20 minutes, would you say?

Mr STOJANOVIC — Yes.

Mr KENNELLY — And then they get handed over a Ps licence, and off you go. In comparison the skill sets learnt in New South Wales as compared to Victoria are definitely higher skill sets to develop before being on the road.

Mr DEVEREAUX — I am Tom Devereaux, by the way. So far, from what I have received this year in the amount of training and assessing I have done, it seems to be well accepted and well received by those who are starting off the LAMS — that is the learner-approved motorcycle scheme out there — that you are going to get, as you mentioned before, the different size bikes, but essentially they are pretty much governed or their speed ratios are pretty much the same as the typical 250 motorcycle you are going to get across the board. It might be 650cc and all the rest, but their capacity and speed and all the rest, as I said, is fairly all close together. They are all very happy, in most cases that I received, to say that they would not want a bike any bigger than that or able to go any faster than that, which is a good thing. However, there are the odd ones who come through and talk about, 'How long do I have to wait until I get my Harley? Do I really have to wait the 12 months et cetera down the line?'. So the mindset out there is pretty much that the minute the tick in the box goes in to get that open licence, they are going for something bigger.

Anyway, at the start I think one of the big areas — and this is sort of a comparison, being both a heavy vehicle trainer and an assessor — are the observations we are not able to offer. We can only do that through DVD, which we do with most of the L-plate courses and that.

The CHAIR — A DVD?

Mr DEVEREAUX — Yes, through a DVD, so obviously just showing it on television. We do not get any chance to do that. Whereas, if you go back to heavy vehicle, one of the biggest aspects of our training for that is observation. You can actually see a remarkable difference in what you get out of somebody as they go through a one-week course in a truck as to what we can input into their mind about how important it is. We can only suggest, point out and tell them how important that is at this stage. I think that is one of the most critical areas that you would want to offer to somebody at the motorcycle level, especially the beginner: what is around them and how important it is. Honestly, in most cases a DVD is lip-service. It is looked at. You have got the Wayne Gardners and all those that do their DVDs. They do it well, but unfortunately, unless you appreciate what it is about, I think that is one of the key areas that we cannot offer. I think it certainly needs consideration.

Mr STOJANOVIC — We had a bit of a think tank, and if I could give you some recommendations that we have got. One of the things here is — and we are not saying how it is going to be done, we just suggest it — compulsory safety gear must be worn. There is no actual requirement for safety gear for riders.

Mr KENNELLY — Other than a helmet, ultimately there is none.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Once again I am not picking on Harley-Davidson riders, but I shudder when I see them go past me in shorts, singlet and thongs, because I will guarantee that at 100 kilometres an hour your body

will hit that tarmac at 60 kilometres an hour. As you know, our skin does not bounce very well at 60 kilometres an hour. That is a guarantee of what will happen. Somehow compulsory safety gear should be brought in. I do not know; it is just a suggestion we have got. The other one is that while riders are under those L and P restrictions they must wear reflective high-vis on their safety gear.

The CHAIR — Are these your suggestions?

Mr STOJANOVIC — Yes. These are our recommendations and our thoughts of how things could be improved. The other one, which we have covered fairly well, is on-road training for both Ls and Ps. That is without a doubt. Compulsory training, so that someone cannot come and do a test only; there must be compulsory training involved. Another is assessment of road position — again, we are talking about on-road testing — and making sure that they are positioning and checking their blind spots etcetera. Another is for providers — that is us, as assessors and trainers — to use communications systems while training out on the road.

The CHAIR — Alex, what did you say just then about blind spots?

Mr STOJANOVIC — That we would actually assess them for checking of blind spots.

The CHAIR — As part of?

Mr STOJANOVIC — As part of the testing. We may get them to do a lane change, and we would like to be seeing them check their mirrors, indicator and head check.

Mr DUMESNY — If I could elaborate a little bit on that, I was a motorcycle training instructor in the UK for four months as part of an army exchange system. The system over there is very different. They incorporate into their system of vehicle control what they call a lifesaver for motorcycle riders. The very last thing that they do before they do a left or right turn is that they have a physical look back up to the right, or left if they are going left. That is something that I brought back, and we taught it in the Australian Army. It is certainly a good thing if they get that system of mirrors, course, signals, speed, gears, changing down and then do their lifesaver just before they turn left, so that they do not have a car come up on the inside of them; so that works.

