TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE OF THE 49TH PARLIAMENT

REPORT FROM A SYMPOSIUM ON INTERNATIONALVISITORS AND ROAD SAFETY IN AUSTRALIA BRISBANE, 14 MAY 1999

REPORT NO. 31

1. BACKGROUND

The Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee co-hosted a symposium at Parliament House, Brisbane, on 14 May 1999 with the Queensland University of Technology's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety (CARRS-Q). The symposium examined the road safety problems experienced by overseas visitors in Australia.

Around the world, road accidents are the leading cause of death from injuries among tourists. Australia receives approximately 4 million international visitors annually. The majority of these visitors are here as tourists. All international visitors are road users and many are drivers. 20% of all visitors rent a motor vehicle and 43% drive a private or company car during their stay.

Parliamentary symposiums provide an ideal forum to deal with issues such as this which straddle a number of government portfolios and interest groups in the private sector. Linking the symposium to a meeting of parliamentary road safety committees, transport agencies and ministerial advisers on 13 May 1999 helped to place the issue on the agenda of key Australasian road safety organisations.

The symposium was the first national forum held in Australia and, we believe, in the world that specifically examined the road safety issues facing international visitors. The transcript of discussions during the symposium is published on the committee's website at:

http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/committees/ travel.htm

The papers from the symposium are contained in a separate report[1] prepared by committee and CARRS-Q staff and published by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

2. OBJECTIVES

The Travelsafe Committee co-hosted the symposium as part of its obligation to monitor, investigate and report to Parliament on issues affecting road safety, the causes of road crashes, and measures aimed at reducing deaths, injuries and economic costs to the community. Through the symposium, the committee sought to:

- Gather information about road safety problems involving international visitors in Australia, current efforts to improve their safety and opportunities for collaboration and improvement in the future; and
- Provide a forum for interested groups to discuss the issues and possible solutions in readiness for the influx of international visitors to the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

3. DELEGATES

The committee and CARRS-Q invited government and industry representatives from the areas of transport, tourism, law, insurance and medicine, parliamentary road safety committees ane ministerial advisory bodies to participate in the symposium.

4. SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM 14 MAY 1999

WELCOME & OVERVIEW	Mrs Nita Cunningham MLA Chairman, Travelsafe Committee
SESSION 1	Session Chair – Mr Bruce Wilson Director-General, Queensland Transport
KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1	**A National Road Safety Overview** Mr Bill Ellis First Assistant Secretary Federal Office of Road Safety
KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2	**Insurance Perspectives** Mr David Matcham, Director, Lumley General Insurance Limited
SESSION 2	Session Chair – Mr David Williams Director-General, Qld. Dept of Tourism, Sport and Racing
KEYNOTE ADDRESS 3	**Legal Perspectives** Mr Robert Davis Australian Plaintiff Lawyers' Association
KEYNOTE ADDRESS 4	A **National Tourism Overview** Mr Robert Crick, Head of Division - Sport & Tourism, Department of Industry, Science & Resources (Commonwealth)
SESSION 3	Session Chair – Professor Mary Sheehan Director, CARRS-Q
	Summary of the main points, actions to follow and critical time-frames
CLOSING REMARKS	Mr Graham Healy MLA Deputy Chairman, Travelsafe Committee

The Honourable Jim Elder MLA, Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, opened the symposium. A panel of road safety and tourism experts led discussions of the issues during the final session.

[1] Wilks,J., Watson,B. and Hansen, R. (eds.) (1999). *International Visitors and Road Safety in Australia: A Status report.* Canberra: Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

5. THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

It is difficult to gauge the true extent of the road safety problems involving international visitors in Australia because the only comprehensive data available is for driver fatalities. Little is known about the crash involvement of international visitors as passengers, pedestrians and cyclists as drivers in non-fatal crashes.

International visitors make up a relatively small part of the national road toll. According to the Federal Office of Road Safety (FORS)[2], there were 45 road fatalities in 1994 identified as international tourists. However, the proportion of fatalities varies significantly across jurisdictions. In 1998, for example, 1.0 percent of road fatalities in New South Wales were international visitors while in the Northern Territory they comprised 9.5 percent of fatalities and were involved in 14 percent of all fatal crashes.

Queensland data is available for fatal and non-fatal crashes involving international visitors as drivers. In the five year period 1993-1997, 43 international visitor drivers were killed, 584 were hospitalised, 874 required medical treatment and 472 received minor injuries in road accidents in Queensland.

FORS estimates that international drivers have a significantly higher risk of dying in road crashes compared to local resident drivers. FORS calculates that international drivers in Australia have a rate of death in road accidents of 22 per 100,000 population. This is more than twice the rate for resident Australians of 10.8 per 100,000 population.

Based on projected growth in visitations to Australia due to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the number of international visitors killed in crashes is expected to increase to 70 per year. Further increases are likely with the growth in outback tourism.

6. PRIORITY ISSUES

Delegates at the symposium voted unanimously that dealing with the problems experienced by international visitors on Australian roads is a national problem, and the responsibility of governments and industry. The following sections discuss priority actions that are required.

5.1 Seat belts

Seat belts have been one of the most successful road safety countermeasures. Over half of international tourist drivers (52 percent) and passengers (55 percent) killed in crashes in Australia during 1990, 1992 and 1994 weren't wearing seat belt. These non-wearing rates are significantly higher than non-wearing rates of 38 percent for resident driver and passenger fatalities during the same period. This difference is likely to account for the higher crash fatality risks for international visitors compared to residents in Australia discussed above[3].

A campaign to lift seat belt wearing rates for international visitors is likely to be effective. While it would require governments to initiate a national education campaign, there is scope for the tourism industry and other groups to reinforce the message at little or no cost. These measures could include "buckle up" dashboard stickers in rental vehicles and reminders from bus drivers to their passengers to buckle up to avoid a fine[4].

This approach may also help to establish partnerships between road safety and tourism groups to support further interventions.

When seat belt wearing was discussed at the symposium, a number of delegates suggested that taxi drivers might be the first Australian drivers international visitors encounter during their visit, and that governments should withdraw the exemption granted to taxi drivers from laws requiring the wearing of seat belts[5].

5.2 Fatigue

Fatigue is thought to be a major problem for international drivers, particularly in the Northern Territory. To some extent, fatigue crashes are likely to be caused by international tourist drivers having inadequate information about driving distances, the risks of driving while tired and the location of rest stops. The Northern Territory and South Australia have developed road maps showing approximate driving distances, travel times between destinations and warnings about driver fatigue. There have also been efforts by roads authorities to improve road signage for tourists and to develop thematic tourist drives. These initiatives are to be encouraged and their effectiveness monitored.

5.3 Road safety information

All groups at the symposium acknowledged that international visitors need better information about driving safely in Australia. This included information about driving hazards, safe driving, road rules and enforcement.

Virtually all groups at the symposium and others such as local and regional tourism interests provide road safety information in some form. These include internet sites, brochures, maps and guidance on trip planning and vehicles.

There were two consistent messages about information during the symposium:

- the earlier it reaches the visitors the better - ideally before they leave their home countries so they can build their trip itineraries around a safe driving program; and
- all opportunities to provide information where it is likely to be read should be used.

A number of suggestions were made about how best to do this such as providing maps and brochures with visa documents[6], and supplying information indirectly through travel wholesalers. These options for the supply of information need to be examined in greater detail.

Another conclusion was the need to coordinate the information that is provided to ensure its consistency, accuracy and suitability for the intended audience. For example, the symposium was told that road signage provided by

[2] The Federal Office of Road Safety is now part of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

[3] Transcript: 53

[4] Transcript: 56

[5] Transcript:56,57

[6] Transcript: 46

governments to assist international tourists is inconsistent across states and territories[7].

From a legal perspective, information providers may be liable for information they provide that is only partly right. It is imperative that instructions and warnings are failsafe, complete and provided in different languages.

Given the large number of information providers and the need to ensure a consistent, accurate and appropriate message, it may be necessary for a coordinating group to assume overall responsibility for road safety information given to international visitors. Indeed, all visitors (international, interstate and intrastate) would benefit from better self-drive tourist information.

The extent to which international visitors are aware of road safety campaigns such as random breath testing is unclear[8]. It may be necessary to look at how well domestic education campaigns target international visitors.

Since the symposium, a consortium of transport departments, tourism operators and other stakeholders has developed a road safety video targeted at international visitors. The committee acknowledges this important development.

5.4 Crash statistics

There is limited information on the involvement of international visitors as road users in crashes. There are inconsistencies in how jurisdictions identify the involvement of international visitors in crashes using either drivers licence details or usual place of residence.

Accurately defining the problem is an important first step towards finding the right solution. Better data on crashes involving international visitors is essential to monitor and reduce the group's road crash risk, and to evaluate countermeasures. Once again, a consistent national approach is needed.

5.5 Enforcement

Speakers at the symposium highlighted problems with police enforcement of penalties for traffic offences committed by international visitors[9]. This is linked to the perception among some visitors that they can avoid prosecution for traffic offences because of their transience. The average stay for international tourists is only 28 days. This is too short for local agencies to extract penalties for traffic offences through normal processes.

Certainty of punishment is necessary for effective general deterrence strategies that underpin Australia's traffic enforcement system. The failure to ensure punishment for international visitors who commit traffic offences undermines the road safety benefits of our general deterrence strategies for these road users. Further investigation of systems used in other countries to ensure certainty of punishment for short stay visitors is warranted.

[7] Transcript: 47
[8] Transcript: 49
[9] Transcript:55

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee recommends that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads seek the support of transport ministers through the Australian Transport Council for a national strategy to enhance the road safety of international visitors to Australia.

The strategy should begin with a campaign to boost seat belt wearing rates among international visitors. The strategy should also seek to:

a) raise the awareness of international visitors of the vast driving distances in Australia and the dangers of driving while fatigued;

b) enhance the quality and availability of road safety information that is provided to international visitors;

c) enhance the quality of data collected about crashes involving international visitors; and

d) identify national research priorities concerning the road safety of international visitors.

Nita Cunningham MLA
Chairman
December 1999

THE TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE

The Travelsafe Committee is a select committee of the Parliament responsible for investigating and reporting on road safety and public transport issues.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Mrs Nita Cunningham MLA, Chairman
  Member for Bundaberg
- Mr Howard Hobbs MLA, Deputy Chairman
  Member for Warrego
- Mr Graham Healy MLA,
  Member for Toowoomba North
- Ms Lindy Nelson-Carr MLA,
  Member for Mundingburra
- Mr Len Stephan MLA,
  Member for Gympie
- Mr Terry Sullivan MLA,
  Member for Chermside

CONTACTING THE COMMITTEE

Copies of this report and other Travelsafe Committee publications are available on the Internet via the Parliament's home page at:

http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/committees/ travel.htm

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Delegates at the Symposium on *International Visitors and Road Safety in Australia*, 14 May 1999

Mr Barry Aitken, Executive Officer, Road Safety Committee, Parliament of Victoria
Professor Richard Allsop, Professor of Transport Studies, University College of London UK
Ms Lesley Anderson, Commissioner, Motor Accident Insurance Commission, Qld
Mr Robin Anderson, Road Safety Manager, Dept. of Urban Services ACT
Professor Nell Arnold, School of International Business, QUT
Dr Paul Barnes, Manager, State Public Safety Unit, Qld Fire & Rescue Authority QLD
Mr Reg Barrett, Director, Land Transport & Safety Authority, NZ
Professor Nick Bellamy, Director, CONROD
Mr Paul Blake, Executive- Director Land Transport & Safety, Queensland Transport
Ms Jan Brimrose, Head, Tourism Development Task Force, Dept of State Development QLD
Ms Gillian Browne, Manager -Road Safety, Motor Accident Authority, NSW
Ms Wendy Bullock, Director (Community Programs and Information Branch), Queensland Transport
Dr John Carlyle, Medical Officer and Barrister at Law
Sergeant Graham Chamberlain, State Traffic Support Branch, Queensland Police Service
Mr Robert Crick, Head of Division - Sport & Tourism, Department of Industry, Science & Resources, Canberra
Ms Amanda Crocker, Principal Policy Advisor, Health Outcomes Unit Queensland Health
Mr David Cunningham MP, Deputy Chairman, Road Safety Committee, Parliament of Victoria
Mrs Nita Cunningham MLA, Chairman, Travelsafe Committee, Legislative Assembly, Qld
Mr Jeremy Davey, Deputy Director, CARRS-Q, QUT
Mr Robert Davis, President (Qld), Australian Plaintiff Lawyers Association
Mr Harry Duynhoven MP , Deputy Chair, Transport and Environment Committee, NZ Parliament
Mr Mark Elford, Regional Manager, Northern & Western Region, Transport SA
Mr Bill Ellis, First Asst Secretary, Federal Office of Road Safety
Mr Ian Faulks, Director, Staysafe Committee NSW Parliament
Mr Gary Fites, General Manager (External Relations) RACQ
Ms Nadia Fletcher, Project Officer, Roads & Traffic Authority NSW
Ms Daniel Geschwind, Queensland Manager, Tourism Council of Australia
Mr Tilak Goonasekera, Manager, Road Reserve Management, Department of Main Roads QLD
Mr Stephen Gregg, CEO, Tourism Queensland
Dr Robert Grenfell, Travel Medicine Physician
Mr Peter Hagan, Asst Secretary, Road Safety & Legislation, Department of Transport & Works NT
Mr John Hand, Deputy Commissioner, Motor Accident Insurance Commission QLD
Supt Mike Hannigan, State Traffic Support Branch, Qld Police Service
Mr Rob Hansen, Research Director, Travelsafe Committee, QLD Parliament
Mr Lloyd Hastings, Managing Director, Red Back Rentals Pty Ltd Surfers Paradise
Mr Graham Healy MLA, Member, Travelsafe Committee, Qld Parliament
Dr Michael Henderson, Chairman, Australian Advisory Committee on Road Trauma
Mr Paul Highams, Hughes Limousines, Brisbane
Mr Allan Honor, Assist. Commissioner - Metropolitan North Region, QLD Police Service
Assistant Commissioner Bob Howie, Southern Operations, SA Police
Adjunct Professor Graham Hughes, Chair, CONROD
Ms Karen Jacobson, Office of National Tourism, Canberra
Mr Graham Jones,Manager (QLD),Insurance Council of Australia
Mr Graham Jones,Chair Rental Vehicles Committee, MTAQ

Dr Bob Kass, CEO, Travellers Medical & Vaccination Centre, Adelaide
Mr Robert Kelly Managing Director Rentsure Pty Ltd
Mr Gordon Lee, Principal Engineer, Transport Technology Division, Department of Main Roads QLD
Dr Mark Leggett, Director (Strategy), Land Transport & Safety, Queensland Transport
Mr Russel Luhrs, Principal Program Officer -Urban Amenity, Brisbane City Council
Ms Nina Lyhne, A/g Executive Director, Office of Road Safety, Dept of Transport WA
Mrs Emma Macken General Manager -Marketing & Business Services, Worldcare PTY Ltd Assistance Services, Brisbane
Mr David Matcham Deputy - Managing Director, Lumley General Insurance Limited
Dr Daniel Mayhew, Senior Vice-President, Traffic Injury Research, Canada
Mr Rob McBride, Snr Research Officer, Travelsafe Committee, QLD Parliament
Mr Brian Measey, Board Commissioner, NT Tourist Commission
Dr Deborah Mills, Medical Director, Travellers' Medical & Vaccination Centre, Brisbane
Mr Brian Milnes, Sales Manager, Britz Campervan Rentals & Tours Pty Ltd
Mr Stewart Moore, Managing-Director , National Centre for Tourism Research Pty Ltd (Brisbane)
Ms Lori Mooren General-Manager - Road Safety, NSW Roads & Traffic Authority
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Ms Lindy Nelson-Carr MLA, Member, Travelsafe Committee, QLD Legislative Assembly
Ms Danni Newmann, Manager, Government Contracts, Ansett Australia
Mr Dennis O'Leary, Federal Office of Road Safety
Ms Jane Olsen, Executive Assistant, Travelsafe Committee, QLD Parliament
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Mrs Pam Palmer, Research Officer, Road Safety & Legislation, Dept of Transport & Works NT
Mr Mark Peters, Deputy Director-General, Department of Tourism, Sport & Racing QLD
Hon Carolyn Pickles MLC, Deputy Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Transport Safety, SA Parliament
Ms Grace Portolesi, Research Officer to the Hon Carolyn Pickles MLC
Mr Bruce Prideaux, Lecturer in Transport & Tourism, Gatton Campus, University of QLD
Ms Kate Redford, CARRS-Q
Mr Byron Roberts, Director, Australian Federation of Travel Agents
Ms Kimberley Rogers, Snr Tourism Advisor, Tourism Qld
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Dr Jeff Wilks, Principal Research Fellow, CARRS-Q
Mr Bruce Wilson, Director-General, Queensland Transport
Supt Bob Wylie, Officer in Charge, Traffic Support Division, VIC Police

Notes: Members of the expert panel at the symposium are shown in bold.