

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

HEARING WITH ROAD SAFETY COMMISSION



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2019**

Members

Mr P.A. Katsambanis (Chairman)
Mr M.J. Folkard (Deputy Chairman)
Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup
Mr A. Krsticevic
Mr D.T. Punch

Hearing commenced at 10.33 am

Mr SIMON GRIEVE

Acting Road Safety Commissioner, examined:

Mr IAIN CAMERON

Acting Managing Director, Department of Transport, examined:

Ms TERESA WILLIAMS

Director, Strategy, Policy and Legislation, Road Safety Commission, examined:

Mr DAVID SLACK-SMITH

Manager of Data and Intelligence, Road Safety Commission, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for agreeing to appear today. One of the functions of the committee is to review the agencies within its portfolio responsibilities. From time to time, the committee will conduct agency review hearings. The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss a range of matters such as road safety and driver licensing, road safety data collection and use, the Road Safety Commission's recent amalgamation with the Western Australia Police Force—not so recent anymore, but certainly within this term of government—and the relationship between the commission and the Department of Transport. I would like to point out that at this stage we are not conducting an inquiry; we are just really reviewing and gathering information and informing ourselves better about what is actually going on.

My name is Peter Katsambanis. I am the Chair of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. The other members of the committee are the Deputy Chair, Mark Folkard; the member for Dawesville, Zak Kirkup; the member for Bunbury, Don Punch; and the member for Carine, Tony Krsticevic. It is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of this committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, this privilege does not apply to anything that you might say outside of today's proceedings.

Mr Grieve, welcome to the position.

Mr Grieve: Thank you. It is day three.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we begin with our questions, do you have any questions about your attendance here today or any brief opening statement that you might want to make?

Mr Cameron: Not about attendance but perhaps just by way of explanation, as you have acknowledged, Mr Grieve is three days into the role, so he is certainly part of this group. Teresa and David are members of the commission, with their expertise. As chair of the Road Safety Council, just to make some broad opening remarks, the commission plays a very important role as part of the Road Safety Council. I continue there by way of cabinet appointment as chair of the council. I am not there as representing transport. Transport has separate representatives there. Members of the committee are probably well aware that that is a longstanding piece of legislation. The intent of that was always to ensure a collaborative approach; road safety is not one of those approaches where you can have a single agency response, so across government. That includes local government and we also have the RAC, which represents road users on the council.

As chair of the council and as a previous agency representative on the council, the aim and the focus is to make sure that we work very well and closely together. The commission plays a very important role in terms of being able to support the council in its deliberations. We act on an evidence base. Sadly, there is road trauma that occurs. That provides a lot of data and information, so the commission plays a very important function there in supporting the council in taking its deliberations. The other function under the act, which is widely publicly known is making recommendations to the minister about how photographic-based speed and red light camera infringements are allocated to road safety initiatives. Again, the council takes an evidence base and wherever possible is using evidence to make recommendations to government on road safety.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That puts a good context into the sort of work that we are looking at doing. Perhaps I will start off with questions. Does the commission or the council, or both, do any assessment of how the Department of Transport's licensing scheme contributes to road safety outcomes?

Mr Cameron: There has been some work—I will speak historically—and there was quite a bit of work done nationally. I am happy to refer the committee to that. I think it is about 2014. All the states and territories collaborated on a licensing framework for graduated licensing. The elements of that, from a road safety point of view, for young drivers are essentially young drivers have less experience—that is obvious. Young drivers sometimes have a higher propensity to take risks. Their conceptual development is not the same as a mature adult driver in many cases. That also equates to, I guess, in terms of having an over-confidence generally compared to a more experienced driver, and perhaps a lack of understanding of full consequences of actions.

The aim of graduated licensing in a road safety context is simply to ensure young drivers get more experience before they get behind the wheel solo, and then to gradually manage their introduction to full risk. The system that the Department of Transport uses is, with some variations, very similar to other jurisdictions and, as I say, there is a licensing framework that all jurisdictions agreed were the elements of a good graduated system to basically get more experience and then gradually manage the risk. So if you look at some of the elements of the system, the requirement for at least 50 hours of on-road experience with a requirement for, I think it is at least five hours of night-time driving experience and log books to record that. That is a very clear requirement to encourage young drivers to get more experience before they are going solo, and that is in a supervised situation.