The other thing that they do in the UK is they have communications with the trainee. The trainers have two-way communication and they can talk to the guy, so when they are behind him they can tell him what he is doing wrong, rather than having to wait until you pull over and then say, 'Back there, you should have done that'. They should be saying 'Watch me. This is where you need to go' or 'I'm going to overtake you. I'll go through this corner', and then they emulate that. So it is like any of the learning processes: it is explaining it, demonstrating it and then the students practise it. That worked very well over there.

Mr STOJANOVIC — I suppose the final thing, which might sound a bit surprising from people like us, is that we would actually like to be reviewed as trainers — that is, for the trainers ourselves to be audited or checked for our skills, maybe over a five-year period, so every five years. That is about it.

The CHAIR — Thank you. What I might do is kick things off. I will just cut to the chase on a couple of things. Paul, can you just amplify a little bit on the training regime requirements between Victoria and New South Wales, as to why New South Wales is better?

Mr KENNELLY — In the Victorian system, as Andrew and most people here will agree, there are the skill sets that you might learn on the day for, say, Ls — just say you learn a left and right-hand turn, using your indicator, where to stop a bike, and you do an emergency stop, which possibly would not really be classed as an emergency stop. In New South Wales they do a lot more swerve activities. Also they do a lot more roundabout scenario-based training, of coming up and giving way to people at roundabouts, the stop and start going through roundabouts and two-lane split roundabouts, as well as a lot more training on emergency stopping. In the Ps session you learn a lot more slow-rider skills sets, with manoeuvrability of the bike. The big thing with the Ps test in New South Wales is the on-road component, where you will actually do two rides out on the road with trainers and assessors. One 45-minute session will be an element where you are actually being assessed, and there will be a 45-minute training session actually out on the road.

Mr LANGUILLER — As a matter of interest, are you Victorian or from New South Wales?

Mr KENNELLY — Ex-New South Wales; I am now a Victorian.

Mr LANGUILLER — Good choice.

Mr DEVEREAUX — What is the licence you went for, Andrew?

Mr ELSBURY — I have now got the learners permit for a motorcycle.

Mr DEVEREAUX — Did you do that with us, did you?

Mr ELSBURY — No, I did that in Melbourne. Basically, I could have done 2½ hours and then been given a licence — total time on a bike. But, no, I am too conscientious for that, so I went and did another course beforehand. So with a massive 6 hours under my belt and being able to do the breakneck speed of 30 kilometres per hour, I am now allowed to ride around, because I have got that little bit of plastic. Putting another yellow bit of plastic on the back of my bike means that I am legit to do what any other road user is doing.

Mr STOJANOVIC — So you understand where we are coming from?

Mr ELSBURY — Absolutely. I actually do have a question here, which I can do a song and dance about. If I was now to go over to New South Wales with the training that I have received from Victoria, do you reckon that I would still pass their test? Would I have a hope in hell?

Mr KENNELLY — Doing an up-front assessment, more than likely no. If you were to do their training session over a 4 to 6-hour period, you possibly could, depending on the level of your skill. Without seeing how you can ride, it would be a hard judgement. For someone who is a novice rider, even after doing a 6-hour session, I dare say that they possibly would not pass the test. That is because of the difference between the skills that you learn in the Ls session in New South Wales. The time period from you actually riding out on-road on your Ls and then actually going to the Ps session, you have got that time period where you can build a bigger skill base and be able to go and approach the Ps in a different way to somebody from Victoria. From what I understand, the hard thing at the moment is, if you were to hop over the border here, there is an exemption, because the closest training authority is 100 kilometres away. So you do not even have to do an Ls test here at the moment; it is just: 'Sit the test, and here's your licence'.

Mr ELSBURY — I would be interested in doing the New South Wales course, if I could find the time to be able to come up here again — so watch out, I could be on your books soon. But I have got the basic skills of keeping the rubber down and the metal up, and shortly I am going off with another company to do on-road training, so there are four riders together with one instructor. Should that sort of thing be embraced as a standard for motorcycle training in Victoria?

Mr KENNELLY — In my opinion, most definitely.

Mr DEVEREAUX — Yes.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Let us go to the real basics. Let us go to the minimum of what someone could do. With absolutely never having ridden a bike in their life, they could come in and do a test only, fumble their way through, meet the criteria and pass. They must hold their Ls for a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 15 months. They could come back after 15 months after not having ridden at all. They could come back in and say, 'I just want a test only'. They fumble their way through, and they are now fully licensed on the road, having never ridden for 1 hour. That is a possibility.

Mr ELSBURY — In the testing regime you have got that certain distance that you have to be able to ride in 10 seconds.

Mr DEVEREAUX — That is right.

Mr ELSBURY — And you have got to be able to do the slow ride. I did it in 10.59 seconds, and I still got a pass.

Mr DEVEREAUX — That is right.

Mr ELSBURY — It is insane.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Good dirt bike riders, I have had them do it in about 32 seconds, where they are almost stopping. But the point is that you did it in over 10 seconds.

Mr DEVEREAUX — You did it within the criteria.

Mr ELSBURY — I have done the minimum.

Mr KENNELLY — I think the big difference is with the stop that you do on the Ls as well, you can quite easily pre-empt when you are going to have to get on the brakes and stop.

Mr ELSBURY — Yes, that is what I did.

Mr KENNELLY — Whereas on the road you cannot pre-empt when you are going to stop.

Mr ELSBURY — I threw out the anchors and successfully stalled it, and I still passed.

Mr DEVEREAUX — That is right.

Mr TILLEY — Gentlemen, thank you for giving us your time today. It has certainly been valuable input. You should certainly be commended. Being the local representative up here, for the purposes of my colleagues on this committee I should say that the work that the NISTC does is enormous in this area. You will see them out on the road in all of their fields quite frequently, and it is probably taking a bit of time away from the business aspect of NISTC.

The CHAIR — Bill, could you just give us the full description of NISTC?

Mr TILLEY — It is the National Industrial Skills Training Centre. In saying that, we have spoken a little bit about training, and you are certainly to be commended because no-one has a monopoly on good ideas. You have come out not sitting on your hands. You are demonstrating what you would like to try to do in the motorcycle training regime, and as a committee we are working to that end to make it all that much better. I heard particularly, Alex, that you said there is no flexibility with the VicRoads standards for testing at this stage, and probably in that it would be fair to say that it is a fairly low standard currently.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Absolutely.

Mr TILLEY — With the regime and the limited field that you have, you are effectively just training people to pass a test.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Effectively that is what we are doing. Bill, you have to be a little bit careful here. Making a test harder does not necessarily create a better rider. It only means that someone can pass a harder test. The other issue is that we can bring in as many ideas and criteria as you want, but the cost will have to get to the point where people will know. If all of a sudden it is going to cost them \$1000 to get their Ls and \$1000 to do their Ps, I think people just will not be doing it. They may ride illegally — I do not know.

Mr TILLEY — Which brings me to the next point I want to go on to. Would you agree or disagree or have some comment to make in relation to the suggestion that some people just do not have the capacity or the ability to ride a motorcycle?

Mr STOJANOVIC — Without a doubt, yes, but does the current criteria of VicRoads highlight that? Not necessarily. It does not because it is not good enough.

Mr DUMESNY — Just as an example of exactly what you are saying, in the UK I had an officer and I was following him. I said, 'Follow me. It should just feel great going through all of these corners', and he said, 'No, Sergeant, it feels terrible'. Then he headed off out into the bush. I sat him down and spoke to him. Motorcyclists go through a transformation at about 60 kilometres an hour. If you are below 60 kilometres an hour and you push on the right-hand handlebar and steer the wheel left, it will actually go left, but when you get over 60 kilometres an hour and you do that, it will lean right and go right. He thought that at 100 kilometres an hour

driving around he still had to steer. He was trying to force the bike to go that way and it was really wanting to go that way. We would never have picked that up in the training that we have got.

Mr TILLEY — That is where you go into counter-steering and all of those sorts of measures. I suppose the bottom line is trying to get some commentary in relation to how currently across the board — not necessarily the NISTC — providers have the responsibility not to pass people who clearly have inadequate skills. There is no opportunity for you to be able to make those decisions because, one, they are not adequately assessed, and two, because of the regulatory framework you are working with you do not have that option available to you.

Mr STOJANOVIC — No. If a person passes that Ls test, they have met the criteria. Your feeling does not come into it. It is black and white. There is no in-between there.

Mr TILLEY — I am interested in the comment in relation to the system of car controls and the system of motorcycle controls — ‘mirror, signal, head check’. The courses that you are talking about at the moment, Steve, were they military courses?

Mr DUMESNY — Yes.

Mr TILLEY — Was it a full-time course over a number of weeks?

Mr DUMESNY — In the UK they have a very different system. The system of vehicle control, they apply that in their civilian-type training as well. Their military and civilian truck licences are different to here. They just have the civilian licence and they drive the military vehicles. It was the same thing. The warrant officer assessors could go and work in the civilian environment on the weekends. So it is essentially the same.

Mr TILLEY — But it is still a full-time course for the students?

Mr DUMESNY — Yes.

Mr TILLEY — How many weeks was the motorcycle course when you were working over there?

Mr DUMESNY — Again, it is a little bit different because they were teaching instructors to train their soldiers.

Mr TILLEY — I understand.

Mr DUMESNY — I do not know, with the civilian thing, what they actually get.

Mr DEVEREAUX — The one here is two weeks. Our defence one is two weeks.

Mr TILLEY — It is down to two weeks?

Mr DEVEREAUX — That is both on-road and off-road. So that is a combination.

Mr TILLEY — I know when I did mine it was four weeks continuous and it was on-road and off-road, and I share the experience of having been an instructor on the defence courses myself a couple of times. That aside, it is probably getting off the mark, whereas defence, police and other emergency services have the luxury of being able to do full-time continual courses. It is there for the road users. How do we demonstrate and get people trained up in those small windows of opportunity? Do we do it over several weekends? Those are the sorts of ideas we are trying to flesh out, and you guys are at the coalface of it.

Mr DUMESNY — Cost will be the big problem. It is seen as a cheap option for a young person to have a means of getting around. So they can go and get the motorcycle licence, buy a motorcycle fairly cost effectively and then be on the road and be able to get about. They do not have a whole lot of dollars. If you are going to engage these guys, again, you would need to have large numbers of students all paying \$200 to offset their wages. Then you have the risk of not having that low student-instructor ratio of probably around three to six people per trainer that they can handle. In that case there has to be some way of getting some funding for that. We use nationally recognised codes with nominal hours that we attract Skills Victoria funding for. I am not sure whether something like that can be arranged for this as well. So you have a nationally recognised code with, say, 40 nominal hours that we can attract the funding for that would offset the cost to the participant.

Mr LUDLOW — The other thing that has not been mentioned today is that Alex and I attend the VicRoads provider meetings, and there is pretty general consensus among motorcycle training providers that the scooter versus the larger bike licence is inappropriate with the current system as well. You understand what I am saying?

Mr TILLEY — I just want to change tack a little bit. Do you provide any NSW testing at all?

Mr STOJANOVIC — No, we can only give them Begin to Ride practise there.

Mr TILLEY — Can you tell the committee, are there any particular details about the New South Wales training test option, if any of you gentlemen are aware, and what is it worth in dollar terms? And could you do a comparison to that in relation to the Victorian training costs?

Mr STOJANOVIC — We will have to get back to you.

Mr LUDLOW — I understand that the New South Wales licensing system is actually subsidised by the government, but I could not confirm that.

Mr TILLEY — If you would be able to help us out, Kylie will get in contact and try to get some details later on.

Mr LUDLOW — I think that the fees are very similar to what we are charging, but I have got a feeling that the government does subsidise the training providers to a point.

Mr TILLEY — What is your competition in the local area here?

Mr STOJANOVIC — DECA in a small way.

Mr LUDLOW — And George Talbot.

Mr STOJANOVIC — And then George in Wangaratta.

Mr LUDLOW — I do not know if you want to touch on this, but I have a big-picture plan of where we are going. Andrew, you will understand this for the Ls part. We would be looking at incorporating Ls with the Begin to Ride. You would do training through the chicanes and things like that, and then you would actually do the Ls, which you have done, and then you would be deemed competent for the Begin to Ride, but that does not give you the Ls. The requirement would be then to come back and do maybe a minimum of 4 hours of on-road Ls assessment. You then go away and hold those Ls for that period again — that 3-month minimum to 15 — and then come back and do the Ps, and you have not done the Ps part of it yet. You do the in-house assessment, or what I call the sterile Ps assessment, and then do another 4 hours on the road assessment for your Ps. Basically you are looking at the Ls and the Ps to be extended out to about 8 hours. There is that cost involved, though.

