TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES COMMITTEE

Members present:
Mr SR King MP (Chair)
Mr JN Costigan MP
Mr MJ McEachan MP
Mr R Molhoek MP
Mr LP Power MP
Mr RJ Pyne MP

Staff present:
Ms K McGuckin (Research Director)
Ms R Stacey (Principal Research Officer)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—EXAMINATION OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORT NO. 2 FOR 2015-16, ROAD SAFETY—TRAFFIC CAMERAS

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2016
Brisbane
Committee met at 9.47 am

CHAIR: Good morning all. I call this public briefing of the Transportation and Utilities Committee to order. Thank you for your interest and your attendance here today. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which our parliament stands. My name is Shane King and I am the member for Kallangur and chair of this committee. Mr Matt McEachan MP, the member for Redlands, is the deputy chair of the committee. The other committee members are: Mr Jason Costigan MP, the member for Whitsunday; Mr Rob Molhoek MP, the member for Southport; Mr Linus Power MP, the member for Logan; and Mr Rob Pyne MP, the member for Cairns.

The purpose of this public briefing today is to assist the committee in its examination of the Auditor-General’s report No 2. for 2015-16, Road Safety—traffic cameras. The report was referred to the committee on 13 October 2015 for examination and report. The committee has requested the briefing today by the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety—Queensland, CARRS-Q; the Department of Transport and Main Roads; and the Queensland Police Service to assist our understanding of the report’s findings.

This briefing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and is subject to the Legislative Assembly’s standing rules and orders. The committee will not require evidence to be given on oath, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. Hansard will record the proceedings and witnesses will be provided with a transcript. I therefore ask you to please identify yourselves when you first speak and to speak clearly and at a reasonable pace. I remind all of those attending the briefing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In that regard, I remind members of the public that, under standing orders, the public may be admitted to or excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee.

I also ask that if a question is taken on notice today by the Queensland University of Technology, the Department of Transport and Main Roads or the Queensland Police Service the information is provided to the committee by Friday, 4 March 2016. Before we commence, I ask that mobiles be turned off or switched to silent mode.

FLEITER, Dr Judy, Research Fellow, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety—Queensland, Queensland University of Technology

HAWORTH, Professor Narelle, Director, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety—Queensland, Queensland University of Technology

WATSON, Dr Angela, Research Associate/Research Methods Adviser, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety—Queensland, Queensland University of Technology

CHAIR: I welcome the representative from CARRS-Q, Professor Narelle Haworth, Dr Judy Fleiter and Dr Angela Watson. Would one of you like to commence your briefing, please?

Prof. Haworth: I would first like to introduce Dr Judy Fleiter. Judy’s research originally was in the area of speeding. So she is our main expert in the speeding area. Dr Angela Watson is also working in the area of evaluations. I think they are very well placed to be speaking to you today. Judy will make the presentation and if there are any questions that come up then Angela and I can assist in helping to answer those.

Dr Fleiter: Thank you very much, Narelle. Good morning. It is our pleasure to be here this morning to address the committee. I believe that you have in front of you a presentation that we prepared. We were originally planning to give a PowerPoint presentation. We are going to save you from that, but I would like to read through each of the slides and address them as I go. We were proposing that I would speak for about 15 minutes and then allow another 15 minutes roughly for questions, but if you have something that you would like to ask as I am speaking, please do.
You will see that the second slide is just the overview of what we are going to touch on today. We thought it would be useful, rather than address the report directly or any of the recommendations in the report directly, to take a one-step-back approach and talk about first principles—enforcement, the need to manage speeds and why that is important—and then talk about what it is we would hope to achieve from a research and a safety point of view by managing speeds. In touching on those issues, I will draw upon the principles outlined from the concept of deterrence theory. General and specific deterrence are mentioned in the report, so I will touch on both of those as we go through.

As a place to start, why do we use enforcement in road safety? This is just thinking about road safety in general. Enforcement helps change illegal behaviour by increasing the driving and riding public’s perception that they will get caught. If people value the concept of not being caught, not accumulating demerit points, not having to pay a monetary penalty and not losing their licence, then it is that motivation that we hope will have them comply with traffic regulations. Australia and other countries, but Australia in particular, has a strong track record in changing road user behaviour and accompanying attitudes by a combination of enforcement and education. It is important to make the point here that one or other of those by itself—so an enforcement-only approach or an education-only approach—is not likely to work anywhere near as effectively as the two components coupled together. Our experience shows us that enforcement can change behaviour first and then bring an attitude change sometime afterwards. There is some contention. Some people in the research literature will suggest that attitudes might change first and that leads to a behavioural change. I will go on to talk a little bit later about the example of drink-driving enforcement and community attitudes to that in Australia to make that point a little later.

Moving then to the next slide: why do we use enforcement to manage speeds? Managing speeds is critical to safe road use. The report outlines that managing speeds is a well-documented and sought-after aim. One of the things we find is that, unfortunately, the community does not necessarily have a good understanding of the role of speed in crashes. There is a vast body of literature that tells us that the travelling speed is critical to the outcome of the crash. To make that point, I quote a New Zealand road safety campaign to put it in very blunt terms: ‘the faster you go, the harder you hit’. That is perhaps more reasonably well understood by the community—drive or ride faster, hit harder, more damage to vehicle and self and others. But the concept of the role of speed in terms of the risk of crashing is not well understood, so there is a bit of a disconnect there about how critical speed is in the road safety outcome. Because there is that lack of understanding, we do not necessarily have a high level of public acceptance of the need to manage speed on the road.

One of the critical things that the behavioural and scientific literature tells us is that, as human beings, we are not terribly good at assessing risk. We can say that people can identify hazards on the road. In fact, a hazard perception test is something that has been implemented in novice driver training programs—the graduated driver licensing program, for example, that we have in Queensland—to try to help people recognise hazards on the road: ‘There is a cow about to cross’, ‘There is a kangaroo about to jump out’, ‘That car is about to pull out in front of me’. Hazards are somewhat different from risk.

There has been some work done by some colleagues of ours from New Zealand and others that have indicated that, shown a real road environment, people are not terribly good at recognising what the risks are on the road and roadside furniture and other things as well. Because we are not good at recognising risk, there is this thing called the illusion of control. I have noted that there on the slide—I believe that I’m a good driver and I believe that I can control a car at any speed. If that mystical crash that you talk about, officer, might happen to me, I believe that I would have the capability to control my vehicle when, in actual fact, that may not be true. Because we have that poor level of being able to assess risks, that calls into question some of the traditional measures that have been used to set speed limits. The setting of speed limits is a whole argument in itself that I will not go into today, but speed limits have traditionally been set at something called the 85th percentile, which is the proportion of 85 per cent of vehicles travelling at or below that particular speed. That is one of the indicators that has traditionally been used to set speed limits. If we are not good at assessing what is a safe level of speed to be travelling and our limits are somehow based on Joe Average’s travelling speed, then we have some problems there.

