ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pedestrian safety at carparks

Melbourne—27 July 2009

Members

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Witnesses

Ms K. Owen, Director, Research and Policy, Municipal Association of Victoria; and
Mr O. Harvey-Beavis, Manager, Economic Data and Policy Department, Municipal Association of Victoria.
The CHAIR—Thank you for being here to assist the Road Safety Committee in its inquiry into pedestrian safety in carparks. As you can see we are recording the evidence. Anything you say here is protected by parliamentary privilege but if you say anything outside you're not afforded that privilege. If you could start by introducing yourself and proceed with your presentation and we will ask questions as we go.

Ms OWEN—Well, from our point of view we do not have a lengthy presentation. What we would be looking to do, I think would be the greatest advantage to everyone, is to take your questions as we go along the way. The [MAV] I have to say has not had issues of road safety in carparks raised by its members in the consideration of the strategic plan, the state council consideration of issues of front line importance to local government. This has not been up there as one of the issues. We have not spent a lot of time on it over the period. Obviously councils are very interested, a general concern, in road safety but it is because of the fact that it is not there as a key issue impacting upon councils we have not done much work in that area.

We would see that there may be some particular issues which relate to the size of vehicles. There could be some issues because of the planning in relation to carparks, planning and design of carparks. At this point it probably is best if we leave it to you to pursue some specific lines of inquiry.

The CHAIR—in terms of the responsibility that local government has, does that vary from the operator in terms of whether it is a private carpark or a public carpark or what jurisdiction does local government have?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—I would put large-scale carpark into three categories: the first one would be where local government is the owner and operator of the carpark; the second one is where we have a private carpark which is operated by local government on behalf of that private operator; then there will be a third category which is a private carpark and operated by the private organisation or company. The first two are treated differently from the third in terms of enforcement activities in that carpark.

Mr WELLER—in your opening comments you mentioned that was room for improvement around vehicle size and carpark design. What are some of your thoughts then on vehicle sizes in carparks and perhaps design that could improve carparks?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—in terms of how we would look at the particular issue of vehicle size, I would say if you have a public carpark, any risks inherent with a particular size vehicle, say, a four-wheel drive, for instance, in terms of visibility when you are reversing out, things like that, would be there even if it is in a private carpark at your own home, for instance, if you are trying to reverse onto a street, you are looking at pedestrian safety. There is not a significant difference between public carparks versus on your own private property or something along those lines. If you have particular concerns in relation to visibility out of the rear of that vehicle or something along those lines, then that might be dealt with by particular standards around the construction of those vehicles, whether it is the existence of cameras on the rear of vehicles so you can have better sightlines when you are reversing the vehicle.

Ms OWEN—Again that would be something that we are not best placed to comment on.

Mr WELLER—you said that MAV is not best placed to comment about design of carparks?

Ms OWEN—I do not think so.

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—No. We understand there are Australian standards in terms of the actual design of carparks. Obviously municipal councils when they have an opportunity to consider a planning application which includes a large-scale carpark would typically make reference to those Australian standards. We would encourage councils to do so but we are also not in a position to know that all councils do that as a matter of course. We would expect the larger councils which have more frequent planning activity would have those systems and processes in place where they would, as a matter of course, assess design applications against the Australian standards to ensure that sightlines and turning circles and everything like that are aligned with the Australian standard.

Mr WELLER—What about separation of pedestrians and vehicles?
Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—I am not expert enough on the content of the Australian standards.

Mr WELLER—The Australian standard is the key and it is not something that we at the MAV are across in detail.

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—if you are talking about mixed use of that space, raising a question around that, the safety, the shared zones, we have a specific 10 kilometre speed limit and also the requirement to give way to pedestrians.

Mr TILLEY—Would you say then across all our local governments in Victoria that there is an ad hoc approach to applying Australian standards to the design of carparks?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—I am not sure we can say that it is a completely ad hoc approach. The way it would work is if you had a planning application which would include a carpark. An internal referral in the way that you would make many referrals through the planning process could be to the engineering area or the council which are the experts in the actual design of the car parks, and then they would apply the Australian standards. It really depends, as I said, on the volume, I would expect. I could not speak for every single council in Victoria but we would expect the large metropolitan that have frequent development would have those systems in place, so it would be far less ad hoc where the majority of carparks are being constructed. It is more those councils where it is an unusual occurrence. They may not have those types of processes in place. You have an automatic trigger.

