

# TRANSCRIPT

## ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Bairnsdale — 14 December 2011

#### Members

Mr A. Elsbury

Mr T. Languiller

Mr J. Perera

Mr M. Thompson

Mr B. Tilley

Chair: Mr M. Thompson  
Deputy Chair: Mr T. Languiller

#### Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Jenkins

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#### Witness

Mr D. Townsend, chairman, Eastern Region Motorcycle Working Party.

**The CHAIR** — Welcome to this session of the hearings of the Victorian parliamentary Road Safety Committee inquiry into motorcycle safety. I am pleased to welcome Daryl Townsend, who is the chairman of the Eastern Region Motorcycle Working Party. By way of background I will make some general remarks to start with. You have the benefit of parliamentary privilege here, and we can go in camera as well, which means if there is any confidential information you wish to convey to us that is not for the public record, then we can take that on board. In addition you will get a copy of the transcript of proceedings today, which we invite you to correct for typographical errors and then return to us. It will then be placed on our website and form part of our general brief.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Do you exclude the waffle if I waffle on?

**The CHAIR** — No. You will be in good company, I would add, which is a starting point to introduce you to the people here. Our format generally comprises the opportunity for people giving evidence to speak to any information they would like to convey to us, and then we vigorously cross-examine them and seek to elucidate some further points that might ultimately help with the objectives of the inquiry, which covers 11 terms of reference, with a number of sub-points within those terms of reference.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — I have a few notes I would like to talk to and some information by way of background. I will go through that process, and then we will fill in the gaps as they appear. My name is Daryl Townsend. I work for the East Gippsland Shire Council. I have been here for 30-odd years. I am the current chairman of the Eastern Region Motorcycle Working Party and have been on that party for three years.

That group was formed as a result of a regional managers forum for Gippsland that was concerned by the increasing number of motorcycle crashes in Gippsland. Motorcyclists and other stakeholders were asked to participate. I fall into the category of a motorcyclist, a council person for East Gippsland and a road traffic practitioner. My job with council is as a roads and traffic safety officer, and I am a fairly passionate motorcyclist. I had three chances of getting on the party, and I was very pleased to be involved and take a leadership role in trying to find solutions. It has been a very enlightening process. Part of the reason for my initial submission on the terms of reference of the Road Safety Committee was based on some of the experiences, good and bad, that we had in forming our committee.

There were some great light bulb moments that I thought would be an advantage to share. I will just go through those issues. As a motorcyclist I have been riding for 40 years. I am still an active motorcycle rider. My introduction to motorcycle riding was fairly privileged. I joined the police force 41 years ago and was able to get into the mobile traffic section then, and they trained me. They put me in a six-week motorcycle riding program, and I became a solo rider, a show rider and a bit of an instructor. I loved every minute of it. I probably would not be alive now if I had not had that initial training. I have ranged from the good rider to the bad rider to the reformed rider.

Part of the reason I made the submission is that I thought it was important for the Road Safety Committee to have current and accurate, reliable crash data relating to motorcycle crashes. That was the biggest problem in our group. We procrastinated for six to eight months. We had 20 motorcyclists in the room, and everyone had a very low-level personal view. There was very little in the way of strategic approach, and it was not until we were able to access reliable crash data that we were able to get traction. We had to move away from the pothole in the road or the young kid who was unlicensed riding past someone's house and going up into the bush. For us, having good reliable data set us off on the right track. Having data from a number of years certainly helped us.

**The CHAIR** — Just one point of clarification. What did you mean by the pothole in the road?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — In our group everyone was talking about the pothole in the road as being the reason that motorcycles crash. No-one had reported these matters. We had people on our committee who would come along and say, 'There's a pothole here. There's a pothole there. That part of the road is no good'. They never reported it to anyone and they never even bothered to put pen to paper or make an anonymous complaint, but that was the solution to the motorcycle crashes in Gippsland from their perspective. We lost some of our group, and we had to renew it with people who had a bit more of a strategic view on how to progress.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Can you explain the composition of your committee?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — We have a number of motorcycle riders who are just motorcycle riders. We have Victoria Police, RoadSafe Gippsland committees, local government and VicRoads personnel. That is the composition of the committee. That committee also has loose associations with and referrals from and with motorcycle outlets, traders and businesses. As part of my role I utilise a network of motorcycle club contacts I have in East Gippsland. I send information to them, and they can feed information to me. All other members have their own associations, so we can feed information out and get a feel as to whether we are on the money or whether we are missing the target with what we are looking at.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Is TAC off the table?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — No. TAC has provided funding for some of our programs. The other thing with our group is that we had no funding. We would do our research, identify what we could do and what we wanted to do and then apply for funding. Depending on where we got the funding from, we were limited and obliged to spend that funding according to the preferences of the funder. If TAC gave us money, there were strings attached to how that was to be spent. That may restrict what programs we are able to deliver. In the last three years we have delivered 20-plus programs. I have been on RoadSafe for 10 years. It is the first time I have been on a RoadSafe committee where we have not had any dud programs and where every program has been a winner. From my perspective we have delivered really good programs that had supporting evidence. They might not have been the programs we wanted to deliver, but given the funding we received, to be able to deliver those 20 initiatives was fantastic.

One of the other programs we trialled was the development of a fact sheet. I do not know whether you have seen our fact sheet. I will provide you with a copy. The fact sheet is called 'Motorcycling through sensational Gippsland including the Great Alpine Road' and contains the core of our research. It was made available through all motorcycle outlets and businesses across Gippsland. As well as creating that fact sheet I was able to access data and obtain the names and addresses of 4000 motorcycle riders in East Gippsland, and I did a personal mail-out of this information to every motorcycle rider in the East Gippsland municipality. We were hoping to do the research in the next three to four months to see if there had been any changes in the trends across the region, including any specific changes in East Gippsland — that is, to see whether the personal mail-out process had worked or had not worked.

That is one of the programs we have done. Through VicRoads and the police we were able to get access to the police reports of all the accidents. They worked with us to provide us with that sort of information. I and another member of the committee who has the skills to interpret that data went off separately, analysed the data and then came together, and with the rounding up or down of the percentages we were very close. We are happy that we have really good data. The problem, however, is that in the police reports there is lot of information that is very subjective, and it is hard to understand what they are saying. The police report would say, for instance, that the faults were 'road design, rider error, gravel on road' and that the crash was due to 'loss of control on a bend'. It would be far better for the officer doing the report at the time to actually just say what it was rather than trying to interpret what the cause was. If the rider of the bike said, 'I was daydreaming, I hit the gravel and I panicked', that information would be far better than 'road design, rider inexperience, gravel on road'.

We had a lot of problems identifying those specifics. That is the level that we drill down to. It is important that we actually understand, crash by crash, person by person, what is happening. That builds our profile and our knowledge of trends, and then we can say with some credibility what we are dealing with. We can say whether it is a behavioural thing, whether it is a road maintenance issue — that is, the road authority not keeping the road up to date — whether there are no signs or whether people are overcooking it and treating the road as their personal racetrack. That was one of the key issues that came out; the reports were difficult to analyse. Having said that, it was critical that we had all that data that showed the specific problems — where they were, on what roads, whether they were on a bend or at an intersection and whether they occurred in the day or at night-time. The majority of the crashes were single-vehicle crashes not at an intersection; they were either at a bend or on a straight section of road.

Generally rider inattention was the main contributing cause. It was usually in the daytime, in perfect weather conditions and involved the more mature riders. Whilst there were still problems with the younger riders, the biggest problem in our region was the mature-age riders; it was not the young hoonos, although they took fewer crashes per fatality whereas the older blokes took a lot more crashes per fatality. We were a bit harder at knocking ourselves off, but the young blokes could do it quite easily — their stats were fairly low. Knowing all

that information helped us, because if we were going to go out there to try to give information to motorcyclists, as riders we wanted to make sure that we were on the money. If you are on the money and you have good data and it resonates, they will absorb it. At the first sign that it does not resonate the blinds go up, the teflon comes out and you have wasted all your time, effort and money.

We also identified the age groups and riders by origin. We found that most riders who were crashing here were Gippsland riders crashing on Gippsland roads. It might be riders from Traralgon crashing on Bairnsdale roads or vice versa, but they were still Gippsland riders even though they might not have been on their own road. The recent data that I have seen for the Great Alpine Road is saying 23 of the 24 crashes were visitors, but I do not know what 'visitor' means.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Can I interrupt you there? The committee heard from VicRoads yesterday, and I have what I think is a quite interesting quote: all the fatalities were not people who lived in Gippsland; they were outsiders. Is that correct? That is my recollection from yesterday's submission. I bring this to your attention just to highlight the potential discrepancies that exist in terms of data collection. That is what VicRoads says, in which case we think you guys are doing a great job in this region, because you are getting to the bike shops and you are getting to all your residents. You have no fatalities of your own per se in terms of your region. VicRoads says they are all outsiders, so they are all people who are driving into the region. A note taken of that evidence reads:

VicRoads have found in the period it monitored that 100 per cent of motorcycle accidents in the region were visitors.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — I would challenge their definition of what a 'visitor' is, because to me, if we are looking at the Great Alpine Road, a visitor could be somebody who does not live in East Gippsland. I would challenge that, and I would want to go back to the police report to find out the address of the person by postcode. We did that in our first analysis, and it took us 12 months or longer mucking around and arguing the toss about what data we can get, who is going to give it to us and confidentiality. Eventually we got postcodes and the majority — when I say the majority, more than 50 per cent of the crashes in Gippsland — were Gippsland riders. We were satisfied that there were a number of out-of-state fatalities, but they were very low.

We had a lot of intrastate postcodes — people from other parts of Victoria crashing on our roads — but the majority were Gippsland riders. That gave us the confidence to say, 'Who are we going to target? We're going to target Gippsland riders. We're not going to target anyone else, because it's clear to us that is the evidence'. I would challenge VicRoads as to what their definition of 'visitor' is, because it could be as simple as the data on a police report you are looking at, and you are saying 'visitor'. If it is a road in Bairnsdale, to me a visitor is somebody who does not live in Bairnsdale. It does not mean somebody who is from outside the state.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — My understanding is not that. My understanding is that we work on the basis of Victoria Police regions. That is my understanding. Once again I bring this to your attention, just to show the potential of what it could be

**Mr TOWNSEND** — No, they are the sorts of things that I would challenge, because that is what we challenged in our processes. It was a fairly vigorous and robust process where, as a group, it got very hard at times to keep calm, because we were vigorous in challenging what was happening. Is that right? Is that accurate? How do you know that? There were a few of us, and only a few of us, who did most of the work. It was then difficult to face a firing squad and have them throw these challenges at you. If it had not been that robust, we would not have been as accurate as we were.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Fair enough. Thank you.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — So I would challenge it.

The other thing that we were able to glean some information on was the licence history of the riders and the type of bike they had been riding, which was really good information. Again I did touch on the fact that it is important that the data is analysed by appropriately skilled people. Recently I had discussions with a senior VicRoads safety practitioner about the current motorcycle crashes on the GAR, and how he interpreted that data. He is a very skilled and competent road safety practitioner, but he is a car driver. He knows diddly-squat about motorcycles. I pointed out the fact that if I had that data as a motorcycle rider and interpreted each police report, I would come up with a slightly different bent than he would, and it is important that he understands that

and understands that there is a bias that he will carry into that process that will not serve motorcycles well if he is going to do that sort of research. That is why we challenged ourselves.

The other point I made is that it is important for a road safety committee to put themselves up to scrutiny from anyone and everyone within the industry to get that feedback rather than believe they are the experts. We started to think we were the experts. No, we are not; we are just motorcycle riders sitting in a room trying to nut something out. Feedback help us — good, bad and otherwise.

The other thing is that we then looked at the trends and the themes, and we tried to develop programs or treatments that would have some effect in redressing the causal factors. We also advocated to the likes of VicRoads and other agencies that they commit a greater level of resources. We felt the licensing process was atrocious, and we have advocated, through our VicRoads contact, that as a committee they look at it.

**The CHAIR** — Do you have any specific sub-comments there?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — In relation to the — —

**The CHAIR** — Licensing.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Yes. We have not had any feedback other than they have taken it on board and that it has been identified at higher levels in other strategies. But as a group while we acknowledge that the learners process is a learning process — you get your permit to go off and learn — what we are finding in our region is that people get their learners but do not go on to practise. They then get their Ps, and they squeeze through that process. Suddenly time has passed and they are on a bike and riding, and they have not completed their obligation.

But the obligation that is set up does not encourage them to show that during the period I have had my Ls I have gone out and done this component, this component, this component and this component and I have so many hours up. I can now do a panic stop at 100 kilometres an hour. I put that to a recent learner driver, ‘Can you do a panic stop?’. They said, ‘Yes, at 30 kilometres an hour’. I said, ‘Do you ride at 30 kilometres an hour?’. ‘No’. ‘Well, then if you ride at 100, can you do a panic stop at 100 kilometres an hour? No? Well then you had better damn practise because it is going to happen one day.

**Mr TILLEY** — I just want to explore some of the stuff you were talking about in relation to learner riders and the gap before they go and do the next test for their probationary licence. Is it the case that there is a gap there because they are not applying the necessary learning due to the capacity or the type of motorcycle they are restricted to ride during that period of time?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — No. I like the new LAMS process. I think up to 650 is a progressive step. I think the problem with that is that the licensing system still throws the learner to the wolves. Once I have got my learners I need parameters and I need to achieve objectives, and before I can get my Ps I have to go off and do this component, without it being cost prohibitive, and I have to be able to negotiate this and to practise that. There is a whole list of things that you have to go off and practise, which makes you a better, safer and more competent rider. There should be a manual from which you can glean some of that information. There may even be — God forbid — enough resources to enable them to go to a service provider who could say, ‘Yes, you have got your L plates. I can now give you a 2-hour tuition program on these components’, so they book in, they do it, they get the knowledge, they go away and practise that and then they can tick it off on their book. They come back to get their Ps, and they have covered all the critical components of being a rider.

Some of them are fundamental; some of them are just a matter of teaching people to lift their head. They look at the front wheel and they do not lift their heads. They are not using their observation and their hazard identification. Riders do not understand what a hazard is! Going into a bend, they do not even know how to set up for a bend. They do not know how to get around a bend, they do not understand the physics and the dynamics of a bike and they do not even understand the gyroscopic effects of a motorcycle and how that can work for and against them.

I have four boys, and the youngest one has just gone and got his Ls. I do not mind, but he will not ride on a road until he has done his couple of hundred hours with me and his professional rider training as well. It is only then that I will feel confident that he has the basic competencies.

**The CHAIR** — Do you plan to give him a couple of hundred hours of training?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — He will have to do a couple of hundred hours with me.

**Mr TILLEY** — Just in relation to the figures you were talking about regarding the number of licence-holders compared to the number of registered motorcyclists, you probably do not have any data, but as a motorcyclist and being involved with your organisations, is there some way that you are able to express to the committee where the gap is? In the state of Victoria it is something like in the order of 2-to-1 of the number of registered motorcycles matching licence-holders at this stage. Is that at the later stage or is it early stages?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Personally I have two bikes in the shed. One is a trail bike and one is a road bike. If I could, I would have another one. It is generally the mature-age riders who tend to have a couple of bikes because time and finances allow. Having said that, some of the younger trail bike riders will have a couple of trail bikes, but the ones I know of are not necessarily registered. Anecdotally I would say it is more likely to be the middle-aged motorcycle rider who will have a couple of bikes. I know four or five people who I ride with have multiple bikes in their shed.

**Mr TILLEY** — Just in reference to the datasets, I was interested to hear the evidence given by Victoria Police earlier in relation to the data and details they have, and I was interested when we were talking about the traffic incident system, TIS, and how it is subjective in some regards and restrictive because it is only as good as the data that is inputted. Having used the TIS system I know that sometimes you are trying to put a square peg into a round hole. I was very interested in what you said in relation to the detail — that there was additional information you can put in and how you as a committee get some traction in delivering some safety outcomes for the riding community. You went on to say some things in relation to the local level. I do not want to compromise the work you are doing in the area, but I am interested because you said you had some access to some accurate data. Is that a local arrangement to get raw data?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — We are given a bit of privilege, yes. It is not arm-twisting but the relationships we have with some of the police and VicRoads are based on the fact that they understand about having good accurate data and they are able to glean some of that data and filter it through a source that not everybody has access to — just a very select few who already have the credibility that they can handle that. I was certainly one of those people. I regularly receive crash data from VicRoads to interpret for our own municipality. I can access the VicRoads crash stat database, which the police stuff is loaded on, and I can access as much information as I want because I do it regularly for our own municipality. When I do black spot funding for TAC through VicRoads I will get the police reports on all those crashes on all those lengths of roads.

When it came to motorcycling it was a short quantum leap for the police, who probably should not have been doing it, to extract that data and allow us to access it and identify the trends and the themes. The data would go back, and we would have the outcome of the research. The outcome of the research was the critical stuff that we wanted to work with.

**Mr TILLEY** — It relies on personal trust and relationships you have developed?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Yes, the integrity and the protocols have to be spot on. We were very cautious about that. Even getting access to the VicRoads name and address registry to do our mail-out was a minefield. We were very fortunate to get through all the pitfalls that they put in our way to prevent it.

**Mr TILLEY** — What I am leading towards is that from having those relationships and getting access to certain data, including raw data, you are able to come up with some outcomes. Comparing it to what generally goes into the mass pool and is publicly released, have you seen any conflict in the information that you have received with what goes out there publicly?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Yes, it is definitely different. As I said, that is why it is important to come up with solutions for the state. If you look at the state, you will have a completely different view as to what is right for East Gippsland, for the Western District and for anywhere else. As a committee you cannot say, 'We have the solutions for the motorcycle woes of Victoria' and try to implement one solution. You need to understand that regions have different needs. It is like the TAC ad on TV where the guy gets cleaned up at the intersection. I still hear it now: 'bloody car drivers'. Car drivers are not our problem. It is the idiot who is hanging onto the

handlebars who is the biggest problem in East Gippsland. That is 90 per cent of the problem. It is our understanding and awareness of our self and our behaviour or ego that gets in the way.

This fact sheet has broken down some of these barriers. I have had some phone contact and some feedback in relation to it. Interestingly, when I did the mail-out to 4000 people in East Gippsland I was prepared for a nightmare. You send out a letter like this with your name and contact details on it, telling motorcyclists that they are going to die and that these are the facts and they had better wake up to themselves — I got one negative phone call. To me, that is a resounding success. I will do backflips on that every day. I probably got about 15 or 20 positive calls, which I thought was a bonus, but the silence was golden. The silence to me means it resonated, because if it did not resonate, they would have been wanting to throttle me and tell me how stupid I was.

**The CHAIR** — Just to clarify one comment — were you quoting someone else? Or was it your own remark that 90 per cent of the problem is people hanging from the handlebars?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — It is my personal perception, but it based on a bit of research that we did as a group. Initially we gathered the crash stats, and then we drew some assumptions about who they are. I will just touch on a few of them. The target group is the 30 to 60-year-olds, and the high-risk time is Saturday and Sunday on a clear day in dry weather conditions. The high-risk area is not at an intersection but usually a straight section of road or a bend, and the accident is usually a run off the road and a hit into a fixed object. The target group is social riders, part-timers and weekend warriors.

Then we made some assumptions. Without knowing anything we said, ‘Okay, let’s put some assumptions together’. This gives us the freedom to guess. We put up some headings. One of them was ‘skills and roadcraft’. We asked why riders are making these mistakes and errors in these ideal riding conditions. Are they familiar with the road? Is it because they are not applying due levels of concentration? Is it their poor riding skills, their lack of roadcraft or their not reading the road or identifying a hazard? Is it because of lack of cornering skills or a lack of experience or practice? Then we looked at behaviour. Are riders deliberately taking undue risks? There is the racetrack syndrome. They are pushing the limits to keep up with their mate. They might not actually be riding fast, but they are riding faster than their competencies.

We then looked at education, the licensing and training component, fatigue, the motorcycle, protective clothing, the road and the stats. We put a whole heap of information under that as to what might be some of the contributing causes. When we as a group were satisfied that that pretty much hit the mark for us, we then identified some positive outcomes or treatments that could reduce those contributory causes. Then out of that we identified a massive big wish list of what we thought could solve the cures of all motorcyclists. Then we realised we are a local Gippsland committee with no money and no funding and we cannot influence anyone. Ninety-nine per cent of our wish list had to go out the window, and we had to ask what we could do.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Were you able to get the licence status of the people whom you researched?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — In broad terms, yes.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — What about the fatalities? Were you able to access information in relation to the licence status of those who unfortunately became casualties?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Yes, of all the — —

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Can I ask you how you managed to do that? Our committee has not been able to get that information from Victoria Police, the Coroners Court or VicRoads. I would be curious as to your methodology. It might help our committee.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — I am just trying to think of the name of the gentleman who was from MUARC.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Sorry, it is about the relationship.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — One of our committee members was — not Andrew Symonds; he is a cricketer — his surname is Simons. He is on our committee, and he is a member of MUARC. He is a Gippsland resident, but he works for the Monash University Accident Research Centre. He was the second person who took the data. He is far more skilled at this sort of research than I am. He went off and worked. He worked with the data that he had,

and he came back with a breakdown of the age group, where they came from and the size of their bikes. I have a copy of the graph he did for us, and I am more than happy to pass that on.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Thank you, we would welcome that.

**The CHAIR** — Daryl, we are nearing the end of our journey this morning. Do you have some more work you want to present to us? We have not quite gotten to all the questions that we wanted run with you either.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — There is a couple of things I would like to touch on. One of the really good things that came out for us — we ran a subsidised training session for existing motorcycle riders in Gippsland. We eventually attracted funding. We ran for four days and got about 80 to 100 participants. We fully subsidised that training and paid for that. People attending had to put up a \$50 deposit, and when they turned up they got the \$50 back. We had 100 per cent positive feedback from everyone who attended that riding day. One of the things that stood out for us — we had a number of people who had been riding bikes for long periods of time. One person in particular had 40 years of experience in riding a bike. He was amazed by what he did not know. The sad thing was that the braking and cornering skills training program was just above learner level. For a person who has been on a bike for 40 years to say he was amazed by what he did not know scares the hell out of me.

The other thing is that we had people from Bairnsdale who could not go to the Sale program to take it up because they had a licence to ride a bike, and they were riding a motorbike, but they could not see themselves riding from Bairnsdale to Sale to do a 2-hour course and then riding back in the one day. It was like going to the moon. The Bairnsdale people missed out. The Bairnsdale people in particular who should have been there missed out. We tried to secure more funding to run this program, and wherever we went we got knocked back, from TAC to VicRoads, saying skills training only teaches people to ride faster and kill themselves more quickly. In any workplace environment, knowing what you are doing and how to do it safely is called occupational health and safety. We were just absolutely flabbergasted at the negative approach to teaching people to give them better skills.

There are a couple of other things that I have highlighted. I want to have a quick look through them to make sure I have not missed anything important. The other thing that we have found in our dealings with VicRoads — and I have touched on it — is the focus of road safety, road design, road development and road maintenance is definitely for anything that has more than four wheels. It fits nicely. Any innovation in road safety — the guardrails or wire rope barriers — has been designed for cars; there is no real initiative that has come out from somebody saying, ‘This is a great motorcycle safety initiative’.

They have said, ‘The guardrail is a problem for motorbikes; we’ll put in a rub rail and call it an initiative’. It is an initiative, but every fundamental principle that relates to any road infrastructure and environment is based on cars. I know the number of licensed riders and riders on the road probably dictates that; we have a lower priority, but I also think that is part of the problem. When people look at reviewing black spots for motorcycles they are generally looking at the problem through motor car eyes. They need to open up their processes to scrutiny by motorcyclists so that they can be challenged. You only have to get it wrong a little bit and you miss the point, and all that effort of doing a black spot initiative can be wasted.

The other interesting thing is that our group was recognised in the Regional Achievement and Community Awards. We were a finalist in the Beaurepaires road safety awards that were recently held. That was a bit of a feather in the cap and a bit of recognition for the hard work that the committee has done.

Other issues: I think we focus a lot on the crashes and the road, and we deal with the problem at the end of the journey. The start of the journey is when they get their licence. It is like anything else; if we start dealing with that problem now and fixing it now, it is going to take a generation before we see any results. It is a bit of a two-pronged attack. No-one likes to see people killing themselves today, and we want to try to stop the problem today. However, there needs to be a strong focus at the start of the journey, not at the end of the journey. That will help significantly.

There are a number of issues with having bikes, motorbikes or cars that can do warp speed. Some of these bikes can do over 300 kilometres an hour, and there are cars that can do over 300 kilometres an hour. What planet are we on that we can do 300 kilometres an hour? There are some people — and I will quantify this — there is a very small percentage who will ride bikes on public roads at warp speed. Unfortunately they are usually the ones who do not necessarily wipe themselves out; otherwise we would have eliminated all of the Neanderthals.



I think about licensing, driving and further education, and I think there should be incentives for existing riders to go and get further skills training. I think there should be a subsidy, discounts, tax breaks or rebates for anyone who takes up further roadcraft or bikecraft.

On safety gear and personal protective clothing, one of the blokes I know very well rides around town here in thongs and a singlet. I have nagged him to death, but I still have not convinced him. He still thinks it is a joke. I have tried for probably three or four years, and I do not know why I cannot convince him. The behavioural thing is a big component in this as well.

The critical thing is the road environment. I go looking for the worst roads to ride on. I rode through the Simpson Desert for three weeks. It was one of the worst roads to ride on, but I loved every minute of it. You cannot necessarily blame the road. It is about people understanding that if I drive a car from here to Melbourne, I will probably exercise between 20 and 30 per cent of my concentration, and I will get out the other end fairly refreshed. If I ride a bike, I will need to operate it at about 70 per cent concentration. To get there safely I cannot relax anywhere near as much. I cannot look around. I will get to the other end and need a nanna nap. Motorcycle riders just sometimes do not understand those simple forces that are working against them. It is education and awareness in the environment in which the rider is going to absorb it.

There are a couple of other things I would like to say. This is something that I saw when I was riding through Queensland. I did a four-week ride out through Far North Queensland, Mount Isa and down through the centre. I was out in a remote area, and I saw a big sign, 'Motorcycle danger zone — be aware, take care, survive'. It had a tombstone with a bike helmet on it. That was about eight years ago. That still has an impact on me now. That resonated with me. It did not say anything. It just resonated and reinforced the message that I need to be safe for myself for my own benefit. It was not the authority telling me, 'You will die'. I have seen another one like this where it had the data. It just said the number of motorcyclists killed in Queensland and it had a figure. It was not saying anything more than that. It left the rest for me to absorb and interpret. I have been talking to VicRoads through our group trying to get funding to do this. I would love to put three or four of these big billboard signs on the GAR. The GAR is a problem long route for motorcyclists with crashes and fatalities, and I think that something like this actually deals with the behavioural issue that motorcyclists have. If you put up a standard VicRoads road sign, a skidding motorcycle sign, or you put up a curve warning sign and put 50 kilometres an hour on it, a motorcyclist will look at that, double it, add 20 and go for it. They do not give it the due respect.

That is pretty much about it. I have got a bit of a wish list. I would like to see changes to the learner process. I would like to see all licence-holders obliged to undergo advanced training and educational courses. I would like country people able to access this. As a rider, when I wanted to undergo advanced riding, a number of us got together and we had to pay dollars to get somebody down from Sydney or we had to go to Sydney or Melbourne to get the level of education that we wanted. We were fortunate enough that we had the dollars that we could do that, but there are a lot of people here who cannot do that. There are a lot of good people who just do not have the finances to do that. It is not rocket science. It is somebody imparting their knowledge to other people in a positive way.

Some of our current TV ads, they are okay, but there is one that I am seeing now where there is a guy on a bike taking off, darting between traffic, somebody running a red light with a girl on the back and the next minute he pulls out, loses control, falls off his bike and collects the bullbar coming the other way. When I first saw that ad I went, 'Oh, yuck! Terrible!', but now I see it and I go, 'That is a stupid ad'. I hate it. As a motorcyclist, I do not ride like that. I know there are some people out there who do that, but sometimes in trying to convey the gore, or not the gore but the consequences of those actions, you take away the individual's right to apply his own interpretation to it. I think that ad has probably run its course for some people. I think sometimes you can overdo it, and sometimes positive reinforcement can work better than negative reinforcement.

Just a quick run-down of some of the other programs that we have done. We have done our brochure, our fact sheet and our report on hazards, which came out of everyone wanting to say that the pothole on their road was a problem and the reason why motorcyclists were crashing. We provided support to the police for off-road enforcement and education. We supported police with on-road enforcement and education, as you heard from the previous presenters. We committed \$18 000 to the police unit in Bairnsdale if they could get something up and running in this region, because there is nothing happening here. It is all happening in the valley. Unfortunately due to their resource restrictions they have not been able to fulfil their obligations on that at this

stage. Hopefully that funding is still there. We are hoping that they will fulfil that and be able to get out and about, wave the flag and do some education and some tapping on shoulders to say, 'Did you know this?'

**The CHAIR** — Darryl, would you mind holding for a moment? I need to check with Kylie. Our next speaker has arrived. Would you mind checking with him what his time is like? I just need to make sure that his parameters are okay and just balance the questions that my colleagues may seek elucidation on. Your evidence has been very interesting and very worthwhile, but we do have a program to stick to.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — I was told to be succinct.

**Mr TILLEY** — You have done well.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Some of the other programs we are able to do include embarking on media campaigns where we have put text in newspapers, radio; we have internet, newsletters, we have VMS signs and billboards which we put out. We roll them out across the region at different times; they are motorcycle campaigns in particular. They still run; we still have a number of TV ads and we have a radio ad running fairly regularly under the banner of RoadSafe, which deals with motorcycle safety. We have done our mail-outs. We have the TV ad with the police where they talk about waking up to the facts. Since then we have done two other ads.

At key times through the year we now have a new motorcycle display trailer that is set up with a couple of dummies — or mannequins, I should say. They are dressed in appropriate motorcycle gear with a storyboard beside them and a whole heap of brochures, information and a video that runs continuously. We released that at the Barry Sheene ride when we had it running. It has been around the valley a couple of times. Throughout the year it will go to various events, and it will be there for motorcyclists to come and have a look and absorb the information.

We have lobbied for greater funding to treat high-risk motorcycle routes and road upgrades. That is happening. VicRoads is very proactive in applying for funding to do these upgrades, and we have had a number of successes with that. We have tried targeted education to older riders. We have done our training, and we distribute information through various motorcycle outlets. That pretty much wraps up everything I had earmarked to talk about. There is a whole lot of other stuff, and I could go into detail about each one, but I think I would only be starting to waffle a bit more.