Moving to the next slide then, we felt that we would take a fairly basic approach and think about what it is that we want speed enforcement to achieve. We came up with three broad categories. One is to discourage people from doing it at all. Two is to punish those who do it in the hope that they will not again. Three is sanctions and related legislation that has the potential to create a moral imperative for people to comply with the law irrespective of whether there is punishment or not.
That brings me to the slide about deterrence theory. I would just like to touch on the key principles of deterrence theory. Deterring people relies on them believing and fearing that they will be caught by the police when they are performing the behaviour—in this case running a red light or speeding—and that they fear the consequences of that. If the consequences do not mean anything to them, why would they care? There are two primary things here. One is the perceived risk of apprehension: ‘Do I think when I drive home tonight that I will get caught if I speed?’ If I do not believe that to be so, perhaps I am more likely to. The second issue is about the threat of sanctions. It is about what the community perceives of the sanctions that they are likely to receive. Bear in mind that not everybody understands exactly what sanctions they will receive. When we ask people about how much a speeding ticket is or how many points they are likely to receive, they do not always know—perhaps because they have not been caught before, perhaps they have been caught before and they cannot remember, or perhaps the penalties have changed. We are relying on people to think that when they get caught they will definitely receive the penalty. That is referred to as perceived certainty of the punishment.

We want them also to think the penalty is harsh enough that it will change their behaviour and not let them speed again in future. The perceived swiftness of punishment refers to whether they think that penalty will come in a timely way—close enough to the behaviour that they then want to change and not do that again.

Just to reiterate, the next two slides highlight in a very basic way what general and specific deterrence are. When we talk about general deterrence, we want people to think they will not speed or they will not run a red light, in the case of the behaviours under question today, because they think they might get caught: ‘Anywhere at any time, I might get caught. Therefore, I will not do it.’ Specific deterrence, however, is different. It refers to people who have already been caught and penalised and therefore it will change their behaviour so that they will not do it again. It relies on them learning from past experience. I just make the point at the bottom of that slide that the principle of specific deterrence is not the same as site-specific enforcement. The report refers directly to cameras that are deployed in particular locations, and it is true that that is a site-specific effect perhaps of that camera, but that is not, strictly speaking, traditional deterrence. That is not what specific deterrence refers to. It refers to me having been caught, not liking the outcome, learning the lesson and not doing it again.

The next slide has some blue boxes and a red bucket on it, and I will not spend a lot of time on that. Professor Ross Homel is a man who has done a lot of work in deterrence in the field of criminology in Australia, and he first applied this to the concept of drink-driving. The red image in the middle is meant to refer to the group of people in our community who are deterred at any one time from speeding, and that fluctuates depending on a number of things. The boxes at the top refer to how you can increase the number of people who have decided that they are deterred and will not speed today. Seeing the police enforcing speed limits, seeing a speed camera on the side of the road, hearing about publicity or advertisements on television, or in fact having the radio station tell you where the speed camera locations are, is all likely to increase the idea that, ‘I might get caught, therefore I will slow down.’ The next one is knowing other people—family and friends, work colleagues—who have been caught. The other is having actually been caught yourself. We put the little green box there to denote that that is the specific deterrent effect.

Then Homel refers to this as the leaky bucket, because people can leak out of the bottom of the bucket, and you would become one of those people who have leaked out and therefore you are not deterred if you have not actually seen police enforcement—so perhaps you think they are not anymore, even though they might be—and you have actually had successful episodes yourself. That is, you have sped a lot in the last fortnight and nothing has come of it—you have not crashed and you have not been caught and you have not been ticketed. There are a number of factors at play that constantly influence how many people in our community might be deterred from speeding.

Just to summarise: speed enforcement seeks to discourage people from speeding. There is both general and specific deterrence at play there: to punish people who speed in the hope that they will not do it again—that is specific deterrence; and to create the moral imperative to not speed and obey the law. Both of the deterrence mechanisms are at play there.

I will touch now on the difference between overt and covert camera deployments and how we see that fitting into the program. From the overt speed camera perspective, drivers see the cameras operating, they see signage on the road to say that cameras are operating, and that aims to increase their general perception that, ‘Yes, I can be caught because I see it happening.’ Covert enforcement is equally as important. Cameras here are operating without signage. The drivers and riders are not aware that camera speed enforcement is happening, so that aims to increase the uncertainty of where
I might be able to be apprehended if I am speeding: ‘I know that they are out there somewhere but I cannot see them, so therefore maybe I will not speed.’ That links very closely to the concept of trying to enhance unpredictability. The report refers to the random scheduling that happens with the Queensland mobile speed camera program. That is very important to increase that perceived risk of apprehension: ‘I think I can get caught anywhere at any time.’ We see that as a very valuable component of the program, and that contributes to the general deterrent effect.

In terms of creating a moral imperative to not speed, I mentioned earlier that we have had some success in Australia in this area in the past and we know that sustained enforcement—not just a one-off campaign or a two-off campaign—well-resourced with a sustained education campaign, has helped change social attitudes and behaviours before. In my lifetime the change in community acceptance of drink-driving is a really good example where enforcement was very prominent, and I think we would argue that community attitudes maybe changed after behaviour started to change. I think we are at a point now where drink-driving is seen as largely socially unacceptable, so enforcement can assist with long-term behaviour change as well as long-term attitude change. Attitudes do take a long time to change, generally, so we need enforcement to change behaviour of people whose attitudes may not yet have changed.

Finally, I reiterate that managing speeds is critical to safe road use for everybody, and enforcement is needed because drivers and riders do not necessarily understand the level of risk that they place themselves at. Cameras are an efficient enforcement mechanism, and they are also able to divert speeding by increasing driver perceptions that they can be caught. We argue that cameras should be visible. Having said that, though, we also recognise the importance of covert enforcement and that they should be unpredictable so the driver will not know where they are. They should always detect offences in a way that enables me to be punished. One of the difficult things that can happen in terms of a behaviour change cycle is: ‘I did speed, I got caught, but then for some reason I did not receive that penalty.’ That is not necessarily going to reinforce that I did a bad thing; in fact, it may encourage me to do it again. Finally, be part of a system that delivers the punishment quickly or at least in a timely manner.

Mr COSTIGAN: I just want to congratulate Dr Fleiter on her presentation along with her colleagues, Professor Haworth and Dr Watson. Thank you for being here today.

Mr Chairman, I just want to place on record my acknowledgment of your leadership as an organisation in relation to road safety matters and commend you on the success of the Queensland Road Safety Awards. I note the presence of the QPS here today as well. It was great to have the awards in my hometown of Mackay, the city that I represent, last year. I also note the presence of the minister. I thought it was a very successful awards ceremony and I congratulate all involved. I think it was a very, very impressive presentation to our committee here this morning.

Mr PYNE: I think you really hit the nail on the head in terms of societal attitudes. We have seen that happen with drink-driving. Last night in the chamber here we were talking about smoking and enforcing that, but really it will be people’s looking down on it and frowning upon it. How much ground do you think we have made on speeding in terms of community attitudes and how far do we have to go?

Dr Fleiter: Thank you for the question. It is something I think about a lot. In fact, you have perfect timing: our centre was commissioned by Austroads, the funding body for Australia and New Zealand for a lot of research that happens here, to prepare a report which was published just two weeks ago. We were commissioned to prepare some interventions that could potentially be trialled in Australia and New Zealand to do just that: increase public demand for safer speeds. I have a copy to leave as a reference for you today if that is helpful.

