

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Melbourne — 18 October 2011

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Witness

Professor M. Wigan, professorial fellow and partner, Volvo centre of excellence in the governance and management of urban transport, University of Melbourne, and principal, Oxford Systematics Australia.

The CHAIR — We will resume proceedings. On behalf of the Victorian Parliament Road Safety Committee, I welcome Professor Marcus Wigan to give evidence before the committee. The evidence that is being given is being recorded by Hansard and has the benefit of parliamentary privilege. Statements made outside here do not have that benefit. You will get a copy of your transcript and please amend any typographical errors and return it to us in due course.

We are grateful for the public interest in the inquiry and for the contributions that have been made. Mobile phones should not be on and no other recording should be made of proceedings at the moment. I invite Professor Wigan to speak to his presentation, following which we will have some questions. I note also that we are running a little bit behind time moving into lunch. I propose to work forward as I want to allow Professor Wigan the optimum time that has been allocated for his benefit to present to the committee. It is over to you.

Prof. WIGAN — Thank you. I am privileged to be able to present towards you. I have worked in this area for a very long time.

The CHAIR — Just one other issue, too — I want to make sure everyone can hear at the back. If you cannot, please put up your hand and let me know, and we will arrange to bring some chairs a little bit further forward.

Prof. WIGAN — Thank you for the reminder, Mr Chairman. I shall speak more loudly and clearly.

The CHAIR — That would be helpful.

Prof. WIGAN — First, I had better make some introductory comments. I have been quite depressed to see how many of the VicRoads materials have not been tabled to you. I have a small number of those here. They are all germane to issues you have heard about. I am happy to discuss them offline, but I wanted to introduce to the record that there are many reports you have not yet sighted, including ones I cannot comment on — motorcycle users of lanes and bus lanes, and other materials. I would hope that the committee will get access to a broader range of materials and will ask for more. This is quite an important point — non-transparency is a core function of my submission.

The CHAIR — For the record, can you read on to the record the names of the reports so that we can seek copies of them?

Prof. WIGAN — They are on my updated submission with web links, so I think that is read in.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Prof. WIGAN — There are a series of motorcycle traffic engineering notes, which were designed for 100 people, and many of them were distributed to nearly 1000 of their users wanting them and motorcyclists listing them. There is a motorcycles and transport report that produced evidence from new data from vehicle counts that have never been analysed by VicRoads, or around about 2 per cent, rather than 1 per cent of traffic. There is the actual basis of consultation of the front numberplate work. There is the actual work done on identifying what electronic methods may be done. The irony is that most of these reports are 7 to 10 years old, and few of these that have been circulated widely by VicRoads are readily available on the website. I will speak to the one done in 2004. I think it is a pity that when VicRoads does good things somehow it has a way of shooting itself in the foot, and I am so sorry. I would like to help them with this.

If I may introduce the documents, the area that I have discussed is essentially governance of the area. To introduce that we need a context and to have a context it is best to look at the future. So much of safety is a discussion about the past and hand wringing. So little is about setting forward directions and scenarios that we may then address and look at the trade-offs and benefits therefrom.

In a report I did in 2004 for VicRoads, which was not adopted by them, I wrote three scenarios, one of which was ‘The future is about now’. You will find that seven years ago seems to be exactly what has happened. So you barely need to read it, but you will later because I think you will find it is the only proactive document you will get with a holistic view. I am sad to say this; perhaps you might have a look at the scenarios report, which will give you the fuller context — the positive measures taken to change fleets taken by governments, positive changes made that have safety effects and a few other things.

If we look at 'Mobility matches safety', which is the second scenario, this is a series of situations that would be desirable to reach. Processes for effective shared use of dedicated lanes have been worked out and motorcycles, bicycles and scooters are able to benefit as a result. Inter-vehicle warning systems have been improved. Poor rates of driver identification and response to motorcycles with right of way have been corrected. Legal structures have been put in place to enforce liabilities on the larger vehicles to take due care up and down the hierarchy. Filtering through traffic when stationary is being clearly permitted and there is an offence of inconsiderate driving put in place to handle any inappropriate use of this filtering right. Intelligent transport systems on all types of vehicles have reduced door-opening events and other forms of inter-vehicle collisions. The usage levels of motorcycles and scooters is 15 to 25 per cent of traffic in many busy urban locations, and all parties ride in a manner visibly more aware of these vehicles in the traffic stream. This is a situation which would demonstrate balance and attention to mobility, access and coherence in the vehicles, some of which evade regulation because they are under 200 watts of power, for example. Those anomalies are growing. We need to address them positively. There is a positive future.

'Safety overcomes mobility' is my scenario no. 3. It is the one to which we are headed, I think, unless positive actions are taken to envisage a constructive future. I think a constructive future with lower conflict, lower information hiding and lower agendas of demonising one group versus another in the community would help road safety, the credibility of government, the compliance on the road, the work of the police and the safety outcomes.

I am afraid you will find a number of them in here that are exactly what has been happening. No effort has been made to integrate motorcycles into other forms of on and off-road vehicle intelligent transport systems. As a result, motorcycles are no longer able to access key parts of the road system where they were in place. This is already happening in the UK. I had to inform the VicRoads Executive Director of some of the recent developments for detection, which are relevant. For example, the chips that support radar detection have recently dropped in price by a factor of 10. Robert Bosch is one of the people now paying attention. This will mean that 70 to 100-metre detection could be fitted to cars at an economic price for the first time. There is absolutely no attention being paid to what radar cross-section comprises bicycles, pedestrians or motorcycles in order to ensure that the specifications for compliance and standards have been developed. There is a proactive type of view — 'Let us use the advantages we are getting, please'.

I have put some comments on the scenario latterly because it is easier to take them out of context. Scenario analysis is incredibly valuable in envisioning for any organisation, but you need to recognise that these are not futures; these are linked sets of events and outcomes that give you a perspective you can communicate. There are aspects of them that may look overrated. I have commented on these to ensure they are not taken out of context and are treated in the positive way they are intended. May I say, my conclusion seven years later is that envisioning a constructed and balanced future draws attention to what is needed to achieve it. This would not be a surprise to anybody. Where is it in the massively funded safety community except in negative aspects? On balance it is sad. But correct, I hope this committee will at least consider taking this on board.

I am actually recommending that the TAC act be reconsidered. That is because the TAC, as a reasonably efficient body with a somewhat conflicted act dealing with common law and actuarial responsibilities, has had its extension to off-road, or even on-road, changed by the redefinition of what a road is, which has had some negative effects, I might add, which I will not say here on record, but I would like it on record that I have commented on it. People are having to take off-road requirement materials off off-road bikes to make them safe for off-road use. I think this is an anomaly and something that needs a little more attention. But the important fact is that TAC now is liable for these accidents that occur off-road. It is not off-road any more; it is a new definition of 'road'.

They are responsible for vehicle interactions with pedestrians and bicycles. The way in which they handle different modes is not quite the same. So this creep is not one I am sorry about; what I am sorry about is that it has not been rationalised. Discussions about distributional equity and rate of return confuse the issue, and even TAC will tell you that at once — and indeed did.

But we do need to look at a broader base. Moving outside the context of safety into dealing with disadvantage, damage and injury in the community, the new movements to deal with a disability levy, if we look at the New Zealand approach, we suddenly find that the insurance base, were we to consider TAC in the more integrated framework of that type, would increase substantially, the unit cost would be reduced and the target improved.

What I am asking is not: decrease the levy, increase this. I am saying: I want a future that is positive, for once. Let us look at the successes of TAC, and the failures, in the context of the accident commission in New Zealand — who talked to me last night, I might add, just to make sure that I knew theirs was not perfect — and let us see if we can get a better TAC act. I think this would be to the benefit of all, reducing costs and increasing credibility and increasing transparency every single bit we need.

Let me move to the governance issue. We have three things we must have: communications, competence and trust. If we have those, systems work. The world is littered with IT systems that fail because one of those elements has failed — and they are brilliant systems. The world is full of lousy IT systems, where those three criteria are met and people make them work. Why do we not translate this to our own domain here?

So: transparency, the bases for information. I have already listed a few reports that are not widely available, that have been moved off the VicRoads website. There are many other reports that have not appeared. That is one point. There is no trusted centre where independence can be assured without the conflicted requirements of a large group dependent on huge government funds to survive — such as MUARC, which does some splendid work — but of course they are constrained by what their clients allow them to publish. This has a severe effect on the credibility of the reports produced, and it is so sad. I spend so much time defending the good work whilst trying not to comment on those issues. I am not sure I shall restrict my comments, if asked, however, because I have done it for 35 years and it is probably time to say so in clear terms.

We also need better community engagement. The community has become a lot more educated in 30 years. I could, with a rope 300 yards long, swing it around my head and outpoint VicRoads, Attorney-General's, the police and three other departments with the private competencies within that range in Eaglemont. I am not the only professor with an international reputation within the 300 metres. We have not moved from the patronising approach, which is one that you have heard echoed a few times, to one where there is genuine sharing.

May I move to VMAC. I had to resign from VMAC because I was the only person appointed as an independent researcher — and I stuck to that. Being the only expert who could do some of the work, I had to do it, so I overdelivered massively in order to ensure there was no conflict of interest, then formally raised the issue of probity. I was met with a partner and a senior associate of VicRoads law firm, who assured the VicRoads representative that VicRoads was in no danger and seemed a little surprised to find it was about protecting the members. Why did I do it? Because to consult, under the conditions of even VMAC, was basically something you really could not do, and under the new terms of the MAG cannot be done. If you read the terms of reference, which you should do, you will see that the consultation aspect has basically been obviated. Even membership is at the pleasure and whim of not the Governor in Council, is it — it is Gary Liddle, the executive of VicRoads. How much unwelcome advice or unwelcome commentary is going to survive in that environment for long? I say this sadly, because VicRoads is one of the better departments in this state.

We need better governance, we need greater confidence in the community. I am just a rider; I am not even on MAG or anything. I think you will find, if you check my website and my international reputation — including a few of the brands up there, including Imperial College and shortly UC Berkeley — that some people respect it. I do not suggest I am perfect. In fact, I make many, many errors. But I learn faster than most, because I admit them quicker. This is not a characteristic of government, and so the learning process is slower.

Those have highlighted the key points that I wanted to raise. I have not covered intelligent transport systems and many of the other areas — helmets, where I have headed it; I can tell you a lot about helmets, how they work; and protective clothing — because I think it is so important for this committee to take a positive view of the future, to take an envisaging that puts things in context and thereby enables the targets. Sometimes one feels one has a bullet hole in one's back when one is riding around. The targets can be collaborators. You might be surprised to hear that motorcyclists are vitally interested in their own safety.

There is more than one set of agendas running now. Monitoring motorcyclists has been conflated with the bikie gangs, which is a truly horrendous problem, and one which cannot be minimised; it is very serious now the Mexicans have become part it. But this stereotyping means that the four Es — enforcement, engineering, encouragement and education — and the fifth, evaluation —

The CHAIR — What was the third one, please?

Prof. WIGAN — Encouragement, which is what we did for bicycles. I spent 10 years doing this for bicycles. Motorcyclists are simply the disadvantaged group I am working with now. That is it. And freight before that. We do not do that. Why not? It has garnered great support from the community and the communities and the targets.

I do not want to be negative about anybody or anything, because it is so easy to do. I think I will have to comment on what I said on 3AW this morning, that the figures quoted by the police appear to have no resemblance to the figures I got from the root source when I was analysing front numberplates, so I would like to see them. I also made a point that you should be aware of: electronic identification is a subject I have written a report on for VicRoads. I will give you a copy of it; it is seven years old, but still most of it is correct, apart from the costs and sensitivities. It would have a great effect on recovering lost bicycles and lots of other things, but there is a huge price in community trust in surveillance and privacy.

I would refer you to the Queensland inquiry on automatic numberplate recognition. I was very impressed with the final report, where it said the privacy audit had not been done; people were not being told every single numberplate that went past was being recorded, not just trucks, but that privacy audits were needed — the transparency again.

Of course, CrimTrac — which you are well aware of; I am sure you have been briefed on CrimTrac — are currently pressing to have all the ANPR data collected, plus all of the biometric data that is taken off the licence plates integrated into their system.

The CHAIR — What is the acronym ANPR?

Prof. WIGAN — Automatic Numberplate Recognition, a standard technique in many areas, but one that should be used with care because it brings in antiterrorist and surveillance approaches instead of civil law. You have to prove not, rather than prove do. It is just a difference in philosophy that is applied in different domains. Persons of interest may be a broad group and flagged. ANPR is now used routinely in vehicles targeting persons of interest to be picked up. It is a proactive move; it has great benefits. But is the community aware of it, have we negotiated that price? Some of the front numberplate discussions are very unbalanced. I recommended that we not use all our credibility with our community to put physical front numberplates on, for the reasons I canvassed, if you so desire, but they were pretty persuasive, because we would lose the credibility of the user community we would have to carry with us when electronic identification became the norm.

If you think this is about to happen, it has already happened. Every smart phone that you carry provides the data that is now wanted if it has location-based services enabled. One of my other lives where I spend a lot more time than on motorcycles is on privacy surveillance and consulting with governments in as constructive a manner as possible on issues like multiple identities. Consider that you are your vehicle; you are where you have been. You have to prove that you are not a vehicle. These things have not been worked through in the community, and there are now overlapping road safety initiatives. They need to be worked through. They can be done positively if framed positively.

I return to my key point: governance is the issue; transparency is important; engagement of what is now an expert community is a key. I hope I have hit all the points that you might otherwise want to pick up from there, but I am sure I have not, so I trust that has given a context that perhaps is less negative than what I see when reading my text I might have communicated.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Professor Wigan. We will proceed to run a series of questions by you, and I will commence. Your submission refers to a lack of focus by government agencies in evaluating all the factors that apply to a transport mode, not just safety. What are some of the factors that could be evaluated, and how would that affect current road safety strategies?

Prof. WIGAN — Early in the 1980s, when people did not account for the road system they were responsible for, I analysed what the value was of flows of resources across roads. I managed by making heroic assumptions to get safety up to 9 per cent. The other 91 per cent were vehicle costs, of course, maintenance — all the other things. However, once a budget has been set for safety, those questions are not pertinent and the constituencies and bureaucracies concerned pay no attention to them.

Let us consider travel time. Travel time on trucks is exactly what drives a lot of our road investment. Travel time matters. Accessibility is crucial, and in the 35 years I have been pushing for gender equity and accessibility measures we now have a recognition that accessibility is not just the disabled; it is whether or not you have access to a mode. Try telling a nurse who is in a dangerous area in the northern suburbs or in Footscray that they cannot use a scooter to get there and have to use a taxi, which is not necessarily a great deal safer. Comparative advantage is not taken into account. Environmental impacts are taken into account. There is quite a long list. I would be happy to discuss that with you in a technical discussion. I am writing a paper for it by invitation for the transport economics bureau on some of these failures. They are not failures by intent —

The CHAIR — When is your paper due? When will it be published?

Prof. WIGAN — I may not have time to write it, because I am doing one on gender equity, but I am hoping to do it by December or I will miss the agenda.

The CHAIR — But if you have completed a paper on that or just some thoughts we would be grateful to receive a copy of that in due course.

Prof. WIGAN — It is actually saying that transport is about modes, about people, about accessibility and about activities. If we only deal with safety, then that is how we allocate a budget, but then we do not pay attention to the others. You will actually get safety people saying, ‘Why should we count out small savings in travel time?’. Ask a truckie with 40 drops a day. These are the sorts of missing perspectives for which they are not charged; it is not a negative. It is our job in a broader sense to envision the context within which such appraisals are undertaken. For example, you have heard comments about, ‘We only react to total numbers politically, but yes, the rates are improving a lot’. I wonder if the party concerned, who I think was David Shelton, quite realises how that goes with the community who has been producing those better rates. There is a problem in communication here, and performance measures. Those are some of the evaluation criteria.

The CHAIR — Thank you; I appreciate that. We would be grateful to receive, as I said, some further information as and when it is available.

Mr LANGUILLER — Thank you, Professor, and thank you for your submissions and your contribution. You suggest that information related to safety, motorcycle movement and transport should be made freely available. Is information not made available, and if so, why do you think that is?

Prof. WIGAN — There are several practical reasons. One practical reason is that safety is an extremely important and politically heavily weighted issue in the community. We all know — and if we do not, I am sure if we thought, we would — that identified lives are valued many hundreds of times more than a statistical life, and every time a press report comes out this point is rammed home to us, both politically and practically. Those are some of the starting points of the debate. Would you like me to continue?

Mr LANGUILLER — Yes, if you could, please.

Prof. WIGAN — Could you restate the part of the question you would like most of my answer to focus on?

Mr LANGUILLER — You suggest that information is not freely available, it is not made available; why do you think that is and who should make it available —

Prof. WIGAN — The reason why is because first of all the culture does not really think it is needed. Remember that once a budget is set for safety, they are charged with different criteria. So it is not seen that this is an important document. Or it is seen that it is politically sensitive — of course it is; that is why the community would like it — or it is in preparation or trying to second guess — whatever. It basically betokens a lack of trust in the community. And it is even apparent within VMAC. None of us with professional backgrounds were asked to act on steering committees for VMAC projects. We were asked to be consulted every now and then, but not to be on steering committees. That is an illustration of how the information hiding works. I am aware of a number of reports that have never surfaced. Those are some. I think it is mainly cultural.

Mr TILLEY — On that question, if I can, you talked about reasons why your reports are not being tabled, whether by culture or political sensitivity or being in preparation; are there any particular reports that you can tell this committee about that directly relate to that?

Prof. WIGAN — Let us take the lanes reports on which I cannot comment because I was a consultant on it and I undertook not to — VicRoads would not allow me to, parliamentary privilege or not. I respect undertakings that I make.

Mr TILLEY — Are there any others?

Prof. WIGAN — Yes. Again, in many of these I am conflicted. What I would do is ask you to get VicRoads to give you greater lists, but I think I can do it by code, if you like. At the first meeting of VMAC, as the independent member, the research member — and the only one — I said, ‘Are we going to get tabled copies of all the reports and the initial project specifications for the four agencies for which VMAC was chargeable for communication?’. This never occurred. You can imagine the list now. This just did not happen. Again, it is cultural. When professionals are asked to work within a safety domain, they do, and they do a job with great commitment, enthusiasm and real care. But the context is only part of the game. That is the problem.

Mr TILLEY — Just moving on a little bit from that last part of the discussion, Professor, particularly in relation to motorcycle safety, where there are claims it has always been addressed by safety professionals, no doubt you would consider yourself one of those professionals?

Prof. WIGAN — No, I have done some work in the area. Other people tell me that has earned me some respect.

Mr TILLEY — All right. So you do not class yourself as that. Is it as an engineer that you would principally say your field of expertise lies? For the committee, could you go into some detail about your experience and your expertise?

Prof. WIGAN — I have a doctorate in physics from Oxford. I designed mechanical engineering products as part of that. I have international publications ranging from safety, post-modern views of governance, freight systems, policy analyses for developing and community, consultation processes and a lot of modelling work in many areas, including one on the kinematics of motorcycles. One of my students has just found a way of determining whether motorcyclist behaviours in traffic are risky or not. It looks like they are using much bigger margins than is apparent, and this is a very elegant piece of work. There are about 700 publications out there of mine, and I cannot recall them all.

I was the first person to look at a family expenditure survey so that transport could be put into a person context. That work was used as the justification for the second round by the ABS, which I was pleased to hear. I ended up on one of its advisory committees as a result. I did some of the first work on time use with Duncan Ironmonger, then my supervisor in the study, and he is working on that. That direction has now become part of the supplementary statements for national accounts. I have worked on road maintenance analysis and how to deal with uncertainties in that area, estimating uncertain data and bringing together multiple sources of data so it is useful.

Mr TILLEY — I just wanted to know your credentials.

Prof. WIGAN — I do not really want to go through it all.

Mr TILLEY — I know, and you have had quite lengthy experience.

Prof. WIGAN — Yes.

Mr TILLEY — It would be fair to say that in any jurisdiction, whether it be a court jurisdiction, you would be regarded as an expert authority on being able to detail the matters we are discussing here today. For the committee’s sake I just want to get your expertise known to the committee.

Prof. WIGAN — No expert will say they are.

Mr TILLEY — Okay, so you either are or are not an expert?

Prof. WIGAN — No expert will say they are; it is only something than can be awarded by others.

Mr TILLEY — Professor, in your submission you talked about and earlier this morning you discussed a requirement and a need for a more integrated approach. In that regard can you detail for the committee what you mean specifically by an integrated approach to lead to reductions in the number of motorcyclists being killed or seriously injured in Victoria?

Prof. WIGAN — I always love the conditionals put on the end; it is such an elegant way of framing the question.

Mr TILLEY — What do you mean by the conditionals?

Prof. WIGAN — Reducing the numbers. As I said in an article I published in Britain, increasing injuries in bicycles is a measure of success if you triple their utilisation, so I cannot answer the second half of the question but I can answer the first half.

Mr TILLEY — Sure.

Prof. WIGAN — To the first half I say: let us invest to do so. Example no. 1. The Transport Accident Commission has a contract with VicRoads for it to fund projects that VicRoads wants to do that have a cost-benefit ratio of 3 or above. Most of the black spot treatments — the reports on some of which I still await, after formal requests for them, I might add, after many years — were less than 3. Consequently VicRoads has correctly said that these projects, although they are now routine, would not be undertaken by VicRoads as part of its normal process, if its normal process was through TAC funding. It is only half the answer. There is one simple within-safety-domain comment: you might care to ask which elements they put in the cost-benefit ratios and how they value life and safety.

Let us consider the TAC's responsibilities. They are responsible for compensation. It is very well known — I have published on this for 35 years — that identified lives or areas where responsibility is deemed or perceived to be with the party who is hurt lead to different values being used in terms of revealed behaviour and where the money goes and public response. This is not new; I give credit to Sam Bodily, who stated it most clearly early. The TAC has confirmed it. Their job is not to improve road safety; it is to reduce the costs of safety incidents. They have two tasks: task no. 1, to avoid accidents; task no. 2, to reduce the severity — which is why serious injuries are so important to them.

We can start to talk about: how do people make choices to make a trip? You are sitting there and you have a bicycle, you have an electric scooter — you are a little old, and it is a mobility scooter — you have a motorcycle and you have a BMW. Which do you use for that trip? That is our opportunity to get the appropriate vehicle used at the appropriate time for the appropriate mode. This is not theory; people do it every day. After a decade nobody has looked at that at all. We have done a little work in the UK on mode choice, but here is a direct way of saying that people make these choices every day, every trip. We do not even look at what the answers are, yet there are highly developed, sophisticated techniques for doing so. I have just given you a couple of examples; because you have limited time, I thought two would do. One is within domain and one is without domain.

The CHAIR — In relation to your submission, we were discussing front numberplates and coming up with physical reasons why front numberplates should not be fitted to motorcycles. Can you detail for us why one road user group should or should not have front recognition over another group?

Prof. WIGAN — Have you been to Canada? Not even the buses have them. Front numberplates were originally removed because they were a safety risk because of the mode in which they were mounted, and this spread across the world. You have to go to a couple of tiny states to find anybody who requires front numberplates anymore. There is no technical requirement for it at all. One of those states is Singapore, which has highly sophisticated ways of collecting information, so when I talked to them — and you will find the comments in here — it was basically for the convenience of drivers beside the motorcycle. It really was pretty weak; it was not really needed.

There is very little reason for front numberplate detection. There is a lot of good reason for rear numberplate detection, but even the so-called offence of rear numberplate obscuring is subject to the subjective interpretation of the police that at 25 metres it is obscured. This includes light road dirt. Having been actually given a penalty for such an event from a policeman from over 120 metres away when he moved after me and forced me to clear the numberplate with my hand rather than be able to go and get a picture taken of it, I have a somewhat personal

view of this which has taken some years to get moderated. There is still no clarification of what 'obscured numberplate' means, yet it is freely quoted. We need to specify numerical connections, the legal requirements for fitment, the visibility requirements, the detection criteria and the ANPR area. We can do it better electronically.

Mr LANGUILLER — If I may, given your knowledge and experience, do speed cameras help a front or rear identification?

Prof. WIGAN — It is purely an operational issue.

Mr LANGUILLER — Do you know?

Prof. WIGAN — Yes. Some of them are front, some of them are rear, but in Western Australia they decided to put more of the Movida types, which actually have both front and rear camera triggering. It is an operational decision.

The CHAIR — We are moving strongly into time at the moment, so we will get some brief responses just so that we have got the record used for the widest purpose.

Mr PERERA — The credibility of the safety levy has been questioned. Could you provide us with examples of the governance issues associated with the use of the safety levy?

Prof. WIGAN — Historically, it is one thing, but I prefer to look forward. There is now a governance structure where I noticed that David Shelton actually stated that the levy had been a problem for VicRoads — in other words, some advice had come in that they had to take on board that they were not happy with in the safety area and had to look further. It has been deleted from the advisory group, as I understand, but being one of the two or three people not invited to rejoin it I am unable to comment with surety, but I can say unofficially that I have seen the terms of reference and if I was to retain my integrity as an independent I would be unable to sign them. That is a very powerful governance commentary. I can give you exact examples and history, but this would be identifiable and vilify, probably correctly, some members of staff of VicRoads, and I wish to look forward and not back.

Mr ELSBURY — Thank you very much for your presentation today. Considering your experience with having been on VMAC in the past, what are your views on the suggestion made by one individual who provided a submission to the committee that a preferable model of VMAC would be a council appointed by a minister or Governor in Council, and would that remedy the governance issues you have raised in relation to VMAC?

Prof. WIGAN — That is interesting. I do not think it is an alternative; that is why I am pleased to be able to present to you, because I can answer constructively. The new structure of MAG reflects what VicRoads does with many other special-interest groups, but other special-interest groups have got much higher levels of expertise on a broader front within VicRoads. I think we need a complementary organisation with independence, with information holding, and that is what I recommended, because VicRoads needs that input advice. They have in the terms of reference, remember, defined it as 'safety', not as 'motorcycles as transport'. They did not even mention motorcycles in the safety and transport report, which is their own report, and for safety purposes it is very important that they do that, because it is such an important and highly visible community interest and it needs that.

They also need it on transport. I started a series of governance forums at GAMUT at Melbourne University to enable the impossible to sit on the same framework, and we did. I can give you the documents on that. We got Ken Davidson and Jim Betts on the same platform as Max Lay and myself, talking about what we should do, not what we did do. Those are mechanisms, and we tested that. The Volvo Research and Education Foundation was very happy with the outcomes. Those are constructive answers saying, 'Please do not dump on MAG'. VicRoads needs it, but we do need a separate type of process.

Mr ELSBURY — Your submission also refers to VMAC as a 'troubled body'. Could you expand on that statement and include any examples?

Prof. WIGAN — Again, I prefer to look forward, because when one makes negative comments they are tracked back to people who may have learnt and have changed their views, or organisations that have altered. I am interested in getting things to work better.

I am going to give you the positive versions. When one director came in, who happened to be an ex-student of mine, he said, 'What's this rabble?', and I said, 'Give them time'. Four meetings later, he insisted that motorcycles appear as a transport mode in the metropolitan strategy. This was not a safety view or the unwritten law, as it were, for VicRoads for many years. It is the first time they have formally recognised motorcycles as a transport mode at all.

How could you avoid having a troubled body when you have people from motorcycling or their interests or expertise represented solely by a safety stance? It could hardly help but be troubled. Is that not a constructive comment? If it was not, it would be useless. It is just that it was not transparent.

The CHAIR — Professor Wigan, thank you for your contribution this afternoon, and thank you for the scholarship which you have brought to the debate on road safety in Victoria and your keen-minded insights, which will be of benefit to the range of stakeholders in the field. You will get a copy of your transcript to make what amendments are deemed appropriate in relation to any typographical errors, and we would be pleased to receive it in due course. Again, on behalf of my colleagues, I thank you for your time.

Witness withdrew.