

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into federal-state road funding arrangements

Melbourne — 22 February 2010

Members

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Witnesses

Mr J. Thompson, senior manager, road safety, and

Ms S. Cockfield, manager, road safety, Transport Accident Commission.

The CHAIR — Thank you for being here this afternoon to assist the Road Safety Committee's inquiry into federal-state road funding arrangements. As you can see, Hansard is recording the proceedings. We will provide you with a copy of the transcript as soon as we can so that you can correct it as appropriate. You are protected by parliamentary privilege. That privilege is not afforded to you if you make comments outside this hearing.

Can you please proceed with your presentation? Please state your full name and the name of the organisation you represent, and we will ask questions as we go.

Mr THOMPSON — My name is John Thompson. I am the senior manager of road safety and marketing at the TAC. Thank you for allowing us to make a presentation to this committee. I do not think we will take up a great deal of your time. The TAC is not directly involved in federal funding arrangements for road infrastructure but we have a significant investment in road infrastructure in Victoria. Between now and 2017 we will be spending about \$684 million as part of the SRIP program. The first of our SRIP programs, SRIP 1, is \$140 million. We have achieved a benefit to cost ratio of about 2 to 3, which equates to a 21 per cent reduction in fatal crashes in Victoria, so with that funding we are effectively retrofitting safety.

In this submission, on which Sam Cockfield, the manager of road safety at the TAC, will answer most of your questions, we state that we believe there is the ability to deliver road infrastructure with the joint pillars of mobility and safety built in without the need for retrofitting safety at a later stage through the application of safe system design up front. Some of the programs the TAC has funded over the last five or six years have included the installation of hard shoulders, sealed shoulders, wire rope barriers and tactile line markings. If we look just at the road trauma over the past weekend where we had three run-off-road crashes and three young males lost their lives on Victoria's roads, it shows that we are still having crashes and we are still seeing fatalities on high-speed roads where a majority of federal funding would be targeted. We think there are some opportunities to address that, and I am going to hand over to Sam Cockfield to take you through the submission.

Ms COCKFIELD — I am Samantha Cockfield, manager, road safety, TAC. I also thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I will run through the submission. I will not go through word by word but please feel free to interrupt or if you want anything clarified.

As John said, our submission is relatively brief because our role is primarily, I suppose, retrofitting safety to Victorian roads, and we have a relatively long history in that area, almost back to the start of the TAC about 20 years ago. We have had a lot of success, hence our continued investment. That investment comes not just because of our desire to see reductions in trauma but also because we have, under the Transport Accident Act, a legislative responsibility to reduce the cost and extent of injury on Victoria's roads and we take that quite seriously.

Again as John said, we are not making any statements in regard to preferred methods of funding or the relationship between the federal government and the state governments because we have, to be fair, very little experience; we are a state body. We really do not make any statements in regard to efficiency and the economic value of roads either because, again, that is not where our experience lies. Rather, we are focusing on the strong link we believe can be achieved through having both mobility and safety built in, so I suppose this submission is really about how we can achieve both mobility and safety and have it as a single objective.

The background to our submission is really the underlying safe system that underpins both the Victorian road safety strategy, which is Arrive Alive, the current Arrive Alive strategy going from 2008 to 2017, and also the strategy we believe that the federal government is currently planning for, which will be rolled out next year. We also believe the safe system will underpin that new strategy, so in that sense I think what we have to say carries across to this federal-state funding situation.

I know you have heard about the safe system before — I have certainly been involved in other submissions where we have talked about it — but I suppose from our perspective it is a very sustainable approach. It is a way of thinking about road safety which takes into account the road users' fallibility: that we make mistakes, that everybody can err and because of this crashes will continue to occur, that we should always place the health and wellbeing of our community uppermost, that other societal benefits such as economic savings should not be put first, and that of course as humans we have certain thresholds for energy transfer and if they are exceeded, we know the likely outcome is death and injury. We also know that we can design systems to account for all this knowledge and design a system to be safe for everyone.

In relation to this, understanding the safe system and that this is the underpinning of both the Victorian strategy and the upcoming national strategy, we believe we can actually achieve national objectives of mobility and safety by assigning funds — these are national funds but I suppose also state funds — that are contingent upon the integration of the safe system thinking into the design and implementation process.

We believe this principle of mobility with safety should apply generally, not just to federal-state funding arrangements but also to our own state arrangements, so both state funding and I suppose funding for local roads as well. In relation to this particular inquiry, it is the role that federal funding can play.

We are going to confine our attention to one key area, and it is an area that we have had some experience in, as John has alluded to. Our previous safer road infrastructure program, SRIP, and its predecessors — black spot programs — spent a lot of time and money on high-speed roads, so our freeways and highways, particularly rural and regional roads. We had some rather large investments in terms of tactile edge lining — putting in edge lining and rumble strips, which are particularly effective in terms of fatigue and when people lose concentration — and, alongside that, shoulder sealing.

We know those treatments are incredibly effective in assisting people who run off the road, and we know run-off-road crashes are a major cause of death, injury and serious injury in Victoria, but as John pointed out, we are still having crashes on those high-speed roads, even roads that have been retrofitted with those types of technologies. We believe we need to go the next step, and we are quite aware of some developments, particularly internationally, that can assist.

In late 2008 I was fortunate enough to join the safer roads infrastructure study tour, which primarily looked at roads and retrospectively fitting safety to roads in northern Europe. Particularly in Europe we saw some very interesting treatments, but the one I will talk about here refers to high-speed roads, and as John said, the reason we are talking about high-speed roads is they are often the ones that are earmarked for federal funding in terms of state-federal relations.

One of the treatments we saw on those high-speed roads was what I suppose is colloquially known as the two-plus-one treatment, primarily done with some type of flexible barrier, normally wire rope barrier. It has proved highly effective in terms of crash reductions, particularly in Sweden, and we are seeing somewhere between a 70 and 90 per cent reduction not just in crashes but in deaths on those roads. In fact it is not the crashes that are reduced, it is the injuries that are reduced. Part of the success of this type of treatment is that it does not necessarily reduce crashes, it actually reduces impact by absorbing energy. When we go back to the safe system, one of the known factors is that the human body can only take so much energy absorption, and it is a system that works within those safe system principles.

I will say a little bit about that treatment. I am not sure whether you are aware of the treatment. Potentially you are, but I will speak a little about it. It is taking often single-lane highways and freeways and converting them to having two lanes of traffic operating in one direction and another lane operating in the other direction with a divider of some sort — a barrier system — and in most cases that we saw in Europe it was actually a wire rope barrier down the middle. That is the safety aspect. It is a wire rope barrier in the middle and on the sides protecting you from crossover crashes and crashing into particularly trees but also other solid objects.

The mobility aspect is that the configuration is usually reversed after a few kilometres, so you change the two lanes on the opposite side of the road so that both sides get mobility.

The CHAIR — We physically saw that in Sweden when we were there, the two-plus-one system. I did ask a question, though, when we were fortunate enough to get a bus tour. Some lanes were so narrow that if that bus were, for example, to break down — —

Mr KOCH — It could not get off the road.

The CHAIR — Would traffic verge around it, because it is basically blocked in by both wires?

Ms COCKFIELD — In fact we were in a minibus and the police pulled us over because we had tried the rumble strip, which is why we got pulled over. They wanted to know why we were driving on the rumble strip. That is exactly what did happen, that we were blocking the lane of traffic. We asked the engineers from the Swedish road administration about the dangers, more for breakdown et cetera, and they said their experience to

date had been that there had not been any major issues with that. I totally understand what the issue is. We were stopped on the two-lane side, so it was not such an issue. I think probably the major focus is actually being able to get the vehicle off, and they certainly did have opportunities to get the vehicle off not too far down the road, so that seemed to be reasonable.

Mr KOCH — Have you also studied the system where there is no wire barrier down the centre? I speak of McLaren Vale in South Australia where in the morning you have two lanes in and in the afternoon you have two lanes out, not completely different to what goes on in Queens Road here as a traffic management thing — for moving heavy, congested amounts of traffic either way at particular times of the day — instead of what you are talking about now, which has its own limitations?