[10.40 am]

Other things like reduced demerit points, zero blood alcohol, night-time restrictions; some jurisdictions have passenger restrictions. There are some variances, but essentially that is all about reducing or managing the full exposure to risk. The reduced demerits has had some publicity. There have been some examples in recent weeks. The reduced demerits is essentially around allowing young drivers some errors or some mistakes, but there is a very deliberate intent to intervene early before patterns of risk-taking emerge. I would say the majority of young drivers do the right thing. All of those graduated introductions to full risk are designed to gradually expose the young novice driver to a full operating environment. As I say, there are some slight difference around the country. Australia is pretty well recognised internationally. Australia leads with graduated licensing. If you look across Europe, for example, there is quite a differential rate. The Europeans, in a safety context, would love to introduce that, but of course, there is community-wide acceptance and evolution that needs to occur. The leaders traditionally were probably Canada and the US. Age of licensing, all of those factors, are taken into account with graduated licensing.

The research struggles to identify what one individual component might offer over another because most of the systems have been introduced as a package or a series of measures at the same time.

The research is quite clear about the effect of graduated licensing systems. The high and low estimates probably are about 30 per cent crash reduction for young drivers through to about 58, 60 per cent crash involvement. The evidence from a WA point of view, the recent data that the commission has identified is pointing to about a 60 per cent reduction in the crash involvement of young people aged 17 to 20 over the last 10 years. Governments in WA have progressively introduced a number of changes which largely have fallen to the Department of Transport to implement—reduced demerits, zero blood alcohol, the requirement for hours of supervised driving et cetera. That approximate 60 per cent reduction needs to be seen in the context of, if you look over the same period, the state's overall improvement has been about 30 per cent, so there is a differential effect of graduated licensing as one factor. If it was just, say, for vehicles and better roads, you would not necessarily see that differential, we would think.

The other factor that we would all be aware of is, in the last 10 years, there are many more options now for young people—or all of us, including young people—around on-demand transport options which increase the opportunities for young people, particularly when they are socialising and it also reduces the costs. They are largely probably a metropolitan opportunity. They do vary regionally, of course, but that is probably the other significant factor in the background that is contributing to young drivers being safer than they ever have before. We cannot be complacent, but it is certainly a success story that over a period of 10 years of government and community response, young drivers are safer.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: You mentioned that there is a potential impact on those statistics about involvement in crashes from young people perhaps taking up other options like Uber. Is there any data that suggests there are actually less young drivers taking a licensing option up, and using public transport, and that that is having an impact in the data that you are suggesting?

Mr Cameron: Yes. I can get you more specifics, but if I can make a couple of general remarks, there are two comments that are probably relevant. There is a phenomenon, a trend, not only in WA but across Australia, where young drivers are licensing slightly older, so there is a delay. Instead of licensing straight away at 17 or as soon as they can, there is a bit of a delay—a year or two at least. That has a protective benefit. In simple terms, the older you are when you start to drive, generally you are safer. Most jurisdictions in Australia are either all 17 years of age or 18, in the case of Victoria. Some other US states vary at a lower end of that. Internationally, the agreement is around 16 to begin to learn to drive, so most Australian jurisdictions are pretty much in the ballpark with that. So a delay in licensing and, from an age point of view, we also think there has been a bit of a trend in terms of the numbers of young people getting licences.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Yes. So of that 60 per cent —

The CHAIRMAN: Is there any data around that?

Mr Cameron: Yes. We can find some information in terms of tests being conducted, absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN: Could you take that on notice?

Mr Cameron: Yes. We will take that.

The CHAIRMAN: Both in relation to the number of tests by age group and the age differential for the first test taken.

Mr Cameron: Yes. We will certainly do that.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: As part of that, could you identify, of that 60 per cent, what component might be attributable to delayed licensing in terms of age; what might be attributable to, or linked to, lack of take-up of vehicle ownership; and whether there is a metro-regional difference at a trend level?

Mr Cameron: Probably not. That would be a separate piece of research. We would not be able to pull that information —

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Which part?

Mr Cameron: In terms of teasing out what is just the effect of the licensing factors. The licensing component of that would be very difficult to tease out. We would need to do a specific research project or something. I have seen it done nationally. I would refer the committee to an Austroads' report that was done in 2015. Senserrick and Williams are the authors. My earlier comments about the difficulty of teasing out different components, there was some evidence around the actual effect of a graduated licensing system. We could get you the next best thing. We would not be able to do WA-specific, but we could give a relevant example.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Perhaps some level of assessment, in terms of whether that 60 per cent is attributable to the graduated licensing or there are other factors at play contributing to that reduction, and what the licensing position might.