Mr TILLEY—in that case, the planning engineer would be subjective on how they apply the design throughout Victoria?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—that is right.

Mr KOCH—Having not made a submission to the inquiry but coming today and happy to take questions from the committee in relation to the safety in carparks, have you—prior to coming today—contacted any municipalities, principally metropolitan municipalities where carparks under local government management are more applicable that regional Victoria or have they not responded in the event that you have tried to raise these matters with them?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—No, we have not followed it up.

Ms OWEN—as we have said, it is an issue which has not been raised.

Mr KOCH—Fine. My second question is that you indicated there are three tiers of carparks.

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—Yes.

Mr KOCH—Owned and managed; not owned but managed by local government, and neither. You indicated that the management of these are all different.

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—Yes.

Mr KOCH—in relation to the management of local government owned and managed and the non-owned but managed, where are the differences from that point of view from local governments administration and management of these carparks?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—Predominantly it would be in the provision of infrastructure and the enforcement between those two different types. Local government is obviously responsible for all infrastructure in its own carparks, including parking signs et cetera.

Mr KOCH—and enforcement?
Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—And enforcement. They would make the decisions about how frequently they would enforce, in what ways they were in force. In the latter category it is the private operator's responsibility around the provision of the infrastructure, so the parking control signs, and the enforcement activity would be subject to an agreement between the private operator and the council. There would be an expectation spelt out in that agreement and that is governed under the Road Safety Act. They would then enforce at certain intervals.

Mr KOCH—From the point of view of that private ownership, local government management, your members across the board at the MAV are accepting that there may be two different management regimes completely. You do not have your own code of practice from the MAV's point of view or representing your membership, that carparks will be managed in any particular way?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—No. The Road Safety Act is quite specific about the relationship between the council and the private operator and the particulars that need to be dealt with in the agreement between the private operator and the council. We do not hear, as the MAV, there being particular issues with that type of arrangement. Generally, because it an agreement where both parties have to come together there is—

Mr KOCH—I was not after the issues side of it, it was more about the management regime that you employ under contract on behalf of private ownership, and it does not line up with your own necessarily?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—in terms of how you would deal with that.

Mr KOCH—The day-to-day management of specific carparks whether ownership is one of your memberships or whether it is under contract with private operators?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—from the member of the public, Joe Public, it is fairly similar in a sense that you have signs that are consistent between both carparks and they will both be enforced by the same authorised officer of the council. There might be differences in the governance regime behind it, but in terms of the actual public face of those carparks then there would be a consistency in terms of what the public would see.

Mr KOCH—are you in a position to bring to our attention what some of those governance issues, differences in government issues, may be between both those management regimes?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—in what sense?

Mr KOCH—Well, we are saying from the public's point of view they may not recognise any difference in the way the carparks are managed, but you have indicated from a governance point of view there may certainly be some differences. I am wondering if you could enlighten us.

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—It could well be the case that there are differences in the frequency of enforcement regimes which is set within that agreement. There is more discretion at the council level to turn around and change enforcement patterns within the way they manage carparks.

Mr KOCH—Hypothetically, for instance, if the ground speed in the privately-owned one is greater than what you would be managing in your own ownership, where would local government sit in relation to that matter? Do you stand by your own code or are you led by the owner of the carpark that you have accepted management rights over?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—There is a whole different regime in terms of determining speed limits within public roads generally and carparks in which VicRoads are the lead agency on that. There is a speed limits advisory group of which the MAV has membership which provides advice to VicRoads in relation to speed limits, but we would say that it would typically fall within the expertise of VicRoads to determine the appropriate speeds across public roads and also into carparks.

The CHAIR—There is obviously an interest out there from local government because we have had 28 submissions from local councils and clearly some uniformity, that there has been some suggestion that if...
the MAV supported such a code of practice that there would be some uniformity, because planning at the end of the day predominantly rests with local government and whether there is a planning issue that relates to a shopping centre and its carpark then obviously council have a look at that planning. In terms of uniformity there is some consistency and I think it is reflected in some of the submissions in local councils. Do you think it would be useful that the MAV could support in these councils wanting a code of practice?

Mr HARVEY-BEAVIS—I think if the inquiry concluded there was a need for a code of practice then the MAV would be happy to support it and disseminate it to its members and promote it in that way.

The CHAIR—Thanks very much.

Witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended.