

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Melbourne — 6 March 2011

Members

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Witnesses

Mr D. Shelton, executive director, road safety and network access,

Mr J. Holgate, director, road user safety, and

Mr P. Schofield, manager, road safety strategy and community programs, VicRoads.

The CHAIR — Welcome to the final afternoon session of today’s public hearings for the Road Safety Committee’s inquiry into motorcycle safety. The committee has received some 74 written submissions since the release of the terms of reference inviting submissions. The purpose of these hearings today is to obtain further evidence from selected witnesses covering the terms of reference. Hansard is recording today’s proceedings. We will provide a proof version transcript to witnesses so that any typographical errors can be corrected. That can subsequently be returned to the secretariat whereupon it will be placed on our website. We can take evidence in camera as well. If it is appropriate to move off the parliamentary record, feel free to note an issue, and we can do that.

For the assistance of Hansard it would be helpful if you could identify yourselves initially when you are speaking, so the Hansard staff know who is on the record. Thank you for your attendance. I can lead off with a question, which is: who will be mediating the flow of questions?

Mr SHELTON — Probably I will be starting. I am David Shelton, VicRoads executive director, road safety and network access. I will pass on to my colleagues as we go. Peter Schofield is here to specifically speak on matters relating to data, and James Holgate was with us at the last hearing.

The CHAIR — During the public hearings the committee received evidence that agencies and departments involved in road trauma record and use data for reasons specific to their function. But that can mean data collected by one agency might not be of much use to another because of the way the agency has recorded or used the data or because they did not collect additional data at the time. The question is: how interoperable are the datasets of different road regulators? How can we optimise the data collection so that we collect information that is useful to all the regulators involved in motorcycle safety? Can you suggest an alternative to the current approach of having multiple datasets where data cannot really be used across agencies because of the way it has been collected or because the first agency did not collect information that would have been of use to another agency?

Mr SHELTON — Certainly. I might provide a little bit of background on data overall before I go specifically to that question. It is important in the context to note that Victoria has an evidence-based approach to road safety, so we do have a heavy reliance on data. That dependency exists at a number of stages through the policy development, implementation and evaluation process. We rely on time series sets of data and geospatial data that is collected to give us overall trend information, by which we understand problems and highlight issues. We then use further data to identify options for responding to those issues, and drill down more deeply into specific datasets or create datasets in order to be able to design and evaluate interventions. Sometimes data is produced for very specific purposes knowing that it is not intended to be used across a broad range of stakeholders. It is designed for an agency to work specifically on one intervention.

I think the data to which you are referring is the time series or geospatial data relating to crashes and how we understand those. That is collected on a regular basis particularly by Victoria Police and by hospitals. We have provided a written response to the committee’s request for further information about our datasets on that, and I will pass to Peter in a moment to give us a bit of an overview of that.

The exchange or access by other agencies of that data is generally managed through existing agreements. It is done with a high level of formality and quality control. That is largely necessarily to protect the privacy that is embedded in some of that data, but also to ensure that the datasets we are using are as good as they can be — that is, that the data quality has not deteriorated and we would understand at any given time what that quality is.

Whilst the datasets are not all interconnected and some work has been done to try to identify opportunities to make them more so, there are some emerging technologies that may be able to give us greater analytical tools to try and draw knowledge out of the datasets without having to bring them all together into one single monolithic dataset. There are quite a few options in this space. Cleansing data and moving data into a single repository is indeed one option, but I am not at all convinced that it is the most cost-effective option. Some of the smarts that are coming out of software manufacturers now that allow analysis of multiple datasets in an intelligent way probably hold more promise for us. The benefit of those approaches is they also then allow the organisation to collect data for their principal purposes — their statutory functions — and to own that data for that purpose and to maintain it for that purpose, whilst it can also be used for a secondary purpose and shared with others. I might pass to Peter to give a bit of an overview of the current systems that we operate.

Mr SCHOFIELD — I am Peter Schofield, VicRoads road safety. Chair, I have provided a bit of a diagram to Kylie; I do not know whether you have seen it. Probably in its simplest format this is the best way to explain how we use our data and how we receive it. Essentially Victoria is fortunate that we have a single source of data, which is Victoria Police, in relation to crash data. That data gets sent to VicRoads in an electronic form via a secure network where it gets put into a holding bay. We have a group of experienced coders who then look at every what we call TIS — the traffic incident system report — on a computer, which is supplied by Victoria Police. That is how the information comes in to us. They then code it and essentially enhance that data by geospatially locating it, adding sub-DCA codes and a few other variables. They also check the completeness of the report and make any recommended changes back to Victoria Police. On average we put in about 250 data requests to Victoria Police for either additional information that is missing or seeking clarification on data that is perhaps not quite clear enough in those reports. That is on average about 250 a month that we send back to VicPol for clarification.

Once that data has gone through that filtering process it then gets put into our RCIS query system, which allows our employees or people within the organisation to access that data for various countermeasure developments, including infrastructure and behavioural issues. It also allows us to monitor trends over time in relation to all road safety activities.

Furthermore twice a year we put a limited version of that data into the public domain through CrashStats to allow the general public to access crash data in a query system format. We also provide an additional facility to researchers and local government with the ability to access through a confidentiality agreement private information that might be on those reports. They primarily relate to the narrative, which is the police description of the crash, and the diagram, which is a pictorial display of the crash. These days all the RCIS diagrams are electronic, so they are electronic pictures that appear for access by local government as well as in our own system.

That is essentially how our system works. We then distribute that information to a number of different sources. We supply the TAC with that data on a monthly basis. We report to the federal government on road safety performance, both for all vehicles and heavy vehicles. We also provide that information on regular dumps of data to research organisations like Monash University Accident Research Centre and Australian Road Research Board. The federal government maintains a fatality database, and that information comes from our database. Every month we report through to the department of infrastructure and regional services. The federal government publishes a monthly report on road safety performance across the country, so that fatality data comes from us. Essentially that is our data stream and how we process information we receive from VicPol and who we provide it to.

The CHAIR — I have an ancillary question in relation to data. If one agency refines the raw data and others then use it, can assumptions be made on that data? Do you think it is possible that these assumptions may be questioned if the original data was incorrectly analysed or recorded in a way that did not take into account all the factors?

Mr SCHOFIELD — There is a process in place that if the data is changed we make notifications to Victoria Police. Equally too, if they make changes to the original dataset, it comes back as a supplementary report to us.

Mr SHELTON — As you will have seen in the submission that we have provided you on data, there is a lot of procedural control over the data that goes into our dataset. One of the things Peter referred to is that our analysts do a review of the data to ensure that it is compliant with the rules for its entry into the system before it is closed out and accepted. That is an important feature of ensuring that the whole dataset and the quality of it is well understood. We need then only communicate, ‘These are the rules; you can make your assumptions based on these rules, because the data complies with those rules’.

Mr SCHOFIELD — Some of the governance procedures around data include the fact that the agencies, particularly Victoria Police, Transport Accident Commission, VicRoads and WorkCover, are members of what we call the TIS steering committee. That committee was created to provide oversight for the development of the new TIS, which occurred at the end of 2005 and replaced the paper-based TAIS. That steering committee saw the initial implementation of the system and now meets purely in a sort of governance role to oversee enhancements to the system and where improvements can be made. Under that TIS steering committee there is a TIS data quality group that looks at specific issues with the main purpose of making sure that the data has got

as much integrity as we can build around it, and also to provide suggestions for enhancements. For example, one of the enhancements being looked at now is in relation to identifying ATVs, because there are a lot of those types of crashes occurring, particularly off-road and on farms. They tend to be on farms — —

The CHAIR — ATVs being?

Mr SCHOFIELD — All-terrain vehicles — quad bikes, essentially. Most recently we implemented a new system of identifying heavy vehicles much more accurately than we had previously; it was just either a truck or an articulated. Now we have the full gamut of vehicle configurations for heavy vehicles so that we can see where the problems might be occurring in relation to heavy vehicle smashes. It is always a constant process to improve. I brought along the last minutes of the steering committee in case you had any questions or needed an outline of what things we will be implementing in the next 6 to 12 months to try to improve the current system that we have now.

I think the important point is that there is a rigorous governance framework around that TIS. As I have said, we are fortunate that in a way we do have a single source of data that we can use.

Mr HOLGATE — It is worth emphasising that there is a single source, and that once that data has been through that process, the agencies work on the same set of data. That is not to say they do not enrich that data with their own data sources, but certainly that core data is the same set of data for everyone.

Mr LANGUILLER — Can I put a question to you, Peter? You have not mentioned the health department in that group of organisations or agencies?

Mr SCHOFIELD — No. I try to provide an overview of how we use the data. You are quite right. In an ideal world it would be so beneficial to link the hospital data, basically to get a proper understanding of how many people are involved in road crashes because not all are reported to Victoria Police. But equally, too, one of the important things is that we tend to miss out on the severity of injury. I do not know whether it has been mentioned before, but we conducted a motorcycle enhanced crash investigation project some years ago, and I was responsible for running it. One of the important things there was to understand the injury severity indexes that were being used where we did have that hospital data and were able to interview the riders of motorcycles that were involved in crashes. It was very easy to see, particularly for motorcyclists, that injury severity index was generally far higher than it was for normal vehicle occupants.

You are right. In an ideal world it would be fantastic to have access to that data, but unfortunately privacy provisions within the legislation prevent us from accessing that data, particularly on a linked basis. Whilst we might get what we call aggregated data from different places, the importance for us is the ability to analyse that data, to look at various countermeasures. So unless we can get that data linked to a personal ID to put it into our system, aggregated data, whilst it might provide broad insights, would not be specific enough to drill down to get the maximum benefit out of that data.

The CHAIR — Do you think that arena should be changed to enable the information to be properly melded so that the accidents could be fully analysed rather than there being two separate sources of data?

Mr SCHOFIELD — In a perfect world that would be ideal, and with coronial records and Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine results. They would all be enhancements to a system that could provide greater insight, but unfortunately we are constrained by privacy laws within the country. It is particularly noticeable when we have to link various sets of data to an individual. I really need to stress that point: it is the linking of a name to a person and to an outcome that is problematic in a lots of areas.

Mr LANGUILLER — David, if I may take you back to your submission of Monday, 17 October, you said to our committee that the one-off, in-depth studies of VicRoads data was expensive. You also mentioned that the VicRoads system was letting down the organisation in that sense, and I could refer you exactly to your quote. Can you explain to the committee why it is costly to produce analyses and what steps are being taken to rectify or identify this?

Mr SHELTON — The dataset that I was referring to in those comments was specifically the registration and licensing data. It is important to note that the dataset Peter has been referring to is the crash dataset. They are different, and this is one of the matching exercises that the committee is considering at the moment. We can

enrich our crash data by importing into it details about vehicles and people, provided we comply with privacy provisions in the process.

The measures that are being taken to address some of the costs of data manipulation and access in our registration and licensing area are under way at the moment, and that is essentially a redesign and rebuild of our registration and licensing system. We are anticipating a substantial improvement in the accessibility and usability of data for policy development following the completion of that work.

Mr LANGUILLER — What I put to you at the time is generally clear in my mind. I asked you the following question: do you have data in terms of injuries and fatalities that you can extrapolate from those groups? And your answer corresponded to that question.

Mr SHELTON — For injuries and fatalities? My answer corresponded in relation to injuries and fatalities. The injury data that we have, as Peter said, comes straight from police, and possibly the shortfall I was describing there is that we currently collect some data that we have difficulty reporting on, so we need to enhance our system to report on some of that data. That is an enhancement that VicRoads is considering. Essentially we collect some detail from police which is in our system, but because we do not have the reporting tools, we cannot actually easily report on that data.

Mr HOLGATE — Just for clarification, if the concern is about the cost of in-depth data, I can provide a further explanation. Our mass crash data is, by necessity, fairly shallow in the amount of information it has. It has a lot of data fields but the data collection process is basically for the police observations of a crash. The cost of in-depth analysis and understanding of crashes is much more expensive. For example, we are working with Monash University now on a new project to look at an in-depth study of motorcycle crashes called the case control study. That will involve investigation of about 500 crashes and about 500 other riders, and will cost about \$1.3 million.

So for certain research purposes you can spend a lot of money to get in-depth information about a specific number of crashes. To do that for all crashes is clearly not economic, so we have a blend of our mass data on all crashes and our in-depth data where we particularly need more crash data.

The CHAIR — Is that in relation to the new link data collection system?

Mr HOLGATE — No, this is a specific project. It is an ARC linkage grant. It is the case-controlled study on motorcycles.

The CHAIR — Just to put a side question in, have you had discussions with MUARC in relation to a new link data collection system, and if so what are your thoughts on this and what benefits would it have for safety?

Mr SHELTON — We have not had specific discussions with MUARC. Murray, I think you are referring to actually constructing a new data — —

The CHAIR — A new link data collection system.

Mr SHELTON — I have not been privy to such discussions. I am not aware that any such discussions have happened. We certainly have regular discussions with MUARC that have a data component, and pretty much every research project has a data component. We are aware that MUARC actually maintains a very large set and we use those on a not irregular basis. The used car safety ratings is an example.

The CHAIR — Yes, right. Thank you.

Mr ELSBURY — Thank you for coming in this afternoon and again sharing your experience with us regarding motorcycle safety. Since we last met for our inquiry the committee has received information and heard that motorcyclists were 37, 38 or 34 times more likely — depending on who was speaking at any given moment — to be killed than other road users. Can you explain to the committee how this figure would have been arrived at?

Mr SHELTON — My understanding is that the figure your refer to comes from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which publishes, annually, figures on exposure for serious injuries incurred during transport. They will compare, for example, different road modes based on, usually, 100 million vehicle

kilometres travelled. The figure of 38 was published based on the 2005–06 data, and then it went to about 37 based on the next year's data. So the variations you are hearing are quite possibly just the annual updates on the same dataset.

The reliability of that data when it comes to motorcycling probably has a fair amount of variability, depending on the accuracy of the estimates of vehicle kilometres travelled, or VKT. I am not entirely sure how that group actually estimates the VKT.

Mr SCHOFIELD — If I could interject, the VKT is established through what they call the survey of motor vehicle usage, which was undertaken by the federal government to find out what the travel was within the country, and then they apportion various amounts of travel to each jurisdiction and road user group, whether it be heavy vehicles, motorcycles or normal passenger-like vehicles. That is done in an annual survey. There was a gap, I think, for about two years when the federal government did not fund it, but they have now reinstated that survey.

Mr SHELTON — The report is on the institute's website.

Mr SCHOFIELD — That is where there might be that difference in the numbers — maybe where people have tried to extrapolate what the increase in vehicle travel was in the absence of that annual survey.

Mr ELSBURY — Given we have literally just heard from MUARC that their opinion is that the VKT per million kilometres is not an accurate assessment of increased risk, how would you respond to that?

Mr SHELTON — Could you restate the question for me?

Mr ELSBURY — We have just heard from MUARC that the use of VKT per million kilometres travelled is not an accurate assessment of increased risk. How would you respond to that?

Mr SHELTON — I was not here to hear the context of exactly what MUARC said. I suspect that what they have questioned is how accurate the VKT is on average for motorcycle use. We know, for example, that there are about twice as many motorcycle licences as there are motorcycles and that motorcycles do not tend to get used so much in the wet. We do not have direct measures based on odometers, for example, of exactly how much motorcycling occurs. We use the survey that Peter referred to to get estimates of that. But I would need to speak directly or see the notes from MUARC as to exactly what they were referring to. Having said that, can I perhaps add to it?

Mr ELSBURY — Yes.

Mr SHELTON — Having said that, if we did have confidence in those figures, we could in fact conclude that if they tell us how much on-road motorcycling is happening and if they are sound figures, they do tell us something about exposure.

Mr ELSBURY — We have been hearing from other people who have given evidence to the inquiry that the 38 times more likely figure was derived from an ABS calculation, which has also actually been quoted quite frequently in a lot of advertising around the place. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has placed a caveat on it saying that there is a standard deviation of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent. With my limited statistical knowledge from year 12 mathematics I think that is a fairly large deviation from what could be called reliable data. Would you care to enlighten us a bit more on that?

Mr SHELTON — We would need to take the ABS's advice on the caveat. However, in my view a 19 times overrepresentation is still a big number, even if it is not the 50 per cent. It is still a big number.

Mr LANGUILLER — The Victorian Auditor-General's report into motorcycle and scooter safety programs recommended that the Victoria Police, the TAC and VicRoads interagency data committee could be strengthened and supplemented by the involvement of the Department of Health, Ambulance Victoria and the Department of Justice. What are your thoughts on this recommendation and what steps have been taken, if any?

Mr SCHOFIELD — I am familiar with the committee but I do not sit on it, although I have attended a couple of meetings recently about ways to improve that. I think a report is being prepared in the next few weeks

looking at what the key issues are and how we can improve that area of reporting. I am not so close to the project that I could answer to the best of my ability.

Mr SHELTON — Telmo, the specific work that is happening at the moment is about drawing in the DSE and the Department of Health to better understand the off-road casualty crashes. I think the consensus is that it certainly adds a necessary depth of understanding, and we want to deal with those issues. It does not necessarily clarify for us whose responsibility they are, but it does help to document the problem a bit better. Until we have actually seen the results of that work it is difficult to know exactly how much those increased collaborations — the involvement of those other agencies — has added to the process.

Mr LANGUILLER — What did you mean, whose responsibility they are? In terms of?

Mr SHELTON — In terms of off-road. What I refer to there is that VicRoads has responsibility for on-road activity, and some of that activity has benefits for off-road activity. Let me give you an example here. It is mandatory to have a helmet on when you are riding a motorcycle on a public road. It is not mandatory to have that helmet on when you are riding on private land. However, one assumes that the use of helmets on public roads has some halo effect into public spaces, and people tend to understand the risks of riding without a helmet and do so in public spaces as well.

Mr ELSBURY — The committee has heard from at least one RoadSafe group that VicRoads has explicitly told them not to get involved in training or educating riders, particularly younger riders, and requests for funding to run training days have been rejected. Could you explain why funding has been refused for activities that on the face of it seem to be perfectly suited to reducing motorcycle trauma?

Mr SHELTON — Andrew, driver and rider training are intuitively the right things to do to improve road safety, and there is fairly longstanding tension around this particular matter. There have been many years of research that tell us that driver training — and to a lesser extent the research includes rider training — does not actually produce road safety benefits for young drivers and riders in its current form. That is because the current form of training tends to focus on the skills developed for operating a car or the road rules to drive a car on the road when in fact the causes of the vast majority of crashes relate to behavioural issues, particularly risk-taking, whether it is drink or drug driving, speed or those sorts of things. They are not measures of people's ability to control a car; in fact they are more reflective of people's willingness to take risks and to expose themselves to risks beyond their experience.

Mr ELSBURY — Your community organisation funding scheme states that organisations should have evidence-based research. However, given the lack of data available to local organisations, except where there is a personal relationship, how can organisations be expected to provide the evidence?

Mr SHELTON — I think what you are referring to is our community road safety partnership program. I am happy to provide you with material in relation to this. I have a copy of the program guidelines here. The program provides a large amount of data to community groups who are registered — there are 51 groups that are registered — to assist them in drawing a relationship between what they want to do and the problems they have. Eventually that will be done at a local level. The data is provided to them and, in fact, CrashStats provides data to the public through the internet that anyone can access. From that we can derive some pictures of the local issues.

However, the reason we do that is that we want groups to engage in their local road safety issues and to understand what those issues are and why they might take a certain action, in part because it helps them to be effective, but it also helps us to ensure that the limited funding that is available goes to well-thought-through and hence more likely successful interventions.

Mr SCHOFIELD — Sorry, if I could just add to that: a lot of the community-based programs are municipally based, either singly or in clusters. For each of those groups we put together a one-page overview of issues including who the road users are who are injured are each year. We also put together about a 16-page analysis for each municipality highlighting who has been injured, where they were injured, what time of day the accident happened and whether it was on a local road or an arterial road. It builds up people's knowledge of where the actual issues are within a municipality. They are put up on the web every year for community groups to access, and it is in part of their application forms as to where to get this information so that they can identify what the issues are in their areas.

Mr ELSBURY — That is web-based or is it — —

Mr SCHOFIELD — You can get it through the VicRoads website. We also produce for them a ranking by population of the various road user groups and the municipalities with the highest rate per 100 000 residents across every road user group, so it will actually target out whether each municipality is a particular high risk for certain road users. We try to provide all of this information to local municipalities and local road safety groups to help them focus on where to target their efforts.

The CHAIR — Can you advise of the total number of kilometres of wire rope safety barriers being installed across Victoria? Can you also advise the total cost of installing the wire rope safety barriers? How much does a wire rope safety barrier cost in comparison to other barrier types? Can you provide an estimate of the costs involved in retro-fitting all WRSBs within Victoria to reduce the hazards to motorcyclists?

Mr SHELTON — Listen, Murray, of course the short answer is yes, but they are not figures that I carry around with me. I am happy to provide those figures to the committee. I do not have them here today.

The CHAIR — Thank you. We can provide a list of the questions to you, which may help. Are you aware of any issues with fitting ABS on smaller commuter-focused motorcycles such as mopeds and scooters?

Mr SHELTON — We are aware that there is some concern about ABS fitment on smaller vehicles. The research overseas has tended to focus on the larger capacity bikes, and as a consequence that has also been where our focus has been. We have been monitoring the development of standards for ABS overseas and there have been some encouraging signs within Europe about moves to adopt mandatory ABS. I am pretty sure that is only for large-capacity bikes, though.

Mr HOLGATE — Perhaps I could just amplify that. It is very common for vehicle safety features to start at the larger and more prestige end of the market. Quite often early in the implementation there is a cost penalty, and that technology would then diffuse down through the fleet. ESC in cars, for example, started at the top end and is now virtually universal. I would expect that ABS would operate in the same way. There is work that I am part of through the OECD that is looking at a recommendation on ABS, and I think we recognise that ABS will be universal. It is a question of time. Certainly it will happen first at the top end and that will gradually diffuse through the fleet.

Mr ELSBURY — So it is a question of market force. Basically the development costs and all of that sort of thing get absorbed in the higher prestige end, and as technologies become more available and smaller and materials — —

Mr HOLGATE — The manufacturers get economies of scale, and that makes it more affordable. Clearly one of the impediments at the bottom end is the price impact that it would have.

Mr LANGUILLER — David, if I may come back to you, in response to a question put to you by Mr Tilley of our committee in October in relation to off-road, I quote you:

That is quite all right. I perhaps need to start by saying that by its very nature, conceptually off-road riding is not on the road and hence not the responsibility of VicRoads.

I confess to you and the committee that I am not legally trained, but if you check the Road Safety Act 1986, it defines a road as:

- (a) an area that is open to or used by the public and is developed for, or has as one of its main uses, the driving or riding of motor vehicles; or
- (b) a place that is a road by virtue of a declaration under subsection (2)(a) ...

If I may complement that with a reference to section 87 of the Transport Integration Act 2010, 'Functions of the Road Corporation' — I am sure you would be very aware of this — subsection (1)(d) states that one function of the corporation is to:

lead in the development and implementation of strategic and operational policies and plans to improve the safety of the road system for all users ...

Can we come back to this question, which has been puzzling us, the committee and, as you may appreciate, submitters? If I may conclude: as you know, the committee has received evidence to the effect that in the order of 50 per cent of road trauma takes place off the roads. To have VicRoads indicate to us for the second time that it is not responsible for it, I think we need to put the question to you again and have the benefit of your answer.

Mr SHELTON — Sure. The first definition you read out there, Telmo, from the Road Safety Act 1986, could be interpreted as meaning that a road is any place that a car actually goes. It says that a road is a place where the public has access. Essentially that is wherever a car goes — they have had the access — which makes it very problematic because that does not actually provide any limitations on where the act applies. To that extent it is not helping us a great deal. I think we need to work with other agencies to identify where those boundaries are and to establish in fact that it may well be the case, that we agree that, ‘VicRoads, this is your responsibility, and you have to do something to address this issue’. As it stands at the moment, I think it is quite unclear exactly where the boundary of that responsibility is.

Mr LANGUILLER — If I may put it to you, in the absence of any qualification and in light of the fact that it says ‘one of its main uses’, is it not your responsibility? Can I ask you, have you received legal advice in relation to your interpretation of whether VicRoads is or is not responsible?

Mr SHELTON — We have been getting legal advice, Telmo, as part of the work that is being done at the moment, which was referred to earlier. That work is due to be reported this month and will form part of the next discussion that we are having with other agencies. Just for your information, whilst I have not got the details of the legal advice here, it is sufficient to say that there are areas where it is not sufficiently clear to be certain. My own expectation is that through this process we may well decide that we need to go to the Parliament and seek some clarification about the extent of this law.

Mr SCHOFIELD — Can I just clarify? Whilst we have an act that defines a public place, just to make it clear, as far as injuries go and the reporting of whether they are classified as ABS or non-ABS, we work on a set of guidelines that define what will be reported as on-road and what will be reported as off-road. They are the guidelines that Victoria Police use and that we use, and they are so old that they are from an old typewriter and all we can do is scan them in. Those are the guidelines that we have been operating under since they came out in late 1979 or 1980, I believe. That defines a road as an area within a surveyed road reserve for things like car parks and petrol stations, and whilst under the act they might be defined as a public highway, according to the ABS guidelines they are not.

The CHAIR — Just to put something on the record, I am advised that the definitions in the Road Safety Act 1986 of road and road-related issues were amended to allow enforcement to occur in areas where hitherto enforcement could not occur. There was a specific amendment that expanded the definition for enforcement purposes. I would further note that in some of the work of the committee it has been suggested that the legislative requirements in relation to off-road uses as set out under section 3 of the Road Safety Act 1986 appear relatively straightforward. Given this and the fact that it has been six months since it was indicated that legal advice was being sought and 12 months since the Auditor-General’s report also suggested that the legislative requirements were reasonably straightforward, the question arises as to what the current position of VicRoads is with respect to its responsibilities in the area of off-road riding. I note, David, that that is a matter that is still being worked out in the light of legal advice that is coming forward in the next period of time and that you will be working with agencies and looking at a legislative overview of some of the issues as well, but we would be interested in any interim position that might be conclusive from the perspective of VicRoads. Our research-based advice perspective is that there is a wider ambit than is currently operated under by VicRoads.

Mr SHELTON — Our view is that one can interpret things more broadly, and when you do that you start to bump into the roles and responsibilities of other agencies as well, so it is really not up to VicRoads to unilaterally decide where that boundary ought to be.

The CHAIR — Yes, thank you.

Mr HOLGATE — Mr Chair, if I could provide an example, clearly there are areas that are roads, and trauma occurs on those roads which is not included in the ABS definition. Since they are on roads they will be covered by road rules on issues like that. At the other extreme, there is trauma that happens clearly outside areas that VicRoads could have any control over. For example, last year there was a fatality on a closed motocross

track in which someone got permission to use the track and was killed. The coroner made a recommendation that VicRoads should have an involvement in that sort of crash. Our view is that that is right outside what would be considered a public space or something that a public agency would have control over. Then there are clearly a whole lot of different circumstances in between. The challenge we have is to provide the correct boundaries as to whether it is VicRoads, DSE or other agencies that have prime responsibility.

There are some provisions in the Road Safety Act that do in fact apply everywhere. Drink-driving, for example, applies on private land, so there are offences like careless driving involving loss of traction. There are a few areas where we do have a responsibility wherever it is, but for the large part it is around the road rules and it is where there is road.

The CHAIR — Is it possible to get a copy of the guidelines to which Peter referred before?

Mr SCHOFIELD — You will have to scan them yourself.

Mr ELSBURY — We can do that.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mr LANGUILLER — The committee understands by way of an interested party — not by VicRoads, it should be noted — that VicRoads is funding a project to be led by Monash University Accident Research Centre, aimed at better understanding the factors that contribute to motorcycle safety. Can you provide an overview of this project, and can you advise the purpose of the session held on 9 January 2012 and who was invited to attend?

Mr HOLGATE — I can answer that. This is the project I referred to earlier. It is MUARC's case control study of motorcycle crashes. It is an Australian Research Council linkage grant. The project totals about \$1.3 billion. Contributions are being made by VicRoads, the Department of Justice, TAC and the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce. I apologise if I have forgotten any agency that is contributing.

The purpose of the study is to look at risk factors involved in crashes. The methodology will be to examine about 500 crashes in which motorcyclists have been injured, investigate the site, interview them to determine, for example, what protective clothing they were wearing and what they were doing before the crash, and get as much in-depth detail as they can about the circumstances around that crash. They are also going to investigate 500 what they call 'control riders' who have gone past the same site and try to look at the differences in characteristics between those two sets of riders. The purpose is to look at what factors increase the risk of a crash or increase the risk of an injury and what factors protect from injury. So they will be looking at particularly speed and the involvement of speed in crash risk and injury risk, but also a whole lot of other factors.

The meeting that you referred to was a meeting that VicRoads set up on behalf of Monash University to get advice about how we communicate to the motorcycling community about the project, because clearly part of the project is to stop motorcyclists who just happen to be going past a crash site — well, not stop them but send them out a letter to say, 'You were identified going past this site. We would like you to answer some questions'. Clearly we want to understand how we might communicate with the motorcycling community on that basis. We selected some people from our Motorcycle Advisory Group but also people who had a clear involvement in communications around motorcycling.

Mr LANGUILLER — Thank you. It appears that VMAC previously signed off on a number of studies similar to MUARC's. Can you advise the committee what became of these studies? Have they been finalised, what results were there, if any, and what are the differences, if any, between the projects?

Mr HOLGATE — This study was in fact endorsed by VMAC. It has taken a while in its gestation and it was a project that went through the VMAC process.

Mr LANGUILLER — And the outcomes are?

Mr HOLGATE — The project is just starting now.

Mr LANGUILLER — Just starting now?

Mr HOLGATE — Yes.

Mr LANGUILLER — I beg your pardon. How are the results of the numerous research project studies that are undertaken incorporated into policy-making? May I qualify that by saying that, as we understand it, they use the motorcycle safety levy. Can you provide a specific example?

Mr SHELTON — Certainly. I actually have a copy here of research projects that have been commissioned by VicRoads from 2006 onwards, which is just to give you an illustration of the breadth of work here. Indeed, if you want copies of any of those reports, please feel free to request some of those. A good number have already been provided through Kylie to the committee. Some of these are funded outside of the levy and some of them are levy funded.

I notice the committee has an interest in protective clothing, so we might use that one as an example. Early work identified the benefits of protective clothing. The list that I have just circulated to you is actually organised in reverse chronological order, so if you go towards the bottom of the second page here you will find no. 42, Motorcycle Protective Clothing: stage 1, which was to simply review the literature and develop a proposal around star rating for clothing. This is a very early piece of work, working off an idea that was worked on with the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Committee at the time — ‘It looks like something of promise, let us have a look at what is being done and what the potential might be as a desktop exercise initially’.

Having been through that, the report was commissioned to look at some different models about how a star rating system might in fact be done and what the prerequisites were for it to be effective. We eventually moved at a later date to a stage 3, and I am scanning the list to try to find that for you at the moment. It is no. 29, Feasibility — a further detailed assessment of a single model and in particular looking at how one takes items of clothing and actually physically tests them — who does the tests, to what standard, what might the costs of that be and how do you recover those costs? This is an example of a progression of identifying a countermeasure at a higher level and then progressively drilling down into it to understand it in greater detail. That work has culminated with TAC taking on some further work in this area and now commissioning some testing, I think, in the UK of some items that have been purchased here in Australia.

Mr HOLGATE — Mr Chair, if I could also add to that, I have not got the list of numbers. You will also notice items like no. 9 and no. 23, which are evaluations of programs we have introduced, so that really closes the loop on our processes. The research has informed us to put in a program and the research also allows us to evaluate the program, decide how we modify it or how we go ahead in future.

Mr LANGUILLER — Witnesses have put to us — and incidentally, as you know and appreciate, we just met with MUARC — concern in relation to the lack of transparency by research organisations and regulators, including MUARC as we put it to them, in providing the public with publicly commissioned research into motorcycle safety. Examples include research into wire rope safety barriers and the explicit restriction on publishing research commissioned by VMAC. Can you tell us why these reports are not being made public, and are you not concerned about the public perception that there is a culture of — I would not want to go to the word ‘secrecy’ — but certainly a culture of not wanting to share with the public, and I genuinely qualify that. Please enlighten us.

Mr SHELTON — Certainly. For us, the early processes with VMAC were a bit of breaking of the waves, I guess. We have always valued the ability to do research, to understand issues that may have some degree of provocation in the public realm and to be able to deal with those in an objective way. Once we start working with MUARC directly, we have the public right alongside us looking over our shoulder as we go through that, so that has required some culture change on the part of VicRoads. Yes, I share a concern that there are anxieties around the sharing of that information. Thankfully I think we have now moved to a position where you will see in the recent minutes of the new motorcycle advisory group that we have committed to publishing everything that we commission, and indeed that list I gave you in the process of making sure all of that is available is on our website. The majority of it has been made available in the past, and everything that was levy funded has always been provided to VMAC.