Ms COCKFIELD — You are right, it does have some limitations. Probably the uniqueness of the centre barrier is that it stops head-on collisions, and where I have seen the configuration that you are talking about is usually on lower speed roads. If you have two vehicles approaching each other at 100 kilometres an hour, approaching very fast, you have got very little reaction time, and if a crash occurs, it is usually fatal, because even with a bit of time to slow down, the energy between two cars approaching and hitting at 80 kilometres an hour each is a 160-kilometre impact speed.

Mr KOCH — At 60 it is 120. That is going on in Queens Road every day, and McLaren Vale is 160, but I think the history might speak for itself.

Ms COCKFIELD — I have not personally investigated that, but in terms of safe system design I would say it does not meet the requirements of being able to separate people from being involved in those types of crashes. A safe system would say that we do not want people having to crash in the case of making a mistake; say, if we moved over by mistake. We are talking about people pretty much obeying the law but making mistakes which we do not want to end up in fatalities or very serious injuries. If you make a mistake in those scenarios and you get into a head-on, there is very little chance to go back. I understand that and the history may be such, but we know that when the mistake happens there is very little opportunity.

Mr KOCH — That is a given, but how many times the mistake happens is the bit that is not appreciated.

Ms COCKFIELD — I cannot comment.

Mr KOCH — The reality is we have X amount of dollars for safety, and I think we have to use it as wisely as we can. I do not stand back from that and I do not think my colleagues on the committee would.

The other thing I would raise with you is in relation to barriers and wire ropes on the side of the road. Why is further consideration not given to removing the problem instead of installing all these barriers?

Ms COCKFIELD — The trees?

Mr KOCH — Exactly. If you went on a drive — and I am sure you probably have in your Rolls — on the Henty Highway from between the Glenelg River at Glenisla and even up to Wonwondah, it is kilometre after kilometre of barrier with trees sitting that far behind the barrier. If a truck hits the barrier hard enough, it is going to hit the tree anyway.

Ms COCKFIELD — It probably would be best to speak to VicRoads about the design philosophy behind wire rope barriers. Just in the case of a couple — —

Mr KOCH — The TAC is an advocate for them.

Ms COCKFIELD — Yes, that is true.

Mr KOCH — And that is why I posed the question.

Ms COCKFIELD — I am happy to answer. It is just that there are some issues in terms of why you might use wire rope barriers instead of clear zones. The TAC did fund a lot of clearing work in the early days before the wire rope barrier was available, but some of the barriers that I am aware of are around both heritage and environmental reasons, and they have been big barriers to us. In some of our earlier work it took a long time — if at all — until we were able to do some of that clearing work.

I think the other thing is that the wire rope barrier, in terms of keeping people on the road and absorbing energy in terms of how far you can actually run off the road, has its benefits too. My understanding is that in a lot of cases it is quite cost effective. One of the reasons we are talking about this is if the opportunities are duplication or, I suppose, large-scale, wide funding of roads, this is a cost-effective option where you can get both mobility and safety. I suppose this is the exact understanding we have.

We know that duplication in most cases where you have complete separation of traffic would be the ideal, but often we do not have that opportunity or it comes at a very high cost, which means it is often put off for a long period of time. What we are saying is that where there are opportunities to do this two plus one, it can be done cost effectively.

The CHAIR — I suppose the TAC's reputation as an organisation precedes it, because a number of different organisations have spoken very highly of the work the TAC is doing. There was a previous presentation basically giving a 5-star rating to the driver — trying to rate the driver in terms of stars. I suppose the TAC does that through some of the very powerful commercials that you present to the wider Victorian community. They certainly hit home. They are very powerful and send a very strong message about driver behaviour. There is also the star rating of cars through your website www.howsafeisyourcar.com.au. Obviously you do some very good work in that people are now starting to go to that site before they purchase a car, which means that they try to purchase a vehicle within their budget that has the most amount of stars according to your website. You are certainly doing a lot of good work in that area both with stars for behaviour and stars for vehicles.

Obviously you have a lot of oomph behind you, and rightly so with the work that you do and the millions of dollars that you invest into road safety, and so you would make a very good advocate to present to federal government why Victoria needs its share of road funding. Can you just briefly explain to us how the TAC is approaching that?

Ms COCKFIELD — We do not have a seat at the federal table, so in that sense we actually have not made any representation to the federal government. I say that VicRoads is the lead agency in terms of the Arrive Alive strategy in Victoria and we confer with VicRoads in terms of their work nationally, and they are certainly aware of our views and our interests, but in terms of actual direct presentations, particularly in relation to road funding, we do not have that.

The CHAIR — But, as the TAC is through road safety, you would pick up on certain roads. As the previous witness pointed out to us, apparently we do not have a 5-star-rated road in Victoria, and so you would know what parts of Victoria and what roads the TAC may be concerned with.

Ms COCKFIELD — To be absolutely honest, I am not aware of what a 5-star-rated road would be, and I say that on the basis that I am quite aware of AusRAP and the international program, IRAP, and have had discussions with people around that. When I say I am not aware of what a 5-star-rated road would be, I know what that program would call a 5-star-rated road but from my perspective most of our work is done through the agency of VicRoads in terms of road funding.

As I said, I suppose we do rely on VicRoads as our agent and as our voice in Victoria more generally in relation to national arrangements. I think they actually do that reasonably well. My understanding is that they do it quite well. Our primary interest has been to keep Victoria's roads safe.

Having said that, some of the roads that we have done work on are nationally funded roads, and we would actually like not to have to do that work but this is where the work with VicRoads and our relationship with VicRoads works quite well, and they understand what our views are on that in terms of creating the safest mode of network that we can have in Victoria.

Mr THOMPSON — The key issue is getting the safe system design principles built in up front instead of having the TAC retrofit safety at \$100 million a year, which is our contribution currently.

Mr KOCH — Would it be correct to say that you have the belief that our state roads are better than other state roads and federally? Where does Victoria sit in the hierarchy of safer roads nationally?

Ms COCKFIELD — I would be very hard pressed to answer that. I have never seen any direct comparisons.

Mr THOMPSON — We could not answer that question.

Mr KOCH — Accident history, loss of life, injury, all those sorts of statistics?

Ms COCKFIELD — Generally in terms of how well we are doing, in terms of our road toll and road trauma, you would say that the fact that we have been, I suppose, retrospectively fitting safety to our roads has had a result.

The CHAIR — You are very modest; you should just to blow your own trumpet.

Ms COCKFIELD — We do believe it has been one of the results of continued investment, but it is the same in terms of investment in public education and vehicle safety. We have had a strong history in all those areas, both the TAC and the state. We can probably take credit as a state for a lot of things, particularly in the vehicle safety area right at the moment.

Mr THOMPSON — Yes.

Ms COCKFIELD — But directly in relation to how much better are our roads generally, I would not know. The thing I could come in on is that we are reasonably fortunate in comparison to some other states in the length of the road network we have to look after if you compare us to, say, the Northern Territory or Western Australia. Often when I speak to them about the type and the amount of road they have to look after, it is extensive.

The CHAIR — Is there anything further to add?

Ms COCKFIELD — One issue that we wanted to cover was, as I said, design principles that meet a safe system design and safe system philosophy. The other issue that the TAC has been involved in, and I will blow our trumpet a little bit here, is intelligent transport systems and the development of intelligent transport systems.

You have probably heard us speaking at the TAC previously about our ISA systems — speed adaptation devices that have been designed to assist the driver to know what speed limit they are in and advise them if they do actually exceed the speed limit. One of the limiting factors for us in terms of promoting those sorts of devices in Victoria has been the lack of a very accurate digital electronic speed map.

This has just been recently completed by VicRoads. The TAC did fund that map via the satellite infrastructure program at a cost of around \$2.6 million. We have worked very hard with VicRoads to get that done in a timely way, and its advent is the start of intelligent transport for Victoria.

What I do know from our involvement in that is that for intelligent transport to be truly successful, it needs to be integrated across Australia, because when Victorian drivers go interstate, and they do often, into New South Wales and South Australia particularly, we want them and their ISA or whatever systems they happen to have to be able to be used and to keep them safe. And vice versa — we want people coming to our state to be able to be kept safe by our technologies and our data systems.

There is quite a large opportunity for the federal government, partially through its funding arrangements with the states, to ensure that digital or speed limit maps keep up to date, because one of the keys to them being used and successfully used is that the speed limits they are displaying are correct, because the user will actually stop using them if they are not correct, but also to create the networks for future intelligent transport systems to be built.

Really what we are talking about here is technologies where information can be transferred from vehicle to vehicle and from the roadside to vehicles. There are so many opportunities, particularly in the road safety field where emergencies on side-of-road et cetera can easily be relayed through to emergency dispatch centres, where we become aware of crashes much earlier and the exact locations so that emergency services can get to them, people can be warned about dangerous or known black spots such as railway level crossings et cetera, and there are also a lot of mobility benefits to these types of systems as well.

The key to these systems being developed and integrated well is actually taking a national approach, and I think it really needs to be taken fairly early. From the TAC's way of thinking, one of the ways that can be done is through these federal-state funding arrangements to make sure, for example, in the first instance, that, as part of

the funding arrangements, when you get to build a new piece of road you make sure that all the speed limits, the GPS settings, are integrated into your speed maps.

We think that ITS has really got a lot in terms of both safety and mobility in future and we really can be leaders in Victoria, but to be leaders we need to work together with other jurisdictions and believe that the federal government could pave the way for that to occur.

In conclusion, I suppose we would say that we believe there are huge opportunities to create a safer road system, but not forgetting mobility; that certainly safety and mobility are not diametrically opposed; and that funding arrangements can certainly leverage that safety and mobility in terms of being designed for a safe system approach. What we really think is not taking an opportunity to undertake a review of the way we fund and what we are trying to achieve is really doing a disservice, not only to Victorians but to all Australians.

Mr LEANE — On the ITS, you mentioned the possibility of vehicle-to-vehicle communication. What sort of information would they be communicating?

Ms COCKFIELD — One of the reasons I say that federal guidance is really required here is that the issue of exactly what sort of information should be transferred from one vehicle to another is incredibly important around privacy et cetera. As to the sort of information, in terms of safety the work I have seen done in the US and modelled in Europe, for example, has been intersection work, so that one vehicle can detect that there is a vehicle approaching on the other side of an intersection, so you just get warned, 'There is a vehicle approaching. Enter with caution'. It is just knowledge that the vehicle is there.

Other information that can be picked up from the roadside is what speed a vehicle is travelling at and what the opposing vehicle is travelling at, making sure that the approach speeds are safe for any potential interaction. The other thing that can happen in vehicle-to-vehicle communication — and we know this in terms of the Western Australian work with their ISA devices — is updating speed limit maps. If you are in a very remote rural area where building telecommunication towers is expensive, you can actually use vehicle-to-vehicle to transfer data just about speed limits.

It has quite a lot of potential in terms of the type of information it can transfer. It is probably a little bit endless really. The thing is that we have not started to really think about it a lot, because we do not have the base infrastructure. As I said, Victoria has really lead the way in that the detail of this map that we have got now in Victoria is, as I understand it, probably one of only two or three in the world. We are up there.

The CHAIR — I could see the technology of ISA being used like we have alcohol interlocks at the moment for people with drink-driving convictions. Obviously there are some people out there who persist in speeding — recidivist speeders. I would imagine that the infrastructure that is needed to accommodate the ISA would have to be a priority, wouldn't it?

Mr THOMPSON — There is a trial currently under way with repeat speeders which we have been involved in.

Ms COCKFIELD — I just want to make sure I understood the question. Were you asking in relation to —

The CHAIR — Intelligent speed adaptation.

Ms COCKFIELD — And using it as a trial?

The CHAIR — And the infrastructure that is required.

Ms COCKFIELD — Yes, sorry. I was not really sure whether you are talking about the data transfer there, because currently that data has to be downloaded manually. I was not sure whether you were asking whether it could be downloaded electronically, which is probably an opportunity in the future.

But you are right; that is currently being given consideration. In fact Minister Pallas announced about three weeks ago — at the start of January — that VicRoads is currently developing a trial with ISA technology. It had been planned but it was contingent on that speed limit database, because, again, you cannot really put people on a speed-interlock-type device unless you have got very accurate speed limits on your map.

That trial will not limit people, as I understand it — it will be an advisory device. The ISA device that we have been trialling at TAC is advisory, and I understand that the device that they have gone out to tender on is also advisory. The whole point is to see if behavioural change is an outcome of having that type of device in your car.

Mr THOMPSON — No matter which approach you take — whether it be an advisory or a speed-limiting device — without the \$2.6 million that has been invested by the TAC to develop the mapping these systems cannot be implemented. When we change road infrastructure moving forward we need to plan for keeping this database up to date, and that is an ongoing cost. We can develop those sorts of technologies and they can be implemented reasonably easily, but we need to have the information.

Some of the vehicle-to-vehicle technologies particularly assist with some of our more vulnerable road users, such as motorcycles. Communication vehicle-to-vehicle between cars and motorcycles could be particularly helpful with ITS, as well as level crossings and the like.

Ms COCKFIELD — This is similar to road-to-vehicle communication with vulnerable road users, being motorcyclists, around curve diameters and road alignment. For both heavy vehicles and powered two-wheelers that is the sort of information that can be relayed to them, basically saying, ‘There is a tight curve coming up ahead; you really need to slow down’. There are important types of information that can be relayed through those types of devices.

Mr THOMPSON — We are heading to a period in the future — I do not know how far in the future — when we will not be controlling the vehicle. This is part of the first stage of it.

The CHAIR — Regarding that important technological infrastructure — in terms of roadside infrastructure — that is needed, I would assume that if it was done during the upgrading of those roads, it would cost a lot less.

Ms COCKFIELD — I think it is important to do it as you are upgrading, as you are changing speed limits, but it is not just the cost — because I do not think the cost is huge — it is really to make sure that it actually gets done. Your funding is not just tied to the fact that you actually upgrade the road but also that before you sign off on the job you also sign off to say that the speed limit map has been updated.

Mr KOCH — It has got to be current.

Ms COCKFIELD — Yes, that is exactly right.

The CHAIR — Do you then, as the TAC, feed that information to VicRoads or whoever the authority is?

Ms COCKFIELD — No. One of the reasons that the TAC works so strongly with VicRoads is that really in Victoria the only organisation that is more placed to do that is VicRoads, because they look after the setting of speed limits and the upgrading and updating of speed limits, so VicRoads will do that. I know that they have every intention of doing that. But I suppose, as we said previously, one of the factors that will actually make the system work, not only for Victorians but nationally, is that we have consistency and that this continues across Australia, so that wherever Victorians travel or whenever interstate people come to visit us in Victoria they have got consistency and they can rely on those databases to give them accurate information.

Mr LEANE — The advisory system that is being trialled, is that a system that triggers some audible alarm if you go over the limit?

Mr THOMPSON — We have trialled the SafeCar. Sam can talk about it more than I, but I certainly had one of the earlier versions in my car for about 18 months. It was a sound-only device with a reader that told you the appropriate speed. It displayed where you would maybe have a mobile phone or a GPS system.

Mr LEANE — It would tell you that you were in a 60-kilometre-per-hour speed limit zone — you would see that displayed — and if you went to 61 or 62, it would alert you?

Mr THOMPSON — It alerts you.

Mr LEANE — That is fantastic. I am sure a big percentage of motorists would use it. I mean, it would cut down on speeding fines.

Mr THOMPSON — I think it is fantastic technology. As I said, I had it in my vehicle for about 18 months and it is sensational technology.

Mr KOCH — Did it change your driving behaviour?

Mr THOMPSON — My driving behaviour is very good.

Mr KOCH — Everyone can have slip-ups.