**The CHAIR** — Daryl, we appreciate your evidence and the coverage and your great work in this field. Thank you very much. We saw the statistics for this region in Traralgon yesterday and the declining trends that are quite marked in this particular area. I think one must draw a correlation at this stage, although it will be evidence based as well, between the good work that has been done at ground level and the decline in accident data.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — We are hoping that the evidence will show that this has been part of a contribution to reducing accidents. It will not be the sole thing, and I would like it to be that, but I do not think it will.

**The CHAIR** — Daryl, I do not wish to deny my colleagues, so I am going to get them to ask one question each — their favourite question. If you could try to answer in a very succinct time frame, we can then liaise with the secretariat to get some more detail as required.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Thank you for your comprehensive submission, and well done on your work. Just on off-road riders, how much does your committee do on off-road? How much exposure do you have? Given the data that seems to suggest across the state that in the order of 50 per cent of thereabouts of fatalities have been off-road riders, what is your experience of that and what can you comment on it — succinctly.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — We know, mostly anecdotally, that there are a lot of problems with off-road bikes. From the data that we looked at, it was easier for us to see what was happening on-road than it was off-road. We have recognised that it is a problem, but as a committee we are not in a position to deal with that at this stage. We do not have good data to understand what is happening, and the crash statistics can often lead you up the wrong track. Crashes will happen off road, and they will drag it out onto a public road and say it happened on that road when in reality it was on an off-road track. I know in East Gippsland there are a lot of off-road trail bike activities, in particular around Lakes Entrance in the Colquhoun forest; there are a lot of problems there

with young kids getting out there and some of them absolutely hooning and flogging and destroying stuff. There are also a lot of people who get out there legitimately and have fun.

**Mr LANGUILLER** — So just to be clear, the off-road areas are not part of your terms of reference?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — It is not part of our brief at this stage. All we have said initially is that we know it is a problem; we do not have the capacity to look at it.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Just going back to the comment you made about the gentleman who rides around town in thongs and singlet — and I hope he is wearing shorts or pants of some description — given that you have your trailer that goes around showing people what the protective equipment is and how it works and the benefits of wearing it, can you think of any other initiatives that might be able to be brought into play to encourage the use of safety equipment by motorcyclists?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Yes. For me what worked the most was seeing firsthand the results of not wearing the equipment. For me it was seeing people in pain. I have had one crash in 40-odd years, and that is all I ever want it to be, but having seen other people who have been in crashes, I cannot understand why someone would not wear protective gear. This person has not seen it, and I plead and beg and threaten, but he still will not; he treats it as a joke.

**Mr ELSBURY** — What level of gear would you suggest? What would you be recommending?

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Fundamentally I wear fabric Dririder gear. If I was riding on a track going at warp speeds I would want leathers. There are a number of fabrics with high abrasive resistance, body armour and protective padding. I would be starting at that level, and boots and Kevlar trousers. Kevlar has been great. A lot of the Harley riders love wearing their jeans and their denim jackets, and they can now wear them with Kevlar in them and still be cool.

**Mr TILLEY** — I just wanted to clear up something regarding the data and some of those things. Mark Simons — —

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Mark Simons, that is it. Mark did that other research, and he came up with far more in-depth data than I did out of the same statistics. Yes, Mark Simons; that is the guy.

**The CHAIR** — Daryl, thank you very much for your time and your expertise. It is interesting to note that you started with the police force training several decades ago and you are now using that skilling to help educate other riders in the area. I am not sure whether you mentioned you went from a good rider to a bad rider to a reformed rider, but thank you for that frankness and that notion that we all need to be in the zone, so to speak, and that whether we are motorists or motorcyclists, whether we are holding handlebars or the wheel, we need to be in charge of the vehicle in an appropriate way.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — And the good, the bad and the reformed meant that I was on the right side of the law chasing the baddies and I had experienced doing dumb things. I am as guilty as anyone of riding at warp speed and doing things where I wondered why I was doing them. That was the bad side, and then the reformed side was saying to yourself, 'Wake up to yourself, or you're not going to be here too long'. I do not think there is any motorbike rider out there who does not make mistakes or overstep their limits. It is upon understanding yourself and who is in charge that you then suddenly realise, 'I need to be in the zone. I need to be in control. I can have fun. I don't have to do anything stupid to have fun or to enjoy this pursuit'.

**The CHAIR** — Daryl, thank you very much for your time and your contribution. It is greatly valued.

**Mr TOWNSEND** — Thank you.

**Witness withdrew.**