The isolated instances — and there have only been a very small number — where reports have not been released to the public are confined to instances where the report in fact dwells on issues that were outside the initial scope and in a manner that, without context, is very difficult for the public to make sense of. In our view

that was more likely to not be a constructive contribution to the debate. In that particular instance we took a cut-down version of the report and made that public as an alternative, but as I say, our current commitment is that everything that is commissioned, particularly through the levy, should be public, and we are writing that into our contracts for research going forward. I think it is also interesting to note that the process James referred to earlier with working with MUARC on this new ARC linkage grant has been an opportunity for them to realise that in fact some motorcyclists had similar views of MUARC, and MUARC has responded very positively to that. I think the whole process has been beneficial, both for motorcyclists and for MUARC.

Mr LANGUILLER — I am sure it will be a welcome cultural change, given the submissions we have received.

Mr SHELTON — Indeed. I think that is right, Telmo. It probably also has not helped that in the past there were constraints with our registration and licensing system to easily bring forward data that people expect us to readily have at hand — it has been quite costly. A lack of responsiveness in that regard has been interpreted as being a culture of secrecy.

The CHAIR — I would like to tackle a number of questions in relation to the motorcycle safety levy. We have about three or four questions. The first issue is: how much money was collected by the motorcycle safety levy in the last financial year, and in turnover in the last five financial years how much of these amounts have actually been spent and on what? How is the motorcycle safety levy referenced in your annual report?

Mr SHELTON — The motorcycle safety levy was introduced in 2002. It was set at \$50 per motorcycle at the time and actually was incremented by CPI each year. It is now, I understand, \$63.80 a year, and it is applied per rider rather than per motorcycle, so if you have multiple bikes you pay it only once. Currently the levy generates very close to \$5 million a year, and as at 1 March 2012 revenue to \$44.7 million has been committed to road safety projects.

Mr LANGUILLER — The total revenue having been?

Mr HOLGATE — The total revenue to 31 December was \$44.1 million, and we project to 30 June 2012 it will be \$46.5 million.

Mr LANGUILLER — Just to be clear, you have committed \$44.7 million?

Mr SHELTON — Each project is approved by the Minister for Roads. That has always been the case. A total of 202 projects have actually been approved to date. The allocation of the levy money is guided by the strategic guide to levy expenditure, which was a document that was put together with VMAC consultation to try to inform the pattern of expenditure across the range of road safety countermeasures. To date that pattern has essentially been along the lines of: education programs, about 14 per cent of those allocations; engineering and on-road projects, about 73 per cent; enforcement at 5 per cent; improved information for decision making at 5 per cent; and communications relating to motorcycling and the levy at 2 per cent.

The CHAIR — Are these amounts in disbursements or distributions referred to in your annual report?

Mr SHELTON — I would have to check that also. Can I come back to the committee on that?

The CHAIR — Certainly.

Mr SHELTON — The details of individual projects will not be there.

The CHAIR — I have a copy of the report here and I have not been able to track it. There is a question I would next like to raise. Is there a reason why detailed information — including the amount spent, aims and achievements — on all the projects on which motorcycle safety levy funds are spent does not appear to be publicly available?

Mr SHELTON — Is there a reason? The data has been provided to VMAC on a regular basis when we have met. Reports on expenditure were put together in the middle of 2010, and subsequent to that projects approved under the levy have been listed on our website. It is probably worth noting, though, that we have for some time, I think, struggled to meet the expectation of some motorcyclists in terms of the level of detail that is actually available on our website.

The CHAIR — Is there scope for that to be rebuilt at all so that there is an outline of where those funds have been disbursed? I note also that sometimes there can be an alignment of funds. For example, with the Great Ocean Road, say, there would be a number of road improvements undertaken that would be of benefit to a range of stakeholders: line of sight and also improvement of rounding on the bends, so to speak. Just for the record, I note that there is a keen interest to understand where the moneys have been disbursed, and how they might be balanced between recurrent expenditure and the levy-specific purposes may need to be graded with auditor's footnotes, perhaps.

Mr LANGUILLER — If I may, through the Chair, supplement that, it is not clear for the public and certainly not amongst the fraternity as to whether you spend the levy exclusively on programs that relate to riders. It would be a good opportunity to dispel or otherwise this discussion — I am not sure of the word — that is taking place.

Mr HOLGATE — As just a comment on the infrastructure projects that you are referring to, they are all listed on the website, so the public can determine where that money is being spent on those infrastructure projects. In terms of how the levy is applied to those projects, I guess there are two types of projects. One type are specific motorcycle treatments that we spend money on to improve the road, largely for the benefit of motorcyclists. For example, a program to seal unsealed intersection bellmouths is designed specifically to stop gravel going on the road and being hazardous to motorcyclists. There is very little benefit for other road users in a treatment like that.

The other range of treatments will be ones that if they were to compete for general road safety funds would not get the priority that perhaps they need from a motorcycle perspective. Relative to the general vehicle population there are far fewer motorcycle crashes. They are therefore more dispersed. The identification of motorcycle black spots is more difficult because the numbers are low. So it is likely that if we relied on general funds for these treatments they would not necessarily be done at the locations where motorcyclists would benefit greatest. So the levy is used as a specific fund for projects that do address issues for motorcyclists.

The evaluation of the black spot program showed significant benefits for motorcyclists at those locations. It did show benefits for other road users at those locations, but as I said, they are locations that probably would not have got up under any other funding program.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Now moving on to the next question. Is there a reason why detailed information — including amount spent, aims and achievements — on all projects on which motorcycle safety levy funds are spent does not appear to be publicly available?

Mr SHELTON — No, there is no specific reason for that at all. There is information on the VicRoads website about which projects are being funded under the levy. As I said earlier, the level of detail there is I think something that we need to address to satisfy motorcyclists.

The CHAIR — Thank you. I note also that there is certainly information provided on estimated costs involved with the black spot program but no other figures are available — for example, in relation to costs spent on research projects. The question is: why is there no information available on costs of research?

Mr HOLGATE — Again, I think there is no good reason. I think the reason we had it on infrastructure projects is that it is an easy way of describing the scale of a project. If it is \$2 million or \$60 000, clearly the scope of the project is going to be quite different. I cannot say there is a reason why we did not provide that on other projects, but certainly there was seen to be a specific reason for infrastructure projects.

Mr SHELTON — Murray, I think it is probably worth knowing that a number of these projects are publicly announced and the dollars are certainly made publicly available through that process. I think your point about finding a single place where you can find the whole lot in a single package in a concise and clear way is well made.

The CHAIR — Thank you. The Arrive Alive website provides a list of motorcycle safety levy approved projects, but it appears to have been last updated on 8 October 2010. The question is: where would motorcyclists go to see what the motorcycle safety levy has been spent on since that date?

Mr SHELTON — That is the place that we would refer them to and that is the place that we seek to keep up to date. If it is not up to date now, it needs to be brought up to date.

The CHAIR — Thank you. I note that earlier on you, Mr Holgate, mentioned that some projects would not have got up under other funding. As I interpret the question, part of the answer would be that statistically in order to determine a black spot it would partly correlate with the volume of accidents that occur at a particular location, and by virtue of motorcycle accidents being comparatively fewer than motor vehicle accidents that might not otherwise qualify under black spot funding. Is there any wider interpretation as to why some projects would not have gotten up under other funding?

Mr HOLGATE — No, I think the volume issue is the main reason. Clearly we have a road with a lot of traffic on it and a greater risk. If you treat that road, you are going to get a greater community benefit than if you treat a less busy road that might have motorcycles on it. Our key source of funding for road safety prudence is the TAC-funded Safer Roads Infrastructure Program. The objective of that program is to maximise our return for the community through it.

The CHAIR — Other than the programs that are funded through the safety levy, what motorcycle-specific programs does VicRoads fund through its own normal funding?

Mr SHELTON — We might need to provide you with a list of projects that have been funded directly through VicRoads. We do policy work directly funded on an ongoing basis with VicRoads, and we have a number of projects that are running at the moment. As an example, the current trial of motorcycles in bus lanes is funded by VicRoads.

Mr LANGUILLER — Through the Chair, on the same chapter, in relation to off-road, have you run any off-road programs or have you used the levy in any way in relation to off-road? Are there any programs that you have run?

Mr SHELTON — We have used levy funding to try to get a better understanding of off-road from a policy and research perspective. If you have a look at the list I gave you earlier, under research projects you will find those items in here. Number 39 is an example — further research into off-road motorcycling injuries, MUARC in 2007. There is at least one other that I saw this morning — no. 46, and also no. 12. Yes, we have, Telmo.

Mr LANGUILLER — I noted that you use about 2 per cent of your budget on communications. Do you use any of that on off-road?