Mr THOMPSON — Everyone can have slip-ups; that is correct. And sometimes we all hear about, 'I was just going a few kilometres over and I got a speeding ticket'. I think it is one of those technologies that can help you with that sort of situation where you are creeping over and on some occasions where you do not know what the speed limit is, because sometimes it is difficult to determine what the speed limit is just by looking at the conditions. I feel for the Victorian and Australian road-using community when that occurs. I think this technology has got great application. And the SafeCar version where we had the actual speed control — —

Ms COCKFIELD — Just on that, most of these technologies that can intervene are actually silent unless you break the law, basically. So John's experience and my own experience is that you very rarely see that system come into play. Usually it will be something like you are on cruise control on the Geelong Road and you go down a slight downward gradient for maybe 3 to 5 seconds and you get up to about 103, 104 and the system intervenes to say, 'You've gone off speed'. It is exactly the sort of situation where you might not notice because you are on cruise control.

My understanding is that the system that John just described is what will be trialled in Victoria. But the TAC, through our SafeCar projects, has actually trialled other forms of that device. One of the forms was with haptic feedback. What that meant was that not only did you get the visual and audio warning but the accelerator would push back on you. You could push through it if you felt unsafe for some reason but it basically would not allow you to exceed that threshold speed limit, if you were in a 60 zone, of about 62, 63. I drove that car quite a bit and found it quite effective. The systems do have the ability to completely interlock — that means you cannot travel faster than the speed limit. That type of technology is available, for example, on work sites. My understanding is that a number of worksites in Victoria have that technology working very effectively, where OH and S considerations — —

Mr LEANE — We saw that on forklifts.

Ms COCKFIELD — Yes.

Mr THOMPSON — That is the company that built it for us.

Ms COCKFIELD — Yes.

Mr LEANE — Yes, we went out and saw that. It was good.

Ms COCKFIELD — We know it certainly has those applications, but again proving how accurate that map is will be key to that.

Mr TILLEY — I am trying to be fair here. One of the things the previous witness talked about was the rates and charges that apply to various road users, specifically truck drivers, for example, and motorcyclists here who are unfortunately overrepresented in the number of fatalities on our roads when you consider the size of the user group. In fairness, when we challenge the federal government for further road funding, we need to be fair and considerate in applying those rates and charges. Do you have any position or policy on that arrangement?

I will try to unbundle this a bit. This comes from the previous witness, and I am trying to work through it myself and have a better understanding. He said that with the planning and funding arrangements we have — and we are talking about the integration of all the different types of road users we have — disproportionately we have different groups that have little empires and have different positions themselves in relation to who has the bigger part of the pie on the road use and things like that. They all start flogging each other, so to speak. The rates that

we apply, the charges that we apply to these road user groups when we discuss funding arrangements, how much are we asking — —

The CHAIR — Are you talking about registration fees at different — —

Mr TILLEY — Registration of them, yes. I mean, obviously with motorcycles we have a number of registered motorcycles on Victorian roads.

The CHAIR — Whether they should be more or less?

Mr TILLEY — Should they be more or less?

Mr THOMPSON — What sort of fee structure do we pay in terms of premium or registration?

Mr TILLEY — It probably takes it right across the board, the whole.

Mr THOMPSON — I suppose we really cannot speak on registrations; we will leave that to VicRoads. But in terms of premium costs, you are absolutely right. Motorcyclists are such a small percentage of the road-using public — they are less than 3 per cent of the vehicle fleet and they travel less than 1 per cent of the kilometres travelled on Victorian roads — but they are about 15 to 16 per cent of our fatalities and about 25 per cent of TAC's serious hospitalised claims come from motorcyclists. That is millions and millions of dollars. In terms of the premium setting that we have, I think we have a system in place at the moment that is fair. They are certainly subsidised by the car-using community; there is no doubt about that. They pay a small levy for motorcycle riding for one motorcycle, I believe, if they have multiple motorcycles registered.

Ms COCKFIELD — Yes, a safety levy.

Mr THOMPSON — And we have to understand, too, that organisations like the Transport Accident Commission or VicRoads or the police deal and interact with the motorcycling community, and I am a motorcycle rider.

Mr TILLEY — For the record, so am I.