Mr Cameron: I just do not have those figures in my head. We could certainly point to the evidence of what has been the identified effect of graduated licensing systems as a percentage, in terms of reducing crashes.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Okay.

Mr Cameron: The age one might be slightly more difficult.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: In relation to the actual driver statistics in relation to fatalities, et cetera, we have had a good year in the last 12 months, but previous to that we have had some shocking statistics on the roads. What percentage of our fatalities have been unlicensed drivers? In my time as a copper, it was 26 per cent. Has it increased or decreased?

Mr Cameron: It has not increased. It is running at about 20 per cent. Clearly, we have two things that are happening now. We have extreme risk-takers. From your experience as a police officer, sadly you would have seen a lot of that—too much. As a population, we have had huge success in reducing risk-taking crashes. In 10 years, the reduction in speeding-related crashes, drink-driving-related crashes and people not wearing seatbelts in crashes has reduced by over 40 per cent—somewhere between 40 and 45 per cent for each of those crashes. Alcohol and seatbelts, as you would have known as a police officer, were often co-related. Again going back to my earlier comment, that 45 per cent is above the 30 per cent we have had overall. The problem we have in Road Safety that is emerging, which was always there, is that the risk-taking crashes are publicly known, they are identifiable and they get a lot of attention, as they should. For those crashes, we are making progress. So a 40 to 45 per cent reduction is a great result. What is not improving at the same rate is the crashes where people are otherwise law-abiding, would not have necessarily come to the attention of you, as a police officer, slightly inattentive, slightly distracted, fatigue related. In some circumstances, police can identify a fatigue-related crash and prosecute, but, essentially, we are not going to enforce our way out of those types of crashes. We have an underlying problem now that is about me being a human being and just making mistakes. If you accept that with fatigue, I might not know exactly how tired I am and those sorts of things. Sometimes you do. If you have been in Parliament four nights a week and you have been there late and missing sleep and all those sorts of things, or a shift worker, doctors working long hours, we are aware of those, but sometimes a micro sleep does appear on a person and they do not get much warning about it. They are the ones now that not only WA, but all of the jurisdictions are turning our minds to. We have to keep working on reducing those risk-taking crashes. Thankfully, the community is much less accepting of that. A young driver coming out as a 17-year-old now is in a different environment to what I did

when I came out as a 17-year-old. Community acceptance—all of those things are positive. What is now showing is that we have to keep working on the risk-taking crashes, but we have a problem with these other so-called errors or mistakes.

[10.50 am]

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: What about the actual standards of the new drivers coming onto the road? Within my constituency, I am getting a lot of complaints. We have seen statistics here where licensing centres are having failure rates in excess of 60 per cent? Surely, that is an indicator that our system is broken. We are not getting kids to the standard to get on the road. I will evidence that; if I was to ask a 17-year-old, “What’s oversteer, what’s understeer, what’s effective braking?”, I am going to get a blank look. I would like to know your thoughts on the quality of the actual kids coming through the system we have at the moment going through their assessments.

Mr Cameron: Yes. It is a good question. There are a couple of points there. What has changed from perhaps the way we historically viewed driver preparation is now really the importance of getting experience—the so-called skills-based approach to preparing young drivers. I am not sure of your experience historically, but there was a lot of focus quite some years ago about the need to be able to steer out of emergency situations, to be able to recover in a loss of control and all the rest of it. The single most important evidence base now is really around getting on-road experience and learning to identify risks and potential hazards; in other words, know your limits. The ability of a driver, other than perhaps highly-skilled and highly-practised police drivers for example, who constantly test, re-test and practice high-speed manoeuvring or emergency evasion or recovery skills, the average driver in that sort of situation, the first point is: how do they practice those skills? I would put it to members of the committee: when was the last time that any of you found yourself in an emergency, panic situation? As an experienced driver, you allow following distance, you try and get in a space, you anticipate risks and hazards that will occur and you take action preventatively before it does.

The other thing that has changed in the vehicles now is technology. A lot of focus in earlier years, particularly when I learnt to drive about, you know, progressively applying a brake pedal and those sorts of things so you do not get rear wheel lock-up and all the rest of it, the technology has changed around that now—automated braking systems, ABS, electronic stability control. Really, it does not dumb it down; it basically provides more support to the driver. So the elements now, if you look at driver training and driver preparation worldwide, the focus has moved away. There used to be a historical focus on off-road training tracks. Sweden, in the 1960s, basically moved out of all of that—they went to a risk-based, hazard identification approach, because with those skills-based approaches, essentially there was no evidence to support they were actually making a difference. Loss of control on a country road, two wheels in the gravel—well, you would still want to teach someone to gradually ease back, but if the driver is slightly tired, they get surprised and they have a panic situation, it is very difficult to be practising recovery from those sorts of situations.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: That accounts for 80 per cent of our country roads.

Mr Cameron: Correct. So now the focus shifts from “can I make the driver perfect and highly skilled in all examples at all times” to “what do I do now to prevent that crash from occurring in the first place?” So, I need to educate the driver, and we still do that —

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: That comes back to the next question—that is, the standards of our driver instruction.

Mr Cameron: Yes. I will come back to that one.

If you let me just circle back, I will paint the picture. Let us take the example: single-vehicle crash. It has been a long time now since any jurisdiction focused on skills-based recovery-type actions to recover from dropping two wheels off the road. People are still reminded, still educated about that, but essentially now the focus is: How do I stop that? How do I prevent it? Educate? Yes. Enforce? Probably not. Shoulder seal and edge lines, so one metre of bitumen, a white line down the side and a rumble strip will help, as I drift, reminds me, wakes me up—whatever it needs to do—prompts me to stay on the bitumen. Very successful. WA has been doing that since 2012. We have a cost-benefit ratio over two in terms of the benefits we are getting out of that. Other jurisdictions are going that way. The other bit now is in the vehicle itself. So lane departure warning systems will now increasingly become part of the market and warn drivers.

Back to your question: in terms of preparation, the WA system, as I say, is very similar to the other states. What we are seeing, and we are doing more work on, is a lack of preparation by some young drivers. I think about two-thirds of the tests are retests because young people, some of them are less prepared. The actual driving standards test itself is largely unchanged in the last 10 years, I have been told. What we have done as a department in the last few years is a lot more work on the training that a driver assessor will get when they come to do the testing. That used to be a three-day training program; it is now about three weeks and it is a VET-matched program as well. The quality of assessment has gone up. The department has introduced tablets, we are calling that iAssess. It is in the metropolitan area; it is now rolling out regionally as well. Essentially, that is providing a lot more opportunity for education and feedback.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Without wanting to over-speak you, that is a focus on the assessment.

Mr Cameron: Yes.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Where is the focus on the actual training?

The CHAIRMAN: Preparation for assessment.

Mr Cameron: Preparation.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Yes, preparation. At the end of the day, I am absolutely anti this having parents teaching kids how to drive. Any first responder will tell you that having kids suitably trained by qualified driving instructors has got to develop a far better outcome.

Mr Cameron: No evidence to support that.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: This is something that New South Wales —

Mr Cameron: I am not giving you an opinion. The evidence has been looked at for quite some time. If there was an identified factor, we would be recommending that it is mandatory that you do that. None of the jurisdictions mandate that and the reason is because we cannot find the evidence. What the evidence is showing us is that, of course, you need some skills-based training, you need to know the road rules, but, essentially, the most important thing is the hours of supervised driving experience in a coaching sort of environment.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Could we have a look at some of that evidence, if it is possible?

Mr Cameron: Yes. The report I referred you to, there is an Austroads' report, there is also a graduated licensing framework that was done in 2015. Honourable member, that is one of the biggest shifts in the preparation of young drivers, not discounting people's opinions and what people believe is to be the case. As I say, the reason jurisdictions have not mandated that—we all recommend it; it makes sense. People are going to find it difficult to employ a professional for 50 hours, 60 hours, 70 hours, 80 hours. So a combination of both we would encourage, but many times we have been asked to look into whether there is evidence to say that a person trained by a

professional is going to be a much better driver than someone who just gets supervision and coached, the evidence is not there. That is the short answer: the evidence does not support going down that path.

The CHAIRMAN: In relation to unlicensed drivers, has any research been done as to the correlation between access and equity issues, for want of a better term, and unlicensed driving, and what measures are in place to assist people who do not have good access to driver training, either for financial reasons, family reasons, location reasons—there is a long list of reasons why.

Mr Cameron: Yes. If I understand your question, the first part of the answer to that question is that people drive unlicensed for a lot of reasons, and we have not seen that lack of access is the sole factor. It is certainly one of the factors that would contribute in some cases, but there are some people in our community that have never held a driver's licence.

The CHAIRMAN: Can we measure that lack of access part?