Mr SHELTON — That budget is intended to assist motorcyclists to understand what the levy is being used for. So that has not been restricted to either on or off-road.

Mr LANGUILLER — I see.

Mr ELSBURY — Currently it appears that the auditing of accredited providers is limited to assessing provider competency in terms of following procedure rather than assessing their training outcomes. This is compounded by the absence of a standardised curriculum in Victoria. Will there be changes to the accredited provider scheme if the proposal for a graduated licensing scheme is implemented? Will the GLS mean that providers will be assessed on how well they train novice riders as opposed to how well they adhere to policies and procedures, and if so, how will this assessment be undertaken?

Mr SHELTON — Should we introduce a new graduated motorcycling system, it will certainly improve both of those areas. It is important to understand, I think, the difference between audit and evaluation. The audit process is intended to in fact check compliance with procedure by the deliverers; that will continue to be maintained. As those procedures change, which they will have to do if we introduce a new GLS, then the auditing process will also change.

It is important that we have a sufficient level of detail in both the procedures and the reporting requirements within the procedures to allow an effective audit to be done. Two years ago when we reviewed that process as a result of some issues we had in one particular location in the state, we in fact found that we needed to require our testers to collect more detail about when they were testing and where to allow us to adequately audit them, and so we have made some changes to that effect. Having learned those lessons we will ensure that any new

GLS will also provide a much stronger procedural basis for effective auditing. Evaluation, on the other hand, is really about testing whether as an outcome you actually get a reduction in road trauma or a greater compliance with road laws. That will also be a component of any change that we have. As you have seen in the reports we showed you earlier, evaluation is a standard part of any new intervention, and that will certainly be built into our new graduated licensing process.

Mr ELSBURY — Does VicRoads train the accredited provider trainers? If so, can you outline to the committee what the training consists of and whether any evaluation has been undertaken to determine whether it improves the consistency of training across providers? If VicRoads does not train the accredited providers, can you explain why not?

Mr SHELTON — I am going to have to take that question about the training of the trainers on notice; I do not have that detail with me.

Mr HOLGATE — Perhaps just a comment — we will have to provide detail on that. Certainly our training is likely to be restricted to the administrative process we need to follow to ensure that licences are correctly issued and they are following our administrative processes. There are no training requirements, and part of the objective of the new proposals we have around the graduated licensing system is to have some process around that. If there is a standard training curriculum and a standard process, then certainly training will be part of that.

Mr ELSBURY — Can you explain why VicRoads dropped the on-road testing component for motorcycle licences? The committee has received evidence that the test was dropped due to quality and cost concerns, amongst other issues. Was this the case, and were there concerns surrounding the ability of accredited providers to provide such testing?

Mr SHELTON — Once again, I have not come equipped to answer that question.

Mr HOLGATE — I understand the evaluation of the on-road test found there was a 90 per cent correlation with the range test in terms of outcomes and therefore it was seen not to add too much value.

Mr ELSBURY — What evidence was used as the basis for allowing the test-only option for motorcycle licences?

Mr HOLGATE — Our requirement is a test only. Some providers choose to provide training as well as that. There is no mandatory training at the moment.

Mr SHELTON — We actually developed a training course to try to address that issue, Andrew. We developed a four-day training course which very much responded to an expressed need by providers. We also introduced a mechanism for people to complete that course and move straight to the learner phase. That has not been taken up, so the course we developed has not actually been used. I guess one of the lessons for us has been that a voluntary approach to providing training is unlikely to be successful, depending on the scope of that training.

Mr ELSBURY — Just in relation to the question that James answered just a moment ago with regard to the on-road components of a licence test, you are putting someone out on the road who has to deal with day-to-day traffic issues, yet with the current training that is available at a push you are riding at a 30-kilometre-per-hour maximum speed in a car park; that is basically what you are being trained on. I have experienced this; I sat on the bike and revved it and got all the way up to second gear. I mean, watch out!

But you have a far different environment out there in the real world; 110 kilometres per hour is the top speed. Even without any training you can just hop on a bike, get your licence by sheer luck and then get thrown out onto the road in amongst all of that. Why would you not have an on-road training component? I notice that the GLS includes a proposal to have an on-road testing criteria.

Mr HOLGATE — Absolutely. We have identified the gap you have just described. We provided last week to you, Chair, and I think to the executive officer, a supplementary submission which is our revised thinking about the motorcycle GLS which we have been working on since the previous version was put to the public in 2010, and we have taken on board a lot of comments. It addresses that specific issue of the lack of on-road experience before we let riders out on their own. I guess the proposed GLS is trying to clearly say that the

learner phase is a phase in which you learn to ride a bike. At present it is the first stage of your solo riding. The proposal at the moment is for some standardised training, which we have discussed; an element of on-road assessment before you get your L-plates. It may not be a test but at least it is an assessment to determine whether you are equipped to ride on the road. Then there is a period, similar to the car process, of a log book and perhaps some check rides where you have to report back to an assessor who will make some comments on your riding style, your risk awareness and some of those issues that we know do make a difference.

The previous version talked about a learner period of supervised riding only. Clearly we had feedback about the potential cost of that and the difficulty in delivering it in some regional areas that might effectively be a barrier to entry. We have put together a proposal that still has an element of learning in that phase but does not require supervised riding at all times during the learner phase but addresses the issue of the very low speed test to get onto the road. We are trying to increase that — the period of learning during your L phase before you get on to your full licence, while having some restrictions during those periods to moderate risks as you develop skills.

That is the kernel of what we are trying to do with the GLS. The details are not yet fleshed out, and we are taking the opportunity now to say this is our proposal that is public. We will be engaging with the training providers, the Motorcycle Advisory Group and others to start fleshing out what the detail of what that might look like. That would include the audit arrangements that we just talked about previously.

Mr ELSBURY — I can say from experience that I went through the learners permit process, got to the end of it and was basically told, ‘Go out there and learn’. Instead I took up an offer of going off to another training provider that offers an on-road component — once you have got your Ls you then go out there on the road with a qualified trainer. I do not know whether it was a safety blanket sort of thing for me but having him there riding ahead of me and copying his position on the road, copying what he was doing in the traffic and also using the elements that were taught to me over a further 4 hours of training before we actually got out there on the road provided me with a lot more confidence to hop on a bike out there in traffic than what I was offered with a 3½-hour course and then a licensing program.

Mr HOLGATE — One of the issues we have had to grapple with is the lack of evidence to show that training works. I think if there was good data to show that training of this type leads to a certain reduction in the crash risk, that is something that would have been implemented a long time ago, but the data is not there, and to some extent we are working — —

Mr ELSBURY — Has the research being done by yourselves?

Mr HOLGATE — A lot of research has been done to look at the effectiveness of rider training and its impact on crash risk. Certainly things like the Cochrane review, which has done a meta-analysis of a whole range of studies, have shown that the results are very inconclusive. Common sense would say that a rider needs a certain degree of skill and if you have a bit more skill, you will be a better rider. We know for cars, for example, that might make you overconfident and might lead to an increased risk, so we are not saying that training is not required, we are proposing training, but the difficulty we have is understanding the evidence to provide the justification for it.

Mr ELSBURY — I am struggling a little bit with that considering you have a mandatory requirement of learner drivers to have a log book, yet you are telling me now that additional training is not required for riders.

Mr HOLGATE — We have a log book requirement for car drivers precisely because driver training is not effective. What helps young drivers become safer is experience behind the wheel as a learner. It does not matter who is next to them; if they are getting that experience and are imprinting the behaviours they need to drive safely during those 120 hours, they will be a safer driver. We cannot do that process for motorcycle riders because there is no-one next to them, so we are proposing a system that hopefully will provide a lot of those benefits in a way that is practicable for motorcyclists. The data on training is inconclusive. That is not to say it is not effective, but it is difficult to find solid data to show that it is effective, and in that position we are looking at an element of training in the process.

Mr ELSBURY — If the study has been done, why has it not been brought into effect? Why has there been this lag?

Mr HOLGATE — The studies on training do not show that it is effective. Perhaps just to amplify that, one of the larger levy-funded projects is the assisted rides project, otherwise known as VicRide. We are taking about 2000 riders shortly after they get their intermediate licence and putting them through a 4-hour process of coaching. We will be tracking their performance to see whether their riding becomes safer. We are expecting that will give us some results, hopefully to demonstrate that that sort of coaching is beneficial.

Mr ELSBURY — Certainly you have some support here from the RACV submission to this inquiry that says that post-licence training has not been shown to be beneficial and should not be supported as an effective road safety measure. However, this view has been constantly challenged by witnesses to this committee to the extent that it seems counterintuitive. I think I have your views basically on what that is.

Mr SHELTON — I will add to that, though. One of the things we are interested in is the content of training, and I draw a distinction here between the training to learn to manage the bike itself as distinct from training that is about anticipating, identifying and then responding to hazards.

Mr ELSBURY — That is certainly what happens when you are on the road with an instructor next to you in a car. You can do all the theory you want but it is not until you are actually in a car with your foot on the pedal that you can understand how to deal with the unpredictability of other road users, even larger vehicles and smaller vehicles than yours. It just does not seem to make sense that you would not then ask a motorcyclist to undertake the same sort of training or something to the equivalent that is within the limits of the vehicle. You are not going to have a pillion passenger whispering in your ear the whole time, ‘You really should be further to the left’; that is not going to work. But having an instructor on a bike either just ahead, just behind or off to one side of you would give you that extra little bit of knowledge so that you are not thrown out there from second gear at 30 kilometres an hour with no hazards out there except for some witch’s hats — and they are deadly. Being able to get out there and have to deal with — and I experienced this on my ride — being cut off by a truck. When I was halfway up him he decided, ‘I am going to take your lane’. He probably did not see me so the anchors went out and I came in behind him, which meant my instructor was ahead of him, I was behind and I was out there on my own. But because the instructor was somewhere out there ahead of me I had that little bit of assurance that what I did was right.

Mr SHELTON — Essentially what the assisted rides work is doing at the moment is seeking to better understand what are the components of training that are going to give us value so that we can design something that is going to be effective.

Mr HOLGATE — And perhaps just a comment on your last comment, Andrew. The proposal we have put up on the GLS has the same objectives as the process you describe. There will be an element of assessment in the process — check rides, which may involve a rider out with you assessing those risk awareness issues that you have raised, as well as a period of solo riding in between in which you can embed those skills. It is a question of balance between requiring many hours of supervised riding at great cost to the individual versus what we have got now, which is virtually nothing. We are attempting to find that balance.

Mr LANGUILLER — Just on the subject, I have not read that specific research, and I certainly will, but does that not tell you much more about the training itself, the actual training per se? Is it not about what kind of training you evaluated? If I may put it to you respectfully: if VicRoads, or if the RACV for that matter, plainly suggests that there is no value in training per se and this is taken out of context, you can see how the community could think, ‘What are these guys saying?’, because when you think about any type of training in any jurisdiction, if the training is good, surely there has to be some benefit. What you are saying is you have evaluated some training and that that training is not good enough. So shouldn’t we lift our game in terms of training?

Mr SHELTON — There are two things that come together here. There is both the training itself and then there is the evaluation that has been done. We are not suggesting that the training has been shown to be ineffective; we are in fact pointing to reports that other people have written that have tried to evaluate training and found it not to be effective. We are not simply making that aspect of it up. But we do accept that particularly for motorcyclists there is not a lot of good, thorough research in this area. Our proposal, through the assisted rides project, is to design something from the ground up with behaviour change principles built into it and evaluate that. Through that process we are hoping to find, Telmo, by applying our own rigorous evaluation which we can have confidence in that we can answer that very question that you have just posed. Intuitively it

would appear to be the right thing to do. If it is such a strong countermeasure, why is it not being shown in the research to be effective?

Mr HOLGATE — Perhaps just to amplify that, we are not saying that training is not effective; we are saying that it is not proven that training is effective.

Mr LANGUILLER — That is the training you have assessed and measured.

Mr HOLGATE — I refer to the Cochrane review that I mentioned. Its process is to review all reports of any evaluation of training. To some extent the jury is still out.

Mr LANGUILLER — As you would be aware the 1992 Social Development Committee report on the inquiry into motorcycle safety in Victoria recommended:

... VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission, in consultation with the Victorian motorcycling community, plan ongoing public education programs which encourage motorcycle riders to use appropriate conspicuity measures.

Further, in the 1998 Road Safety Committee report on the inquiry into the review of motorcycle safety in Victoria the committee considered that not enough work had been done by VicRoads on this recommendation and stated:

VicRoads should conclude and release as a matter of urgency, a recommended minimum standard for protective clothing and conspicuity measures for motorcycle riders.

The report further stated:

It should not be necessary for the committee to raise this issue again.

It has been 14 years. Can you advise the committee what work has been undertaken in relation to these issues?

Mr SHELTON — A lot of work has been done on all of those issues, but probably what has not been done is a mandatory approach to those issues. So a lot of work has been done to promote the conspicuity or visibility of motorcyclists, and other vulnerable road users for that matter, and, as we discussed earlier, work has steadily been done on the protective clothing issues. They have not been mandatory approaches, and quite typically a non-mandatory approach is adopted where there is either inconclusive data or the costs of compliance with the mandatory approach are seen to outweigh the benefits. You will notice in our revised graduated licensing approach that we are certainly strongly promoting restrictions on learner riders, that they must ride with their headlights on and wear high-visibility clothing. By getting in at that very early stage of a rider's career we hope to have a long and lasting effect on their habits in this area.

Mr LANGUILLER — We also understand that VMAC was briefed on a three-stage project on motorcycle protective clothing and that the third stage of this project which was finalised in late 2008 outlined the process involved in establishing a star rating system. Can you explain to the committee why this project does not seem to have gone anywhere since 2008?

Mr SHELTON — The key challenge of a star rating system is determining what standards are going to be used for the testing of protective clothing in order to assign star ratings to protective clothing. Added to that is the complexity of the number of pieces of clothing you can potentially test, and hence the cost of doing that. As I mentioned earlier, in this piece of work the current state we are at is that we have got some sound thinking about how a star rating system might work. TAC are currently going through a process of testing some clothing against the European standard, I believe it is, through the UK. That question may best be directed to TAC to check on the status of that work.

Mr LANGUILLER — Thank you.

Mr ELSBURY — Just asking whether or not you are aware of a training program that was carried out by the Gold Coast council which involved on-road rider training which was found to reduce the amount of trauma caused by motorcycle accidents, and if so, can you comment about your thoughts on the program.

Mr SHELTON — I am not aware of it. Perhaps James is.

Mr HOLGATE — No.

Mr SHELTON — We would certainly be happy to have a look at it. We are always interested to have a close look at something that particularly claims to have been successful. I would have to say that whilst we will have a close look at it, the evaluation will be one thing we will be looking closely at and how that is actually being done. It is a notoriously difficult area to evaluate well without a large budget.

Mr ELSBURY — Just relation to earlier on in the piece, a couple of months ago we had a submission presented by VicRoads to this committee in relation to what is going on in the motorcycling sphere so far as VicRoads sees it. That submission did not mention any of the good work that you are doing with regard to road engineering or various other safety measures that are being undertaken with road barriers. We actually found that out by going to Western Australia and ending up at a road safety conference over there. I just wondering why it was that, given that VicRoads had the opportunity to raise these good works with us, we did not find out about it until we went to Western Australia.

Mr SHELTON — The submission, Andrew, that we made initially does talk about the motorcycle black spot program in which those works were done — —

Mr ELSBURY — You were sitting here in front of us with the opportunity to present slides, similar to what we got presented with in Western Australia.

Mr HOLGATE — Perhaps I could comment. It is in our submission Making Roads Motorcycle Friendly information. I recall a lot of our time at the last session was spent answering questions. I think we presented the highlights of what we saw as the future opportunities.

Mr ELSBURY — It just would have been nice to have been educated and to be able to go to something like that and actually say that we were able to back up what VicRoads was doing, because everyone was singing your praises in WA. And we were just nodding our heads until we went and had Kenn Beer actually present to us what was being done. We were left quite flat-footed, and we could have been backing VicRoads up.

Mr SHELTON — I am sorry to hear that was the case. We have extended many times an invitation for members of the committee to meet with us and have a look at what we do. We have made some references to the motorcycle work we have done, particularly on roads. I am happy to provide further information on that.

Mr ELSBURY — We have it now.

Mr SHELTON — I guess we do not actively go out promoting ourselves in that regard.

Mr ELSBURY — It is just that we had to book a flight with Qantas to get it.

Mr HOLGATE — Perhaps if I can comment. As I have just said, the focus of our evidence at the last hearing was looking forward. We are certain that in our submission we provided information about work we had done, but our emphasis was on what needed to be done in the future.