Mr TILLEY — I suppose then there is the question of what is the cost of a life over training?

Mr STOJANOVIC — Exactly. So both elements of Ls and Ps have on-road assessment.

Mr LANGUILLER — Thank you for your collective and individual submissions. Can I say that you have covered a lot of the terrain that we had anticipated we would be asking you questions on, so we appreciate the fact that you obviously have done your homework — and we welcome that.

Can I divert for just a minute? Have you given thought to the provision of training for people with physical disabilities? Are you aware of a program called the trike project in Geelong? They train people who are paraplegics to ride certain types of bikes.

Mr KENNELLY — I have seen something about it. I did not know that it was a training facility for it.

Mr LANGUILLER — They have a pilot project. I bring that to your attention, if I may. I would be happy to send you some stuff that you might want to look at, purely because there may well be people in this region who may wish to undertake some such training. If I may ask for our opinion on providing some training for people with physical disabilities; have you given thought to that? It is a new subject. It has not been looked into

fully, but there appears to be some room for trainers and others to think of that as a new field, perhaps. Do you have any comments you wish to make?

Mr STOJANOVIC — We have not had inquiries for that. That is all I can say.

Mr LUDLOW — Certainly we do not have the facilities at the moment, but if any person had their own trike, in that case we would certainly be happy to offer that training. We do not have physical facilities to do it at the moment.

Mr LANGUILLER — Alex, I think you touched on the subject that you would welcome being tested by VicRoads and other authorities. We certainly welcome your advancing that notion. I think it is a very good one. Notwithstanding that — and we do appreciate it — isn't it your responsibility to have ongoing training and testing of people who provide training, and do you do that? How do you do that; how do you manage it internally? The bar may not necessarily be that high, but do you actually push it higher yourselves, as part of being a training provider?

Mr STOJANOVIC — I suppose all of us are currently motorcycle riders. I ride most days, so my skills are updated daily. Sure, we have discussions. We do things like this. We consider this training. This is idea-giving and that. Unfortunately, in our industry there are people who are not, I would say, 100 per cent in their ethics of training. I would like us all to be on an even level. I think there is always an opening for people who are not quite honest in their business dealings with driver training and rider training. I think it just keeps us on a level playing field.

Mr DUMESNY — These guys also have a mentoring program, so Tom would be mentored. He would not just be given a motorcycle course and be able to run it. He would be what we call brown dogged, so he could go out and watch a couple of courses and then he would start to slowly take over those responsibilities. We also have a moderation program, if there are things they need to talk about and evaluate in those courses, to see if there is anything they can improve on, as part of our normal validation process.

Mr LANGUILLER — Do you provide any off-road training?

Mr STOJANOVIC — No.

Mr LANGUILLER — You are aware that in the order of 50 per cent of casualties happen off road, so there may well be some room for a conversation in terms of what, if anything, could be done to assist off-road riders?

Mr DUMESNY — We could be poised to next year accommodate something like that. We are moving into a new facility out at Barnawartha, which gives us a bigger area, and we will have off-road facilities. Obviously we need to find somewhere to even ride off road, too, on some of the forest tracks and things like that.

Mr LANGUILLER — I will make one final comment, if I may, because we do talk about costs, and I certainly am mindful of that. I represent an electorate in the western suburbs of Melbourne where the average income is about \$30 000 and there are lots of families with single incomes and so on, so I am certainly cognisant of the issue of costs. I am equally cognisant of evidence that this committee has received that a casualty — a death on the road — costs \$100 000 or thereabouts. To one submitter I put the proposition that a severe profound injury arising out of a road accident would cost in the order of \$1 million, in terms of rehab and so on. I have been challenged, because it appears that it costs more than \$1 million.

The question for us — and, if I may suggest, for yourselves — is to think laterally in terms of how we can find a scheme or model that may actually allow for or facilitate training, taking into consideration that some people may not be able to afford it. Ultimately it appears to me that if we did the modelling, it is likely that it would be worthwhile doing it. If a severe profound injury costs the TAC and taxpayers in excess of \$1 million, there must be room for certainly you to make recommendations and for us to consider ways by which we can actually achieve the optimum levels of training, which I think you provide.

Mr STOJANOVIC — As you aware, the highest statistics with motorcycle accidents are not with young people; it is actually between mid-40s and the 50s that our biggest problem is. I relate that to the children are now grown up; the mortgage is now paid off; I have never ridden in my life, but now I am going to go and buy that Harley-Davidson.

Mr LANGUILLER — Middle-age crisis, do you think?

Mr STOJANOVIC — In that case, it could be quite difficult to educate someone I consider to be quite educated, as they are in their mid-40s and 50s. The reason there is just lack of skill; it is not irresponsibility or that sort of thing. That person is a grown-up. So that is a bit of an issue. Those people think it is the young people, but it is actually that middle-aged group.

Mr ELSBURY — This next bit that I am about to talk to you about is again about the cost. I do not want to put anything in your mind about setting a pricing regime, but I have done just some very quick mathematics. Based on what I used to have to pay for tuition with a driving instructor, if that was extrapolated to what is expected today with the 120 hours of on-road experience, I would have spent \$3600 just to get my drivers licence if I had used a driving instructor exclusively. Bear in mind that that is based on prices back in 1997 and I suspect something may have changed slightly, based on something like oil prices. With that in mind, if people are still looking for a cheaper alternative to the motor vehicle, would that not give you some idea of what would be acceptable for a rider, to be able to say, 'Right, this is the idea of the pricing structure we could put forward'?

Mr STOJANOVIC — Ross is our costing man.

Mr LUDLOW — Yes. I am just trying to think that one through. I am not sure that people would actually pay for 120 hours of training.

Mr ELSBURY — No, not necessarily, but certainly if you were saying, 'Okay. Instead of \$3600 to get your car drivers licence, we'll charge \$600 for a motorcycle licence over a certain period of time'.

Mr LUDLOW — Certainly something that we have had discussions about is the cost and what the market will bear. As I said, we have offered training for roadcraft skills for a mere \$200 to do a day with our trainers. They come back with excellent feedback, saying they got a lot of it, but it is very, very difficult. You can encourage people to do it and participate in it, but it is very, very difficult to get them involved in it. Unless it becomes a mandatory process, people will say, 'I can't afford it' and they will spend their money on other things. As you say, with the amount of money that is involved in a severe casualty or accident, you are talking peanuts, but unfortunately the general public do not see it that way.

Mr DUMESNY — As a rough guide, if you put on our costing sheets what Tom is worth a day, or any of these guys are worth a day, it is worth somewhere around \$1200 to \$1400 a day.

Mr ELSBURY — So you have to get the numbers?

Mr DUMESNY — Yes, that is right.

Mr ELSBURY — I do understand costs as well because strangely enough Telmo's electorate is the same as mine — or mine overlaps his. You have already said that you are more than happy for your testers and trainers to undergo regular spot checks from either VicRoads or somewhere else. One of the things that got me when I went for my learners permit was the fact that the person who took the training was the person who did the testing at the end of the day. Do you guys see any difficulty in that occurring?

Mr STOJANOVIC — If you had asked the same question about the heavy vehicles a few months ago, that did not exist; the trainer and the assessor were two different people. That has now been waived, so now we can be a trainer and tester for heavy vehicles. With the change of competency-based heavy vehicle assessing, that is the way it is going to be anyway, that the trainer will be the tester. With the motorcycles, if you were to go down that track, we would be back to that cost factor again because you would require two trainers and assessors.

Mr DEVEREAUX — Right now, technically we do not really train. They rock up here for 2 or 3 hours and we basically warm them up, if you want to call it that. We put them through just a couple of manoeuvres and that — as you would know — to actually sit the assessment. As a trainer-assessor, I am not out there —

Mr ELSBURY — It is the oval track, and then the witch's hats get moved, then start a few chicanes, then another witch's hat gets moved and you have to stop there and start off again. That was our day. Basically our 2½-hour session before we got the assessment actually done on the bike consisted of doing those sorts of things, as you guys are more than aware. Many stalled, and there was even one person who decided on a corner to

activate the front brake. That did not end too well for him. You have those sorts of things going on. But, having said all that, each and every one of us passed.

Mr STOJANOVIC — That is right.