Mr THOMPSON — From a transport footing we look at motorcycles like they are a transport system, yet the majority of motorcyclists use our transport system — that is, Victoria's roads — for recreation. Nearly 70 per cent of the motorcyclists — and we have surveyed them; we survey them every week — —

The CHAIR — *Wild Hogs.*

Mr THOMPSON — No, nearly 70 per cent of registered motorcycle riders in this state use their bikes for recreation; about 50 per cent of that is on our roads and 20 per cent is off-road. With some of our approaches to motorcycles and motorcycling there is a clash, there is a conflict of interest there. We want them to use the system for transport in a safe and reasonable fashion. They are out there for maybe the thrill of riding their bike and maybe that is not consistent with the transport system we are trying to maintain.

Mr TILLEY — It is a difficult one, isn't it?

Mr THOMPSON — It is a very difficult one. We do not want customers; at the end of the day the TAC wants less customers. In fact our charter is to put the place out of business. That is our ambition.

Mr TILLEY — I suppose in the absence of Victoria Police making a submission, on our roads when we see a fatality somewhere in the state Victoria Police usually has to, within a 24-hour period, give some sort of summary or make some recommendations for some engineering works that may fix that particular section of road very quickly, and quite often we do see that. Is there any way we could assist, in the absence of Victoria Police making that submission, which could well have been valuable to this reference in that regard?

Mr THOMPSON — I am not sure. Do you have a view on that?

Ms COCKFIELD — This is in terms of early intervention with roads?

Mr TILLEY — Yes.

Ms COCKFIELD — I think in terms of that early intervention, police are best placed in terms of immediate recommendations. VicRoads also usually attend scenes of fairly serious collisions and serious-injury crashes fairly early and are obviously very well placed not only in terms of knowing the road but also knowing the suite of treatments, both temporary and longer term, that can assist. With the system in place I am not aware, in terms of having looked at these sorts of schemes across the world really, of anything that is better in the short term. Longer term there may be some different solutions in terms of multidisciplinary approaches to looking at crash scenes and how we can retrospectively fit safety. But I think in terms of that immediate response we probably have a system that works quite well.

Having said that, ITS again can really assist, because in the future we are likely to be able to know at exactly what speed the car was travelling because it will have been tracked the whole way along a road. We will know exactly what happened and we will be able to make a diagnosis and provide a treatment within an hour or two. You could have experts in Melbourne knowing exactly what has happened on a road in far northern Victoria, hence this being so important. But if we are talking about the immediate future I am not aware of anything that would assist in that regard.

Mr TILLEY — State or federal?

Ms COCKFIELD — No.

Mr LANGDON — I have one question, Chair. In your submission you commented that almost \$700 million of your funds go into — —

Ms COCKFIELD — Safer Roads.

Mr LANGDON — Safer Roads over a 10-year period et cetera. In other states are TACs or the equivalent of TACs doing the same sort of thing, or is Victoria miles ahead at that level?

Ms COCKFIELD — My understanding in terms of, say, Safer Roads, or what used to be called a black spot program, is the program that we have in Victoria is actually the largest in the world. Certainly I am not aware, in any other jurisdictions in Australia or in New Zealand, of where third-party schemes such as our own contribute large amounts of funding. But we are fairly unique in that the TAC is a monopoly insurer, so we have a total vested interest in making our roads safer. Because of that we also have total control of the funds, so obviously the benefits come back to us. Obviously we also have, under the Transport Accident Act, the legislative requirement. So we are a little bit differently set up to other funds.

Can I say, though, that some of the jurisdictions that I know are looking at similar approaches and have actually picked up on similar approaches — say, Vancouver, British Columbia. In fact the roads up to Whistler have benefited from this type of treatment in relation to these Olympic Games.

The CHAIR — Wow!

Ms COCKFIELD — And in South Africa they are also introducing a fairly similar scheme to that of the Transport Accident Commission. One of the commitments they are going to be making is also for roads funding, as I understand it. So it is not any longer unique that it happens, but certainly the quantum of what is happening in Victoria is quite unique.

Mr LANGDON — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Excellent. Thank you very much for your assistance today.

Committee adjourned.