Mr LANGUILLER — Can I just make the following comments? I am not sure if you notice an element of frustration, let me say, on my part. The reason is that VicRoads does enormously good work. Wherever you go in the world — and we get delegations almost every month from all around the world — people praise VicRoads and so on. I do not need to tell you this. But it appears you downplay the work you do. You do the opposite of what political parties and politicians do; we talk up everything we do and everything we do not do. In some ways it is frustrating for us — and it certainly was in WA, where everybody was evidently happy and proud of the Victorian delegation.

I say this with respect to yourselves. I think to a large extent VicRoads does itself a disservice by not sharing so much of the good work you do out there with the public and the community. I think that is one weakness of the organisation, if I may say so, institutionally and culturally. So far that has come through with the submissions we have received, and I believe that if you were to do so, you would certainly be able to improve your relationship with the riders and the fraternity themselves. I just say this for what it is worth.

Mr SHELTON — Thank you for your comments and advice, Telmo. We are certainly paying attention to that.

Mr ELSBURY — As someone who has driven on New South Wales roads over the holiday period over Christmas, I have to say that I have not prayed that much in all my life, because the quality of their roads compared to what we have here in Victoria — there is no comparison. We have superior road safety measures. That is something we should be quite proud of as a state.

Mr LANGUILLER — And of course Kenn is a great presenter as well.

Mr SHELTON — He is indeed.

Mr LANGUILLER — It is worth putting that in. He did very well. Can I just take you back? I refer you to the motorcycle protective clothing project. When did you start, and why did you not start that promptly?

Mr SHELTON — The work on protective clothing?

Mr LANGUILLER — Yes.

Mr SHELTON — I might just hand out for the committee's purposes a short summary of work we have done.

Mr LANGUILLER — That was 2008. I guess the point I am making, David, is that yes, you are working on it, but that was in 2008. When did you start again? When did you start the project following the 2008 — —

Mr SHELTON — The first stage of the protective clothing work, stage 1, was November 2006, if that is the three-stage piece of work you were referring to earlier, Telmo.

Mr LANGUILLER — And the third stage?

Mr SHELTON — The report on the third stage was 2008, I think — August 2008. We were starting, really, from the ground up to look at two things: whether a star rating system would be received by the public and well used — we needed to demonstrate that — and then we needed to demonstrate whether we could actually do this in a defensible way that would be cost-effective as well. We were putting together, if you like, a business model for what is not unlike, say, the star ratings you get on kitchen appliances or cars — the ANCAP scheme at the moment. The technical quality of those processes needs to be absolutely spot on, so getting it right from the outset was very important.

We are also very cognisant of the fact that at the moment motorcyclists enjoy a very broad range of products available to them, so being able to decide what we wanted to be able to sample and test was another part of that process — not only the makes and models but whether it was pants or jackets or so on. There is just a vast quantity. Where to start was in fact a challenge for us. As I mentioned earlier, we have gotten a certain way through it, and we are now doing some testing of clothing. It is certainly not a complete piece of work at this stage, but by choosing a star system fairly early on in the process we actually made a choice that we believed that trying to influence consumer behaviour was going to be a more appropriate place to start than a mandatory approach whereby you put a standard in place and basically say, 'You cannot sell a piece of clothing unless it meets that standard'.

Mr HOLGATE — Perhaps just to add to that, while that back-office work was going on, we were also doing a reasonable amount of work in promoting the benefits of protective clothing with brochures like *The Right Stuff*, which you have hopefully seen, and working with the TAC in the work they were doing. Also, for example, the police yellow flag/black flag program includes providing advice to motorcyclists about protective clothing. We were continuing that ongoing public process while the research process was going on.

The CHAIR — I have one question I would like to put to you. Can you provide any more information on how the community road safety partnership program and alliance is expected to contribute to improving motorcycle safety?

Mr SHELTON — Sure. I provided Kylie with a copy of our guidelines earlier and invited her to certainly seek some further information on this. The alliance is essentially the governing body that recommends to VicRoads program allocations and registrations of new bodies for the Victorian community road safety partnership program. The program currently has about 51 registered groups. They range from councils to small groups of volunteers to statewide organisations. We provide to those groups a fairly comprehensive guide as to

the sorts of things that are effective in road safety and that they may choose to submit to us for funding. We strongly favour initiatives that have been shown elsewhere to be effective and initiatives that attract joint sponsorship from other agencies as well.

It is a fairly competitive program. This year we had about \$2.5 million of submissions to that program and will probably end up allocating funds of about \$1.6 million. About 10 of those groups submitted motorcycle-specific projects. There are a lot of others I will speak about in a moment that benefit motorcyclists, but the motorcycle-specific ones were in areas where there is clearly heightened concern about motorcyclists, particularly the ranges — the Otways and the locations where motorcyclists are very visible and where motorcycle trauma is at its peak.

I am happy to provide you information about the motorcycle projects that get put forward. When they are put forward they are immediately referred to our motorcycle policy team to evaluate, so they get specific attention. We then liaise with each group to try to make the best we can out of the projects that are brought forward. As we mentioned earlier, we do not provide funding through that program specifically to provide training to motorcyclists — just as we do not provide funding through the program to provide training to car drivers. We do provide funding for raising awareness, for example, around the visibility issues for motorcyclists and equally amongst car drivers. The ‘look out for motorcyclists’ message is advocated. Programs that are not targeted specifically toward motorcyclists are also funded through this work, and they include things like the Driver Reviver program, which in fact benefits all road users — motorcyclists, car drivers and truck drivers alike.

The CHAIR — Are there any general concluding comments you might wish to make at this stage, responding to our terms of reference? Just before you contemplate that, we will forward to you the list of questions we have put to you today. As you peruse the transcript, if there are issues — and there are a couple of matters that I think you will be able to identify for follow-up response — and if you wish to add any commentary that would assist our research staff to work through the list of recommendations that we will be drawing together, please feel free to do so. It is open to you now for a moment before I conclude.

Mr SHELTON — If I might raise one matter, Murray. Recently we have been considering targets for road trauma reduction in Victoria’s part of the development of a new road safety strategy. We hope to be going to the public soon with a public discussion paper around a range of issues including motorcycle safety. Traditionally targets have been set at a macro level for all road users. For example, the national target in the National Road Safety Strategy at the moment is at least a 30 per cent reduction in serious injury and fatal crashes over the coming 10 years.

The committee might consider whether in fact there is a case to be made for having a specific target just for motorcyclists within that high-level target. In particular, I think the justification may be founded in the numbers we spoke about earlier — about the overrepresentation in road trauma by motorcyclists. They are 4 per cent of our registrations and less than 1 per cent of our traffic volumes, yet in 2011 they represented 15 per cent of our fatal crashes. On that basis alone, if we are to reach a 30 per cent reduction overall in road trauma in Victoria, we are going to have to lift our socks in the motorcycle area.

Mr LANGUILLER — I have to put this to you: will you include off-road as well?

Mr SHELTON — Telmo, if we are charged with and resourced to do off-road as well, we will be very happy to take on off-road.

The CHAIR — I note that we have had a very interesting day today as a committee. We have taken evidence from Motorcycling Australia and from the Alfred hospital and their head of plastic, hand and maxillofacial surgery, who gave some quite graphic evidence to the committee earlier on about his reconstructive surgery work and the implications for those who do come off their bikes. We are grateful for the contributions of MUARC and also for the great insight and expertise that you bring to our deliberations. We trust you will treat this as a constructive and robust dialogue out of which there could be some good recommendations.

There have been some suggestions as to the effectiveness of parliamentary committees. Having been a member of one for a number of years now and having seen outcomes from parliamentary committee reports, we have a detailed process of engagement with communities across Victoria to take onboard the insights of people from city, rural and regional precincts and then let that meld through the political process. I think there is a certain

opportunity we have in public decision making. I hold the committee process in high regard. I thank you for your cooperation with it and trust that there can be continuing cooperation as further information is brought to bear.

I have a couple of quips. It has been said that lack of knowledge about subject matter has rarely been an impediment to a politician making a speech or a comment on a matter, but also there might be a keen-minded insight that we can approach an issue from and look at different issues. In the words of Robert Kennedy, and I am paraphrasing here: some people see things as they are and ask why; some people see things as they never were and ask why not. We trust we can all have that vision of why not to a degree, but also factored against issues of resourcing, which you would be mindful of, and also the statutory charter, that we are not unresponsive to and not unmindful of.

Thank you very much for your attendance here this afternoon. I thank the committee staff for the great work they have done in preparing for today and also Hansard for their hard work and for surviving the graphic presentation this morning. I also thank those who have attended.

Committee adjourned.