Mr ELSBURY — I was probably a middle-range person. Then we had a guy turn up at the last minute before the assessments were being done. He wandered in and said, 'I've been riding motorbikes for years, never had a licence. Once I walk out of here, I'm not putting the bloody L-plate on the back of my bike. I'm riding a Harley. I'm a big man'. The only thing I thought as he was leaving was, 'Okay, your time will come, mate, because I don't reckon you'll be on the roads very long'.

Mr STOJANOVIC — I suppose to answer on where you were going there, as a motorcycle trainer and assessor — and I told the students this when I was taking the classes — the last thing I want to do is pick up the *Border Mail* and read that one of my students has been killed. We have to put our hand on our heart and say, 'Andrew, maybe you're not as skilful as I'd like' — —

Mr ELSBURY — It is not the first time I have been told this!

Mr STOJANOVIC — — 'but you've met the criteria. I can only hope that you better yourself out on the road'. The tick and flick part, no — but we are restricted by the criteria.

Mr LANGUILLER — Just on that subject, you said you passed 95 per cent.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Yes.

Mr LANGUILLER — What is the other 5 per cent?

Mr STOJANOVIC — They would be people who just cannot ride at all. They will not do it today; they will not do it tomorrow; they will never do it.

Mr LANGUILLER — Who are they? Can you give a description of who they are?

Mr DEVEREAUX — The general person, with no specific education issue or anything like that. I had one guy who chased a motorcycle around the yard, sitting over the back there and could not bring it to a halt. Another guy rode around and as he stopped he just fell over with it.

Mr LANGUILLER — So you just do not pass them.

Mr STOJANOVIC — They can be young or old, male or female. There is no exact rule on that one.

Mr PERERA — Thank you very much for your informative presentation. I have a few questions. One is that you were recommending introducing compulsory safety gear.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Yes.

Mr PERERA — Apart from the helmet, what other protective gear should be worn?

Mr STOJANOVIC — That I would like?

Mr PERERA — Yes.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Full skin cover, so riding pants and jacket, appropriate boots, fluorescent high-vis vest and gloves.

Mr PERERA — Some witnesses who appeared before the committee mentioned that with changing weather conditions in hot weather it will be very hard to wear the leather protective gear. Is there an alternative?

Mr KENNELLY — You have a lot of textile gear now which has vents that breathe and allow air to flow through. A lot of the pants have the exact same thing, and a lot of the boots also have ventilation through them. It does get a lot hotter with the gear on, but the thing is that even if you come off a bike doing 40 kilometres per hour to 50 kilometres per hour, you are going to do yourself a lot of damage. I see a lot of guys out there

wearing just standard basic jeans. If you come off your bike wearing standard denim, within 3 metres of sliding on the road you are through them and you are going through your skin. That is compared to, say, Draggin Jeans or Hornee Jeans, which have Kevlar panels in them, where you can go up to 40-odd metres on the road without going through the actual material. Even though some people may wear some protective gear it is not to the standard to actually protect themselves.

Mr PERERA — I have another question, which is: what are the barriers to introducing on-road training and on-road assessment here in Victoria? Do you see any barriers to New South Wales-style testing?

Mr STOJANOVIC — As in barriers by who?

Mr PERERA — Barriers like is public liability involved?

Mr STOJANOVIC — Obviously the risk is going to be higher in the training. The opportunity for accidents and injury is certainly going to be higher, but if you are going to have an accident, the training ground is the best place to have it. It is going to be part and parcel of it. There is no doubt that the injury factor could increase.

Mr PERERA — You still recommend that we take that path, like in New South Wales, of on-road testing and on-road assessment?

Mr DEVEREAUX — I think you also have to look at it and see that we are not going to put somebody on the road for that part of the assessment until we believe they are ready to go out there. They are going to have to meet the criteria before we go out to the on-road. That would be something where we would now have a licence to make that decision, as opposed to typical assessment criteria that pretty much anyone could turn up to and pass.

Mr PERERA — To do that you need longer hours of inside training rather than 6 hours?

Mr STOJANOVIC — That was my proposal. As I said before, the Ls would be the 'Begin to Ride' and 'ride' in the current Ls, and then the second part would be the on-road component. The on-road would always be a second component to the licensing.