One of the things we looked at was a comparison with what has happened with smoking, with drink-driving and with seatbelt use, which is another success story here, and then where we are at with speeding. It has taken much longer—maybe colleagues from Transport will touch on this—but the successive national surveys that happen—and Queensland also does their own—show that there is a shift in community attitudes towards a variety of driver and rider behaviours. It is shifting in the right direction, fortunately, for many things. I was actually a bit surprised at the last Queensland survey. This relates particularly to the use of covert or overt enforcement, so whether people can see or not see hidden speed cameras. There is a strong level of agreement for both types of enforcement, one much higher than the other. I think 84 per cent was the 2014 figure for marked police enforcement. That is high. It was not as high for covert enforcement. From memory it was 63 per cent, a two-thirds figure. That could possibly be tracked over time.
In terms of whether people believe they are at risk from being involved in a crash when speeding, we have a lot more work to do in that area. That trend is shifting in the right direction, but that is the hard one. As I mentioned in my presentation, being able to equate in people’s minds that the harder you go the greater the damage has more traction. We have a lot of work yet to do in the area of the risk of being involved in a crash from speeding. I would like to use as an example the communities in Australia that have fought very hard to keep their speed camera. We hear a lot from the loud vocal minority, some of whom sit behind radio microphones, who think speed cameras are a bad thing. I like to think of speed cameras as lifesavers. I do not really want to return to a world where we do not have speed enforcement, but I am not sure that everybody sees it that way. Let us face it: people do not like getting speeding tickets, but the level of acceptance of police enforcement certainly has been shown to be increasing for a number of years now in the Queensland data and also the national survey that happens every year.

Mr McEACHAN: Thank you, Dr Fleiter, for your presentation. I am interested in risk and how it relates to driver behaviour and speed limits. I am a former motorcycle rider instructor and I was president of the Australian Driver Trainers Association Queensland, so I have a strong interest in this area. The regulatory speed signs, in my experience, often encourage people to drive up to that speed limit. If I can use an anecdotal case study, I used to be based out of Moss Street, Slacks Creek, where the speed limit was 60, and it was downright frightening if you ever attempted to go anywhere near that speed limit. An appropriate speed was more likely 40 at any given time. In addition to that, following distance in my experience is a huge problem. Has there been any research into that aspect of the risk of crash and driver behaviour?

Dr Fleiter: Narelle, you may be able to touch on the first one. I will touch on the following distance one, if I may, and then hand over.

We are currently conducting some work looking at people’s perceptions of a safe following distance. This is work that we were commissioned to undertake by MAIC, the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, recognising that rear-end crashes represent a substantial burden in Queensland. Particularly they were interested from an insurance point of view, but they were also interested in it from the trauma point of view. We have not finalised it yet, but we are currently looking at the difference between what people think and report as a safe following distance versus what they actually leave on the road. We conducted a survey last year where we asked anyone in Queensland who wanted to participate—we used the word ‘gap’ so that we did not actually plant the word ‘distance’ in people’s minds—what level of gap people leave and whether that changes according to anything. We gave them quite a variety of scenarios to consider and then asked them to tell us what distance they leave.

It probably will not surprise you to know that people gave us quite a wide variation. Some were in seconds—1½ seconds, two, three, up to 10. Others were in metres. Other people described it as ‘as long as I can see the numberplate of the vehicle in front of me’, that kind of thing. When you are travelling at 110 kilometres an hour on the Bruce Highway and you are planning on only being able to see the numberplate of the vehicle in front of you, that is signalling to us there is quite a bit of education perhaps that needs to go on there. Queensland police and Transport are helping us with that project. We are all working on it together. I agree with you that we are not very good at our perception of risk in that sense, irrespective of speed perhaps—the concept of how long it will take me to stop my bike/truck/bus/car when something occurs on the road in front of me. Humans are not very good at that.

Prof. Haworth: In terms of the part of your question that was about where the speed limits are set at, we certainly have a number of locations around Brisbane and around Queensland where the speed limits are probably too high. Some years ago the Australian road rules were changed so that the default for the urban speed limit was 50 instead of 60. There are many roads around Queensland and around Brisbane which are still 60 which really should be 50, and that is certainly something at CARRS-Q that we are very keen on trying to push—that we have a better gradation of those speed limits. The road safety research shows us that impacts that occur with pedestrians at over 30 kilometres an hour are much more likely to result in really serious injury, so I think we need to look at more use of 50 kilometres per hour speed limits and perhaps 40 or 30 as well in areas where there are many pedestrians, kids and cyclists.

Mr POWER: We are talking about normative change, societal norms, and contrasting with the other big safety messages of drink-driving and seat belts, as the member for Cairns was talking about, and we have not worked on that. The enforcement mechanism and the trickle-out with people who feel they can get away with it—is that what has failed to create a moral imperative? With seat belts, it is obviously binary. With drink-driving, we have created a binary kind of link at .05 and we have
created a clear message about the multiples of risk that you face at .05. Speeding perhaps is less binary in people's minds. Is that why we have not been able to create a normative change? I know in academia normative change is a fraught area, but usually the case studies are the ones that come from traffic. Can you comment on that?

Dr Fleiter: I am happy to. Thank you for the question. I actually agree with that. When you talk about it in the binary sense, you are either belted or you are not, or you are either intoxicated by alcohol for the whole driving episode or you are not. With speeding, we talk about it as being a very transient thing: 'I might speed as I am going down the hill or for the last five minutes before I get to the train station because I think I am going to miss that train, but generally I might be a law-abiding nonspeeder the rest of the time.'

The perception of the level of risk that is associated with that is much more difficult to show. There have been risk curves developed in terms of 'the faster you go, the greater risk you are placing yourself at in terms of crash involvement', but that has been a very difficult concept to describe. It is complicated by the issue that I am your Average Joe or Josephine driver, I have been speeding on and off for all of my years of driving and I have not had the crash that you are talking about yet.

Mr POWER: There is just one other thing. As an analogy, an expert on security cameras told me that security cameras for the most part do not prevent crimes of opportunity. The high-risk individuals who want to do assaults—even though they may have some awareness that there is a camera in the area—will still do that because it is not something that is pre-planned and pre-thought. In episodes of very high speeding—where obviously speeding increases are linear but danger is probably some kind of exponential curve—those people probably are not affected by their perception of whether they will get caught. They clearly know what they are doing is dangerous but they are in a different mindset—much like the person who creates an assault even though they know there is a camera in the area. Are those really dangerous episodes of people going at high speeds in a different class and not contained by this enforcement mechanism?

Dr Fleiter: They are not generally deterred because they are doing what they are doing. My understanding—and correct me, colleagues, if I am wrong—is that the incidence of that high-range speeding is reducing. When we talk about perceived certainty of punishment then perceived severity of punishment, it seems for some people that, no matter what the penalty is and how severe you or I might think that is, it will make no difference to their behaviour.

We have worked together with colleagues. When penalties for speeding changed in Queensland in 2003, Dr Watson and I were involved in a program of research that looked at those penalty changes—and in that instance they were increases in demerits but largely in monetary penalties—and whether that changed and who that changed for. For that high-range speeding offender group—we call them the hard-core repeat offenders—very little changed. We as a research community are trying to look at ways that we can alter that behaviour. Sometimes impounding the vehicle may not make a difference either, if they are someone who will go and steal a vehicle just to continue whatever it is they are doing.

You may be familiar with intelligent speed adaptation. It is a technology that can be placed in cars—in fact I think it is standard in some luxury models now—where it will not allow the accelerator to be pressed any further so you reach a certain speed limit. It is a bit like the alcohol ignition interlock. You cannot start the vehicle until you have given a zero blood alcohol sample. We do not know how the level of acceptance in the general community for something like intelligent speed adaptation would go. It is not a widespread thing, but we have considered that maybe that is something for high-range repeat speeding offenders, although it could be that they are not offending in their own car and it is a stolen car, their mate's car or whatever. They are a very difficult group to reach.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. We might now move to the representatives from the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Queensland Police Service, knowing that CARRS-Q will still be here if we have any questions at the end, and we appreciate that.
HALES, Inspector Allan, Road Policing Command, Queensland Police Service

KEATING, Assistant Commissioner Mike, Road Policing Command, Queensland Police Service

KOLESNIK, Mr Peter, Director (Road Safety Portfolio), Customer Service, Safety and Regulation, Department of Transport and Main Roads

STAPLETON, Mr Mike, Deputy Director-General, Customer Service, Safety and Regulation, Department of Transport and Main Roads

WALSH, Mr Dennis, General Manager, Land Transport Safety, Customer Service, Safety and Regulation, Department of Transport and Main Roads

WROBLEWSKI, Mr John, General Manager, Customer Service, Safety and Regulation, Department of Transport and Main Roads

CHAIR: Mr Stapleton, do you have any opening statements?

Mr Stapleton: Firstly, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss the Queensland Camera Detected Offence Program, commonly known as CDOP, in the context of the recent Queensland Audit Office report. The CDOP is a longstanding road safety initiative with a proven track record of road trauma reduction in deterring motorists from speeding. In August 2015 the Queensland government released its Road Safety Strategy 2015-21 and Road Safety Action Plan 2015-17. These documents define a new vision for the future—of zero road deaths and serious injuries on Queensland roads. This vision is supported by targets to reduce road trauma. Road fatalities intend to be brought down from an average of 303 for the period of 2008 to 2010 to 200 or fewer by 2020. Similarly, hospitalisation casualties for the period 2008 to 2010 averaged 6,670 per year and the reduced target is 4,669.

The Queensland CDOP is a key enabler to meet these ambitious trends in reducing road trauma on our road network, and we certainly welcome the Queensland Audit Office review of the program and embrace the recommendations which will further both facilitate program enhancements and realise road safety benefits. As you are aware, the CDOP is a joint partnership between Transport and Main Roads and the Queensland Police Service. Speed management is a key part of our continued commitment to reducing speed related crashes and road traumas in Queensland. Speeding is recognised as a global health issue and, despite our best efforts, continues to be a contributing factor to road crashes. Speed on Queensland’s roads contributed to 437 fatalities and 2,172 hospitalisations on average during the period 2008 through to 2014.

Speed related crashes place a high cost on the community each year through hospitalisation, health care, lost productivity and cost of emergency services. Importantly, these are personal costs for the individuals involved in these road crashes and their families. In Queensland during 2014 there were 65 road deaths where speed was a contributing factor. This represents 29 per cent of the 2014 road toll of 223. For 2015, the calendar year to 31 October, there were 48 fatal road crashes resulting in 54 road deaths. Recent analysis by the Transport and Main Roads Data Analysis Unit has identified that road fatalities involving speeding have, however, decreased by approximately 50 per cent between 2007 to 2013.

The committee will be pleased to note that CDOP is regularly reviewed by independent academic research agencies. In 2014 a Monash University evaluation report of the CDOP program found that the program was associated with an overall reduction in all police reported crashes of between 23 to 26 per cent over the period 2009 to 2012, with reductions being similar for different crash severity levels. This represents an annual saving of around 6,000 crashes for all severities—that is 1,300 to 1,400 fatal and serious injury crashes per year—translating to an annual saving to the community of about $1.1 billion. The mobile speed camera program has been found to be responsible for the majority of these crash savings with its ‘anywhere, anytime’ philosophy.

I note the outcomes of QAO’s investigation of the CDOP. The report supports the integrity of the program and its success in achieving its primary objective of reducing speeding on the network. I would like to reiterate the positive findings of the QAO report—that is, our program is well designed, draws on a strong body of research evidence and, most importantly, is saving lives on our roads. One of the key findings of the QAO report was that the department continues to uphold our legislative requirement to appropriately invest CDOP revenue towards road safety initiatives, such as road
improvements through the targeted road safety program, community education and improvements to school safety, such as flashing light programs. The Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 requires—

All money collected for penalties imposed for camera-detected offences in excess of the administrative costs of collection must be used for the following purposes—

(a) road safety education and awareness programs;
(b) road accident injury rehabilitation programs;
(c) road funding to improve the safety of the sections of State-controlled roads where accidents most frequently happen.

The level of collaboration that exists between the Queensland Police Service and Transport and Main Roads regarding the CDOP program is outstanding, and the united representation we have here today is testament to this. Both organisations support all of the Queensland Audit Office’s recommendations and we are progressing the necessary changes to further enhance the program.

CHAIR: Is there any further comment at this stage from DTMR? If not, I will now move to QPS.

Assistant Commissioner Keating: Good morning to the committee and thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I will start by simply endorsing the comments of the Deputy Director-General of Transport and Main Roads. The Queensland Police Service supports those comments. I would also like to acknowledge one particular person and the work they have done in the speed camera program over a long period of time—my colleague Inspector Hales—who has been the officer in charge and a senior member of that program for a long period of time. He has ridden both the highs and the lows of being in that position, so I particularly acknowledge his contribution over a long period of time.

To put in context some of this stuff, in the world of road safety you have probably picked up already that statistics can overtake you. As of midnight last night, 37 people were dead on Queensland roads this year. That is 11 more than at the same period last year. We produce a report out of my office every morning which is circulated across government. Tragically, since that report was prepared at 5.30 this morning, a young woman has died at Taroom in a fatal traffic crash. So the reality is that people are dying on our roads—tragically too often. There is no doubt in my mind—and I think it is supported by research and practice—that speed is the significant contributor in relation to many of these crashes.

To take the member’s point in relation to motorcycles earlier and your interest in that, we have seen an alarming trend in relation to motorcycles in Queensland in the last year and a half. Since 1 January last year, 99 people have died in motorcycle related crashes on our roads in Queensland. The motorcyclists were not all at fault—I am not suggesting that—and they were not all riders of motorcycles either, but the reality is that 99 people have lost their lives. There is also an alarming trend occurring this year and towards the second half of last year in relation to pedestrian safety. I know where the file is on my desk and if I could put my hand on it I could tell you the exact figure, but the number of fatalities involving pedestrians, particularly age pedestrians in Queensland, in the last 12 to 18 months is also alarming.

The Queensland Police Service has made a deliberate contribution and strategic approach to road safety in recent times—certainly since 1 July 2013, where we have had a high-visibility approach supported by a covert approach. I recognise the recommendations and the findings of the inquiry in relation to covert and overt but our strategies are based on overt practices. You have seen the decals and the markings of our cars. We are quite deliberate about that but we do support that with covert strategies as well.

We recognise that the Queensland Audit Office has a role, and we welcome the opportunity to be part of that audit. The recommendations of the audit are empowering us now to progress activities which we clearly knew needed to be done but the timing and the opportunity were not present. We now have the authority to advance many of those ideas and strategies that we were looking to. I am sure we will talk to those when we come to the recommendations.

I acknowledge the great relationship we have with the Department of Transport and Main Roads in the delivery of this program over a long period of time and the wonderful support we have had from our academic partners at CARRS-Q and other academic research institutes throughout this country.

Mr MOLHOEK: I want to pursue some questions from the previous review of this report. I address my question to either the assistant commissioner or Inspector Allan Hales. As I recall, one of the issues raised in the report was that 20 per cent of people who have infringement notices issued through the cameras are either driving unregistered vehicles or unlicensed vehicles and are
undetectable. About 20 per cent are not recovered. The concern I raised at the time was that if you are a licensed driver, you are driving legally, your vehicle is registered in your name or you have been able to identify who the driver was and put in a stat dec—that is, 80 per cent of people who, albeit are speeding so are not doing the right thing, are doing everything else right—you are carrying the burden. There is still 20 per cent of people who are not caught because the vehicle is not properly registered or they are unlicensed. My question is: what are we doing about addressing that? It seems to me they are probably more the problem than the masses like myself who every now and then get distracted, go over the speed limit, end up with a ticket, pay it duly and say, ‘Oh gosh, I have done it again.’ What about the people who are flouting the law on three or four levels?

Assistant Commissioner Keating: I will get Inspector Hales to talk to the technical aspects of it, but in relation to the overall program one of the huge advances in recent times has been the transition from the old style film that was used to digital technologies. We are absolutely committed to the advancement of technology in the program. There is a range of opportunities where we can see technical advancement. There are potential detections which are not prosecutable because of a whole range of issues—identification of vehicle and then identification of driver. We have to be very cautious there, and we always give the benefit of the doubt to the motorist, as we should. We cannot compromise the program in the sense that we would pursue matters which we would not be successful in.

Mr MOLHOEK: I understand that.

Assistant Commissioner Keating: The question of unregistered vehicles often comes up. Are you linking that to ANPR as part of this?

Mr MOLHOEK: I am going back over the transcript from the previous briefing. The report basically said that about 15 to 20 per cent of vehicles speeding that are detected end up going nowhere, not because you could not identify who the driver was but because of the ones we identify in the initial notice about 15 to 20 per cent end up going into the ether and not being paid because they have been issued on cars that were unregistered or were being illegally driven or were unlicensed drivers and therefore undetectable.

Assistant Commissioner Keating: I will ask inspector Hales to answer that.

Mr POWER: At line 44 we have that graph about proportion of offences resulting in infringement notices. Is that different from the data we were presented before?

Insp. Hales: As the assistant commissioner outlined, I am the officer in charge of the traffic camera office. There are two parts to that. When we detect offences through the cameras, we have to rely upon sufficiency of evidence. The QAO report complimented us on having a rigorous process to adjudicate those images. That is the primary path: the information in the image which is evidence of the facts. If the image of the registration plate is not clear, we cannot proceed with it. We cannot take it before the court. So there is a percentage of offences that are not proceeded with because the image is unclear. Mr Keating touched on that when he talked about using film based cameras. There are other issues in regard to no plate being fitted. If it is unregistered, we still proceed with it. If it is a stolen plate obviously we do not. There is a whole range of issues why we would not proceed with it.

The other category is when it goes through the whole life cycle of the infringement and getting the recovery of the fines. A certain amount is unpaid and goes to the State Penalties Enforcement Registry. That is another part of that cycle. The Queensland Audit Office looked at that but it did not look at the whole life cycle of the way we manage all those processes. They looked at the enforcement part but SPER would be best to respond to that component of the program.

Mr MOLHOEK: I understand that if people do not pay their fine it goes to SPER, which pursues it and it then becomes a small claims matter, but as I recall from reading the report—and I apologise because I have not re-read the report since the last time so I cannot remember exactly where it is in the report—it was very clear that about 15 to 20 per cent of people who had an infringement notice issued to them were effectively getting off. Even though we detected the numberplate, we could not find them because someone had not changed their driver’s licence details or a car registration had not been transferred appropriately or it was a stolen car with false plates. My question was more about what we are doing in a law enforcement sense to clamp down on those people. It seems to me that 15 to 20 per cent is a pretty high proportion. I am not talking about the percentage that is undetectable because of analogue cameras. I am referring to the 15 to 20 per cent who do not pay their fines or who we cannot track down once a notice is issued because there has been a change of address, a change of owner, the car has been stolen, it is an unlicensed driver or they have left the country. At the time I raised the fact that there are a lot of international students who come here, buy an old car, drive it around and they clear off at the end of the year with unpaid fines. It seems a large proportion to be letting go off into the ether and disperse.
Insp. Hales: I do know from the State Penalties Enforcement Registry that there is a recovery. Even though maybe 20 per cent would go to them, there is still a recovery in it. I think the percentage is a lot less than 20 per cent—probably around 7½ per cent. Dr Fleiter talked earlier about the defy groups. They are special categories. The camera program obviously focuses on people who have registered vehicles. It is more law abiding, I guess, but the people who do defy the program do not get off scot-free. As a case study, we have a person who keeps travelling at high speed with stolen motorcycles, sometimes with or without plates, but we have to categorise that and it will go to a special investigation group to chase that person down. They are related to a whole range of offences including stealing and drug offences. They are in a defy group. The program and the legislation for the camera program does not really suit that. It becomes a more general policing enforcement practice.

Mr MOLHOEK: Inspector Hales, do more resources need to be applied to that area of detecting unlicensed, unregistered drivers and making more of a point of that or having a lower level of tolerance for that sort of behaviour in the interests of fairness and effectiveness?

Insp. Hales: There is a range of strategies we apply for unregistered vehicles, as an example. If we detect an unregistered, uninsured vehicle in our program from a red-light or speeding offence, we will forward that information onto Transport and Main Roads and they will take further action in that way for enforcement. The assistant commissioner I think will expand on the Queensland program for ANPR, which is scanning plates on the road network for those types of vehicles and those categories of drivers in regard to unlicensed or disqualified drivers.

There is a number of proactive strategies doing that including random breath testing. They are checking conditions on licenses. With the mobile data application, the QLiTE program, police have the resources and information right before them in their hands. There are over 2,000 mobile products that police can use for real-time information. There is a lot of proactive treatments being applied to reduce the number of unregistered and unlicensed drivers on the road network.

Mr MOLHOEK: That is admirable. In respect to that, are the current rules that you have to operate under tough enough? In the past we have increased the penalties on hooning so there is less tolerance. Is there a need to toughen up the laws in that respect so that repeat offenders driving unlicensed or unregistered vehicles are subject to a higher penalty or disqualification? Do we need a stronger deterrent to discourage that sort of behaviour?

Assistant Commissioner Keating: That is probably a policy issue that we would need to discuss with the government and the ministers in relation to future directions. To update you in relation to the issue of prosecutability—thank you to my colleagues behind for passing me this—it is about 86 per cent in the most recent report in November 2015, and that is improving on November 2014 which was down at 81 per cent. There is an increase in the prosecutability that we are seeing—

Mr MOLHOEK: That is encouraging.

Assistant Commissioner Keating: as technology is evolving. In relation to some of those technology advancements, the service has—and Road Policing Command has these as a general issue to all of our officers—the QLiTE device, which is an iPad device which officers in the field can access real-time data from our partners at Transport and Main Roads about the currency of a driver’s licence, the class of driver’s licence and registration of vehicles. It is even to the point now where we can have photographic imaging of the driver’s licence of the person so we can do the comparison. That has been a huge advance. The service is looking to expand that by up to 5,400 this financial year.

One of the other great advances that will make a contribution is the expansion of the automatic numberplate recognition program. QPS has had a program in relation to road trauma of about 12 to 13 units on road around the state for some time. It is an ever-evolving product but we are looking to significantly expand that by the end of this financial year. You will see a much broader network of ANPR vehicles right across the state on road all day monitoring traffic movements. The opportunity through that detection is the immediate interception and dealing with the vehicle at the time on the road.

TMR also has a partnership program which deals with it in an automated process. There are a number of innovations technology wise which are coming online and have already been delivered which will significantly improve our ability to identify, target and track these repeat offender, high-risk people.
There are lots of strategies around enforcement in other areas as well, not just road enforcement but more generally. Dr Judy Fleiter, Barry Watson, Vic Siskind and I have done some work about the relationship between traffic offending and other offending and that some in this high-risk group—such as first-time drink-driving offenders to prevent them from becoming repeat offenders. I think that work going on at the moment with the Steering Clear program that is looking at brief interventions with people who have been drink-driving before or they might have had accumulated demerit points due to all sorts of other things as well. They tend to be more likely to drive at night, at high-risk times and things like that.

It is about the sorts of behaviours that they partake in. It is an indication of them generally having risky road user behaviours that were illegal. The fact that they have become unlicensed is representative of problems and their interaction with cars that would perhaps be useful in reducing that 10 per cent?

And attitudes with that group in terms of their driving behaviour and obviously their alcohol and drug behaviours when they are on the road. It is also about when they are driving and all of those sorts of things. It is also about how they are driving unlicensed or unregistered and that has somewhat been dispelled. So they are a risky group and they do tend to be overrepresented in crashes. I do not have the specific figures on me.

I know in recent work that we did a few years ago for TMR on unlicensed and unregistered drivers that there is a lot of combination where people are doing those things all at the same time. We found on roadside surveys that about one per cent of people were driving unlicensed at any given time but they were up around the 10 per cent or more as far as being represented in serious crashes is concerned, so they are a high-risk group. Most of the reason for that is not necessarily that being unlicensed per se is a risky thing but that they are doing other things in combination—they are drink-driving, speeding and doing other things that would put them at risk of a crash.

Mr McEACHAN: Is it probably indicative of their attitude to driver behaviour and their behaviour to other road users the fact that they are not licensed or they are not getting their cars registered?

Yes. I think a lot of it is that they are often unlicensed for a reason—they have been drink-driving before or they might have had accumulated demerit points due to all sorts of other road user behaviours that were illegal. The fact that they have become unlicensed is representative of the sorts of behaviours that they partake in. It is an indication of them generally having risky behaviours when they are on the road. It is also about when they are driving and all of those sorts of things as well. They tend to be more likely to drive at night, at high-risk times and things like that.

Mr POWER: Ten per cent of crashes are caused by one per cent of drivers who we can identify as unregistered or unlicensed. Most of that percentage would come from people who had previously been driving and excluded for some reason. Is there research into intervention in changing behaviours and attitudes with that group in terms of their driving behaviour and obviously their alcohol and drug problems and their interaction with cars that would perhaps be useful in reducing that 10 per cent?

Mr McEACHAN: Historically whenever we have discovered plates that were difficult to detect—and there have been issues with the quality of paint used on plates at times with the contrast—we have the power to do a recall of those plates, and we have exercised that power at different times.

Mr Stapleton: Only one point. A little known part of the program is that since the beginning of this program—I think it started back in 1997—the practice on unregistered vehicles is that all unregistered offences are referred to the department of transport and we issue the tickets for those. Looking at the last five years, generally speaking between one per cent or less of all tickets issued have been for unregistered vehicles and we have issued tickets for those vehicles.

Mr McEACHAN: That cohort of people who are driving or riding unlicensed, unregistered or unroadworthy vehicles is more difficult to detect. Are they overrepresented in the statistics of serious crashes causing injury and fatality? Do we have any research on that? If that is the case, do we complement that with the right amount of resourcing to track them down and stop that happening?

Mr Stapleton: That is a difficult question. Dennis, do you have some research on this one?

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these drivers who repeatedly speed, repeatedly drink-drive and all of those sorts of things—also have other offences in their histories. There are lots of opportunities around dealing with probation in the courts and the sorts of things magistrates would recommend they get involved with in terms of rehabilitation programs. I think it would take a multifaceted approach to deal with those particular offenders.

Mr POWER: It would seem that that group in terms of that dynamic nature of deterrence are firmly in the bucket but still creating a real danger on our roads.

Dr Watson: Yes. Judy might want to comment on that a bit further.

Dr Fleiter: Actually I do not think they are in the bucket because the bucket represents the people who are deterred. The high-risk offenders I do not think are deterred because they are still offending. They are repeat offending and they are offending across a range of behaviours. Some of us have a favourite saying in road safety. Actually several of us co-authored a paper and presented it at the national road safety conference last year. It is a very basic analogy of why you would do something in this part of your life and do something similar in that part of your life, and that is that we drive as we live. Driving is just another thing that we do every day. If I am a risk-taker or a non-law abider in any other part of my life, why would you anticipate that I would acknowledge and comply with rules on the road?

In terms of the work that Angela referred to a moment ago in relation to repeat and first time drink-driving offenders, we know from programs around the world where people are required to have an alcohol ignition interlock placed on their vehicle because they are a high-range or a repeat drink driver that that is a very effective strategy in helping them separate their drinking and their driving. If I am an alcoholic and I have the requirement that I must have that device in my vehicle—a magistrate has told me that I must if I want to drive—that has been very successful in separating those two behaviours. Unfortunately, the majority of the work tells us or the evaluations from that area tell us that, when I have served my time on that interlock licence and the interlock is removed, largely my behaviour reverts to what it was.

I guess you could think of them in silos. For particular behaviours there are strategies that have been looked at for particular types of offences. In terms of addressing the noncompliant person overall who possibly ends up in our corrective services system, we are not very good at discreetly addressing behaviours when there are so many things going on for people like that. So the high-range group—the hardcore people I referred to earlier—are an incredibly difficult group and a very, very challenging group for all of us.

Mr Walsh: Just to address that question from the member and a previous question in relation to unlicensed drivers’ involvement, we do have some statistics here: 21.5 per cent of speeding drivers or riders involved in fatal crashes are unlicensed and 15.5 per cent are involved in hospitalisation crashes. It is overrepresented, but it does also mean that 80 per cent or nearly 80 per cent of people involved in fatal crashes that are related to speed are licensed. There are both groups that we need to be concentrating on.

Assistant Commissioner Keating: We just need to be cautious about the term ‘unlicensed’, because it is a cover-all. I think your question was going to people who were disqualified or suspended and so forth. Somebody could be classified as unlicensed because the date of their licence renewal had passed and they had not renewed it. They may be covered by some of those figures where the question is more I think focused on those people who are repeat suspended drivers or repeat high-risk drivers who are disqualified and so forth. I take CARRS-Q’s point. We need to identify risk and approach risk from a different point of view. It is probably outside of the traffic camera audit. I think the next challenge is to identify risk-takers and what risk means to them and how we address those either individually or collectively as a group, recognising that many of the people in that group when visited by police in their workplace or other enforcement bodies in their workplace would allege that they were being harassed or intimidated but it is actually an activity to engage them and to encourage them to be more safe conscious rather than risk conscious.

CHAIR: I appreciate that. It is outside of this audit. I am constantly meeting with police in my area with regard to hooning. I can understand where you are coming from.

Mr COSTIGAN: Mr Stapleton, in terms of the number of illegible plates that are out there in the community, can you explain why those plates have become so commonplace? There was a time when legibility was not a problem. I can speak from experience. I have been down this path before and I actually had to pay to get new plates myself when I thought the plates were poor. If I went into
a hardware store and the hammer was dodgy, I would have got a refund. I would have got a refund on any other product at any other store. I did not have that experience with TMR, with due respect. It certainly concerns me the number of people out there with plates that cannot be read by speed cameras. That goes without saying.

Mr Stapleton: It is a vexing issue and there are a number of factors at play here, of course. One is that when we issue plates for a vehicle they are warranted for, I believe, a seven-year period. It used to be for 10 years some time ago, but it is now for a seven-year period. During that period, if the plates become illegible the department will replace them at no expense, and that is part of the contract. Once you go beyond that period, once you pass the warranty period, it becomes the responsibility of the person to pay for the replacement, but at all times it is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that their plates remain legible, that they are not blocked or obscured from view—for instance, if they are using a plate cover, that that plate cover does not obscure the view to the plates.

Mr COSTIGAN: I appreciate the answer. I certainly did not have those plates for more than seven years. From my point of view, I did not get the deal that you are talking about, Mr Stapleton, I can assure you. I am happy to talk about that later.

Mr Stapleton: We are more than happy to talk to you about your customer complaint on that one.

Mr COSTIGAN: It is not; I just got duded.

Mr Stapleton: I will follow up with you and we will discuss that.

CHAIR: It is probably not the time to talk about this. It is for a later conversation, as requested.

Mr COSTIGAN: I am wondering if I am speaking on behalf of a number of other people who have not actually raised it. My plates were not seven years old, I can assure you, Mr Stapleton—far from it. I would like to ask a question of either Assistant Commissioner Keating or Inspector Hales. I note with sadness—I am sure I speak for everyone on the committee and those passionate about road safety—the spike in the number of deaths: 37 as of last night; 11 more than the corresponding period last year. What percentage of those deaths do you attribute to speed, Assistant Commissioner Keating? Could you provide some commentary in relation to country roads specifically—something that I am certainly familiar with. I spend about 80,000 kilometres a year on the road, particularly in regional Queensland, as you would appreciate. I am not alone. Of that figure, how much of a bias is there towards country roads and regional and rural Queensland?

Assistant Commissioner Keating: It is too early for me to make a statement in terms of the findings of those crashes for this year and attribute the percentage involved in speed. If we go back to previous years, we see that speed is a major contributor—well up over 25 per cent in many crashes that we see. The significant contributing factor is speed, but there may be other contributing factors where we see fatigue or alcohol or unroadworthiness of a vehicle. Certainly speed is a major contributor.

In relation to the country roads and the application of our speed enforcement program, we do have the rollout of the new digital technologies underway. We are starting in the south-east corner and we will expand that throughout the state by the end of the financial year. You will start to see the new technologies in place. There is a huge training component associated with those new devices. In relation to managing speed, the speed camera program is not the only activity that does that. Our general duties officers, our traffic officers and our road policing officers throughout the state are active in speed enforcement every day. The figures that we see and the offences that we detect—the speeds that we detect are just beyond my explanation. I often say to the media, ‘How can I explain to the community of Queensland that somebody was doing 200 kilometres an hour on a motorbike in a 100-kilometre-an-hour speed zone?’ It just does not make sense to me.

We are active in the area of speed. We have a number of initiatives in the next few weeks that you will see over the Easter campaign period and also the Anzac period. In that really high-risk calendar period of the year you will see speeding as the major focus of our campaign from an enforcement point of view and also from an engagement point of view from Transport and Main Roads, and there are a number of days in that period where we are looking to deploy as many of our speed detection devices throughout the state as we can.

We have around 1,200 individual speed detection devices between mobile radars, handheld LiDAR devices, speed cameras et cetera. That is not about catching more people for speeding. Nothing would make me happier than to come back to this committee and report on those days that we did not catch anyone. What we are trying to do is to create a visibility and a presence to encourage and motivate people to use the deterrence theories that CARRS-Q have explained to compliance.
The whole principle of our high-visibility campaign, whether it be for drink-driving, drug driving, speed or the myriad other challenges in road safety, is that we are using visibility as a model to engage the community and to influence their behaviour. What we are hoping to achieve is that as you drive your 80,000 kilometres throughout the year you will expect to see the police. You will not be surprised.

Mr PYNE: If I could ask a question of the academics. One area that is clear in my mind is the link between speeding and dual carriageways. I suspect that on many of the roads on which the member for Whitsunday drives the only thing separating two cars moving very quickly in opposite directions is a thin white line. Obviously where there is a well-planted median and separate lanes it has to be much safer. Can you speak to how much work we could do with our roads to actually minimise fatalities due to speeding?

Prof. Haworth: I think very often drivers do not always realise the importance of the road conditions in determining not only whether a crash will occur but also what the outcomes are. Certainly we know that dual carriageways have a much better safety record by, basically, unless something really extreme happens, preventing the possibility of that head-on collision where the forces of the impact are so much greater. Certainly in terms of not only the safety of normal vehicles but particularly the safety of heavy vehicles mixed with other vehicles, the dual carriageways are really important.

One of the challenges we have in Queensland and throughout Australia—we have a big country with relatively few taxpayers—is what we can afford. One of the things that is coming up in road safety in recent years is lower cost, highly effective alternatives to dual carriageways. That is one of the things that I think is a really good outcome for countries like Australia. The Swedes have actually been working for quite a while on what they call two-plus-one roads, so where you have two lanes in one direction and then a barrier between you and the traffic in the other direction and then you lose your two and the other side gets two lanes. It is in a sense a three-lane road that is two-plus-one and then changes to one-plus-two. They have used that in their country areas. While Sweden is only a small country, it is long and skinny so they still have some long distances to travel. What they found is that this sort of treatment actually reduces the incidence of head-on and serious injury crashes and fatalities, at about 90 per cent, at a much lower cost than duplicating the carriageway. That is one of the things that we are certainly encouraging road makers throughout Australia to consider the potential of.

If I may give a Queensland example—and I hope I am not taking TMR’s thunder; they can describe this a bit more—TMR have actually had a very successful treatment on the Bruce Highway which is an even lower cost which involves not having a thin white line but having a wider painted median. That has shown a reduction in fatalities of over 30 per cent as a result of that treatment. There is a lot that we can do to improve the safety of roads for drivers regardless of what they are driving or how they are driving.

Mr McEACHAN: Assistant Commissioner Keating, I am deeply concerned about the spike in motorcycle fatalities in the last 14 or 15 months that you described. Have you been able to look at the statistics of that: whether they are single-vehicle; how many are single-vehicle; how many relate to speed; whether it is because motorcyclists are not being deterred by speed cameras in part? I am sure there is a lot involved in it, but it is a deeply concerning trend.

Assistant Commissioner Keating: I am conscious of being quoted and reported inaccurately, but we are talking about essentially a group of people who may have a different assessment of risk to others. When you look at the ratio of the number of registered motorcycles in Queensland compared to the total number of registered vehicles, look at the percentage of motorcycle licences compared to the total of approved licences in Queensland and then you look at the rate of fatalities, and then look even further at serious injury crashes, the figures are what they are. Motorcycling results in more serious injury and deaths.

When we look at the incidents generally, rather than going to specific incidents, we see a number of factors that are contributing to this. I am conscious that the academic processes of research may not be completed, but essentially you are seeing people who are riding beyond the limits of their own personal capability. They are also riding beyond the limit of the motorcycle, so they are attempting to do an activity, which may not be at speed—it might actually be at low speed—that the motorcycle cannot do on that particular corner or so forth. Also, they may well actually be exceeding the limitations of the road network. We see that quite commonly in a range of various locations throughout the state whereby we see high-rate motorcycle use corresponding with high-rate incidents of motorcycles, and that is the recreational or irregular motorcycle rider who rides on weekends and so forth.
We have some wonderful support from the Department of Transport and Main Roads—and this is actually linked to the traffic camera program—where up until now we have had two covert motorcycles in our fleet for the state. Within the next few weeks we will be rolling out another four which are provided for out of this program. They are actually part of the traffic camera program. They will be fitted with and operate what is called a true-cam device, which is actually part of the traffic camera program. We have had success involving the RACQ, TMR, ourselves and the motorcycle community at places like Harry’s Diner and so forth, where we are actually going to those places and talking to motorcycle users as a group and trying to engage with them to encourage them to be more safety conscious. There have been some other very successful programs in the Mount Glorious area and so forth which have engaged motorcycle riders in their activity in the location they want to do that. It is not an enforcement activity; it is an engagement activity to say, ‘Look, the activity you are involved in is placing you at higher risk. Enjoy your activity, it is quite a lawful activity, if you want to do it—I don’t like motorbikes but many people do; good luck to them—but just be conscious of the risk.’ In places where that has been occurring we have seen some really positive trends.

Mr McEACHAN: My experience is that professional training makes a really big difference to the outcomes for the long-term survivability of motorcyclists. I think there may be some research from the early nineties up to about 1999, 2000 where we had an increase in the number of licensed motorcyclists on Queensland roads with a corresponding decrease in their statistics. I think that is worth looking at in this context. Subsequently, with the introduction of Q-Ride we had a spike in traffic crashes in the motorcyclist community. Anecdotally, my riding school, which operated for a period of time, had up to 200 training hours per week on average for a period of 10 years. We never had a crash or an accident with an ambulance in attendance. I would argue that that is a pretty sound statistical number. The motorcycle is not inherently dangerous; it is the way in which motorcycles are used and it is the attitudinal approach to riding where the real danger comes from.

Mr MOLHOEK: I am wondering if Inspector Hales or the assistant commissioner could provide an update on where we are at with the conversion of analog to digital. I know that the program had started but I think there was still a bit of ground to go when we last met.

Inspector Hales: As the assistant commissioner outlined, we have a very ambitious training program. We are running 24 training courses between February and June this year and we are rolling out the remaining 50 systems by the end of this financial year. At present we have 20 digital systems replacing part of the 50 analog fleet. We are more than a third of the way through that replacement. It is done through the training regime but also in line with our fleet management group as we replace vehicles.

Mr MOLHOEK: I have a question for the deputy director with respect to construction zones where there are roadworks undertaken. I think speed cameras suffer from a bit of a public relations challenge, which is probably an understatement. What I have found frustrating and I have often had commentary about is why we have reduced enforceable speed limits in construction zones when there is no construction going on. On the M1, all the way down to the border there have been long periods of time when the speed limit has been reduced to 80 or even 60. The signs can stay up for days or even weeks at a time when there is no work going on and yet we are still enforcing those speed limits through there. Has any consideration ever been given to introducing an interim system or changing the speed limit back when they are not under construction for long periods of time? Even with exit 54 there was a speed camera—I know there was because I was driving up on a public holiday and there was a speed camera in that 80 zone—but on a weekend there was no work going on, there were huge traffic volumes and it could quite easily have been switched back to the normal speed limit for the weekend, the day or the week. Has there ever been any discussion around that?

Mr COSTIGAN: Great question.

Mr POWER: I know that being a paddle-pop person is one of the most dangerous jobs, along with traffic cops and enforcement. When they are on the side of the road where there is that intermittency of speed, is that going to change conditions for them on work days?

Mr Stapleton: I would like to thank the honourable members for their questions. It is a good question and it is one that we are actively working on. I will explain the different facets of your question. In relation to the ongoing speed limit reduction through some of those zones, they are attributable to the narrowing of the road and quite often due to the end barriers at the beginning and the ends of those speed zones. They are not designed to actually allow a survivable crash at 110 or 100. They lack the crumple zone. They are only temporary arrangements. From a road traffic point of view it would be inappropriate for us to actually set up a zone where we know that if there was a crash a fatality was highly likely. That is one reason the speed limit remains down; it is due to the risk of the zone.
In terms of the overall issue of road workers and speed zones, we are doing a lot of work on this at the moment trying to improve our practices. We are very conscious of the fact that the public quite often do not fully understand why speed limits are at the levels they are. We are looking at things such as variable speed limit signs to probably get speed limits to a more appropriate level when workers are on site versus when they are not on site. All of these things are under active engagement. We are actually working at the moment even on an app that would alert people to speed zones well in advance of when they may visit an area. There is a lot of work going on in this space. It is an issue for us.

I make the point that we are not the only agency out there on the roads. There are utilities; there is local government. We are trying to get uniformity across all operators, making sure that speed zones are removed at the end. One of the reasons we are interested in variable speed signs is so that we can actually adjust them when we are not on site, if it is appropriate for us to increase the speed. I just want to assure you that we are doing a lot of work. It is a big issue—as big an issue for us as it is for the public because it is one of the most common sources of complaint.

One thing I want to add in relation to Professor Haworth’s response concerning the white centre line treatment in particular is that that has been a very successful initiative based on a successful trial on the Bruce Highway when we first introduced it at the north coast. It showed actual reductions in head-on crashes, albeit we did see a continuation of sideswipe crashes in their place. It allowed time for people to correct for their mistake and probably not pay with their life for a particular event. We have rolled out and we continue to roll out additional overtaking lanes on the Bruce Highway. That really ties in with the two-plus-one type approach of overtaking opportunities in a safe environment to reduce the frustration of drivers on the road. We have seen a fairly significant drop in the road toll on the Bruce Highway as a result of those initiatives which will continue to roll out over the next eight to nine years thanks to some financial support from the federal government.

CHAIR: Thank you for that. I have noticed, having driven between Brisbane and Gin Gin in a previous role, more and more of those two-plus-ones and the widened lanes as well. Thankfully I never had or witnessed an accident during that time. We will have to bring this hearing to a close. I thank everyone for their attendance today. I appreciate your time and I declare this hearing closed.

Committee adjourned at 11.17 am