

**Submission
No. 70**

DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY

Name: Mr Len Woodman
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Len Woodman



Mr Greg Aplin
Chair
Staysafe
NSW Parliament
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

20 February 2017

Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety

Dear Mr Aplin,

I have only just been made aware of this inquiry so this should be regarded as just a summary or short contribution. I would be pleased to assist in any additional research that would help Staysafe complete this inquiry.

I have been a road safety practitioner for over forty years.

During this time, I have specialised in driver training. I have considerable experience working as a professional driver overseas, including Africa, Europe and central Asia.

Between 1995 and 2014 I worked as a road safety specialist in local government, working for a major council. During this time, I prepared numerous submissions to Staysafe and have given evidence on many occasions.

I am currently still involved with local government but as a specialist in fleet safety working to reduce work related crashes and develop a no-crash culture.

This submission is personal and should not be implied to reflect the views of my employer.

I am also engaged occasionally in providing specialist knowledge to other organisations.

There follows my personal comments relating to the Terms of Reference.

Yours sincerely,

Len Woodman Grad. Dip. Road Safety

Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety

Terms of Reference

The Committee will inquire into, and report on, the role of whole-of-life driver education and training in supporting improved road safety outcomes in New South Wales, with particular reference to:

a) Trends in road safety research and crash statistics:

No comment. All statistics and their interpretation are available from the NSW Centre for Road Safety.

b) Evaluating current driver training, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and adaptation to changing vehicle technology:

Current learner driver training is substantial provided the program set out in the Learner Drivers' Handbook and other supporting resources is followed.

As a professional assessor of licenced drivers I have observed that drivers who have learned to drive (class C) since the advent of the Graduated Licencing Scheme (GLS) in 2000 are generally more aware of road conditions and hazards than those 'more experienced' drivers who were trained prior to GLS.

There is noticeably less evidence of GLS trained drivers succumbing to externalising blame unnecessarily.

Refresher training is almost non-existent with few drivers having attended any form of post-test training. The obvious exception are those who have had additional tests for heavy vehicle licences.

If someone drives for work there is a possibility that the organisation they work for provides some form of driver assessment and training if required. Many large organisations provide this to offset the risks of vicarious liability and chain of responsibility should their drivers be involved in a crash.

Many responsible organisations, public and private, have demonstrated their commitment to workplace driver safety by joining the National Road Safety Partnership Program <http://www.nrspp.org.au/> which provides a major resource for road safety practitioners particularly for fleet operators. The Australian Fleet Managers' Association also contributes to fleet safety.

Adaption to changing vehicle technology is generally abdicated to manufacturer's sales staff of motor vehicles. Again responsible fleet operators provide in-house training for employees.

My experience is that there are many occasions where a driver, regardless of age or experience, has a problem when driving a new or different vehicle. Even minor

changes such as electronic parking brakes or a change in gear selector layout can confuse a driver. This is simply overcome by reading the vehicle handbook (generally seen as an onerous activity) or doing a thorough 'cockpit drill'. This is not new. I was working in car rentals 25 years ago and this problem was just as prevalent.

Additional use of electronic controls and in-car devices add to the complexity of adapting to a new/other vehicle. I believe this increases risk, particularly because it diverts a driver's gaze and 'conditions' them to look only to the near distance and reduces their level of scanning.

Finally, there has been an obvious reduction in the use of manual transmission vehicles from cars to the heaviest trucks. Currently drivers who have learned on an automatic/automated transmission car and have passed a test on such vehicles, may drive a manual once gaining P2 status. In the United Kingdom no such allowance is made and a full driving test in a manual car must be completed at any time should a driver wish to hold a full unrestricted licence.

I would like to discuss my view that the overall general use of manual transmission vehicles in the UK contributes to a better road safety record.

c) The needs of any particular driver groups

No comment. I expect you will receive submissions from a diverse range of driver groups.

d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional

Professional driving instructors are required to complete a Certificate IV in Driving Instruction in order to qualify for a NSW Driving Instructor's Licence. A separate qualification is required for C (car) licence instructing and for heavy vehicles. In addition, many professional instructors complete a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. The standards set for any other Certificate IV are expected to be the same for driving instructors.

Professional driving instructors are generally seen as the 'additional' tutors to a learner driver's overall training program. Because of this, training is often limited to 'teaching' the test route and general urban driving. I understand few instructors are given the time to instruct in inner city areas, motorways and country roads (if serving an urban clientele). Likewise, rural operators spend little time in urban areas.

As a professionally qualified driving instructor I do believe that the profession deserves greater support from the authorities. I believe that a number of research papers and studies by academics has tainted the view of road safety practitioners not directly involved in driver training. As a result I do not believe that driver trainers are shown to contribute to better driving and road safety.

For non-professionals please refer to h) reference the lack of support resources.

e) The needs of metropolitan, rural and regional drivers

No comment. Again I expect you will receive submissions from more qualified sectors.

f) The needs and expectations of passengers and other road users

Passengers and all other road users, have a rightful expectation to move safely in the transport system. They also have the responsibility to move with reasonable care and consideration for all other road users.

The responsibility of the authorities should (must?) be to ensure that appropriate systems are in place to ensure that new drivers meet a minimum standard.

g) The cost of driver training standards and how the costs should be allocated

Good, high quality driver training is expensive. This has been demonstrated in many jurisdictions where advanced police driver training is provided. However, the longer term value has also been demonstrated by police services/forces.

If driver education was respected as another stream of education such as HSC or university study and a similar level of attention paid to it then maybe there would be an improvement in driving and a reduction in crashes overall.

The need is to enhance professional driving instructors training, offering higher levels of qualifications and bestow equivalent status as one would to other professional tutors and educators.

As in the tertiary education system, costs should reflect the value of what is taught, there should be no 'short-cuts' and the user should pay, with appropriate grant systems for those unable to support themselves. Where driving is required for work then costs should be built in to employment plans.

h) The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues

NSW and Australia are poorly served with the authorities providing few resources that enhance driver knowledge and ability.

The United Kingdom's Driver and Licencing Agency provides a full range of resources as can be seen at: <https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/>

The United Kingdom has a well-established, recognised and respected advanced driving test procedure that is not replicated in Australia <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/> . One should not confuse this with 'advanced and defensive' driving courses offered in Australia. These have been subject to much research over the past two decades with negative findings.

i) Other related matters.

If conducting further research, please consult the National Road Safety Partnership Program.

Prepared by Len Woodman Grad. Dip. Road Safety
Sydney, 20 February 2017