Mr DEVEREAUX — Honestly, you will find that the individual will understand where they stand at that time. We can turn around and say, 'We do not believe you are ready to go on open road yet. We are going to have another couple of hours', or whatever. I do not think anyone has ever turned around in any training that we have done when that has been offered to them and said, 'Oh no, I am ready'. They agree with you.

Mr PERERA — Have you used simulators?

Mr DEVEREAUX — I do not know how that would work with bikes. I have used a truck simulator, which I thought was very effective. I do not know how a bike simulator would work. I have never been on one so I suppose I cannot comment on it. But you would not feel where you sit on the road on a bike, and it is about learning to move through things, not specifically to, as Steve said, 'steer' and so on.

Mr ELSBURY — You do not feel force.

Mr DEVEREAUX — Yes. It may be very effective. I do not know.

Mr PERERA — A quick question: you mentioned about training that all the trainers should be trained every five years. How would you do that? Could you elaborate on that?

Mr STOJANOVIC — It would be no different from becoming an assessor now. You may go to a nominated provider who put you through the testing.

Mr PERERA — Their skill level would be the same as yours, wouldn't it? Every training organisation's skill level would be about the same.

Mr STOJANOVIC — You would hope so, and that is hopefully what that would do. If an organisation is not up to that skill level, the retraining could bring them back up to it. It would not be as easy as the Ls and Ps. It

would obviously have to be a lot harder than the basic Ls and Ps riding. It would be aimed at an assessor's ability. The road laws knowledge could also be updated. The requirements from VicRoads are continually changing. All that could be incorporated into it.

Mr LUDLOW — It may be a case where every six months you have a training providers meeting, do an evaluation process and evaluate each other as part of that program.

The CHAIR — Gentlemen, thank you very much for your evidence this afternoon. The individual skill sets and the breadth of background that you each bring to our discussion this afternoon are much appreciated. Without going over earlier suggestions, I would like to give you a chance — running down the panel briefly, with 30 seconds each — to advance any other ideas that might help to reduce road accidents in Victoria or improve safety for motorcyclists.

Mr LUDLOW — I note the comment in the local paper on Saturday about DECA's suggestion that they have an 8-hour theory program. That is a fairly long program, but I think there is probably room there to look at that, not only for motorcycle riders but for car learners. To keep it cost-effective somebody like ourselves might offer two 4-hour sessions over a week, where all new riders and drivers would come through the program to perhaps try to change the attitude early on.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Ross. We will note that.

Mr KENNELLY — I just make the same point that Ross has made that another big thing is the mentality and attitude of some people who are getting on these bikes. How to change that I am not sure, but that would be another thing to look at.

The CHAIR — Thank you. We have received quite a lot of commentary on attitude. It has been a matter of focus.

Mr DEVEREAUX — It is a tough one. I think the big picture is that what we currently offer is not enough. It needs to be increased. It could be that we have a greater power to up the ante of the assessment, which would give us a greater power to not put people on the road who we do not believe are suitable to go on the road at that stage. I think that is a big one.

Mr STOJANOVIC — Let us push the training and assessment as much as we can up until where it is cost-effective. If we can meet the cost, let us do whatever we can.

Mr DUMESNY — I think it is amazing that there is no on-road component of the current test. In the future I would like to see that each different intersection — T-intersection, right turn, left turn — is actually taught on road as a lesson. Precautions when approaching, how they should position themselves and all that sort of stuff should be taught.

The CHAIR — We thought Andrew was safer on the asphalt without any other interference. If you put him on the road, we may not retain our quorum.

Mr STOJANOVIC — I do not think you can keep picking on Andrew. I think that is a little bit unfair.

Mr ELSBURY — I am an upper house member. They just go and get someone new from the Liberal Party and I am replaced. There is not even a by-election.

The CHAIR — Gentlemen, thank you for your time. We do have a program under way. There may be some material that John in his research might be interested in tracking down. Certainly that comparison between Victoria and New South Wales was valuable information in terms of the contrast. We may follow that up further. There was a comment made earlier on, Alex, in relation to some instruction in Victoria that might not be fully up to standard. We can close down the public hearing and take further information in camera if you wanted to pass on any information for the reference of the committee.

Mr STOJANOVIC — It was just a broad comment. There was no specific industry that I was talking about.

The CHAIR — All right. Gentlemen, thanks very much for your time. It was a good presentation that gave an understanding of what you do.

Witnesses withdrew.