[11.00 am]

Mr Cameron: No, that is difficult. The Department of Transport obviously sees people once they are in a system and whether they are going in and out of having a licence, but, as I say, there is a relatively small cohort that we are beginning—across agencies, there is a lot of work being done to now start to look at what else can be done in that space and that is continuing with the commission.

The CHAIRMAN: So if you are a 16-year-old in Western Australia today, your parents may not have a motor vehicle. You may actually not be able to live at home, to start with. You may not have the financial capacity and you really do not know anyone who you would trust to simply ask, "Can you teach me how to drive?" What is in place for those people to take the steps necessary for them to train themselves, sit a test, get a licence? In many ways, the licence can be a pathway to employment opportunities they may not otherwise have.

Mr Cameron: It is. Apart from the safety, it is a very important step in terms of employment. There has been a lot done over a long period of time. When the changes began to be made about requiring hours of supervised experience, there was a lot of focus on: what about those people that cannot access? There have been quite a lot of changes in recent years, and it has been around for at least 10 years now. Starting with the school-based program, so the school drug education and road aware-based program. Most schools now, and we can get you the information, run a pre-driver program which enables young people basically to do their learner's permit in a school-based environment. Then they interface with the Department of Transport on that. That has a benefit that they are getting a broader educative approach, they are getting a safety approach, but then they can actually do that all through the school system.

The CHAIRMAN: But the learner permit is the starting point.

Mr Cameron: Correct, yes.

The CHAIRMAN: So what happens after that?

Mr Cameron: Yes. Then, as I say, there are driving instructors, there are parents, there are responsible adults, there are cohorts, sometimes regionally, and there is a variety of community-based programs that exist. Various organisations have taken it up over the years to provide either a vehicle and/or a supervising driver.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the commission fund any of those?

Mr Cameron: The school drug education project is funded through —

The CHAIRMAN: But not those community-based learn-to-drive initiatives?

Mr Cameron: No. There is quite a wide variety of those and they have a variety of sources of funding. There is quite a number of them.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Do you have a line of sight as to how well those groups are able to continue to provide that service? I am aware of a couple that have had ongoing difficulties attracting funding. RAC have stepped in to sponsor, but their sponsorship funds are drying up. Are we potentially seeing a gap of those not —

Mr Cameron: Not as a trend. You are absolutely right, the feedback or the observations you are making. From time to time, there will be variations for individual groups. We are not seeing a trend in that generally, but certainly, from time to time, over the different periods, there will be people, agencies, that require funding.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Do you have any sense of the capacity of those groups compared to the demand?

Mr Cameron: No.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: So there is potentially not a line of sight to how much unmet need there might be out there?

Mr Cameron: I do not have any information on that, no.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Just on that point, these groups do exist, but we do not know how many of them are out there, we do not know where they are, we do not know how much funding they are getting or who is giving them the funding, we do not know how many people are going through the system and we do not know how many people are not able to access those sorts of services—or do we have all that data?

Mr Cameron: That data does not exist in one spot. What I would say is there is a multitude of agencies involved. There is a multitude of organisations. There is an outreach program for licensing. Police are involved, Transport are involved, the justice system is involved, community development is involved. You mentioned groups like the RAC. Where there are problems or at-risk youth, for example, generally we are talking about there are local responses that work that way through. So if there were systematic problems, we would be aware.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: So if today I had an 18-year-old come to my office and say, “I don’t have the capacity to get a licence. Can you tell me who I can phone up or where I can go to get that?”, where would I send them? I have no idea where to send them. Do I send them to you and then you manage them through that system, or do I just say —

Mr Cameron: No. I would have thought, at a local level, you would start with a school-based program. They would know what programs exist, what support exists. That is essentially why we took that early intervention and preventative approach, so that then the schools are aware of what supports exist. The schools are looking at not only this issue for the welfare of the students, but a range of other issues. So the school drug education network is not only the teachers in the schools. That program is funded—I think it is nearly \$2 million a year. There is a statewide network of trainers, if you like, or leaders, and those people are supporting the teachers in the schools with these programs, but they are also in touch with the various providers and organisations. So for any young people, the first starting point would be through the school-based system.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: So if was to write to the Minister for Education and Training and ask that question, she should be able to tell me these are all the providers that are available and in which locations around the state?

Mr Cameron: The SDERA-based program? There is not a central list of those across the state. But your question was around the local level. Through the school-based program and SDERA, those trainers in the regions would be aware of the different agencies and different providers.

The CHAIRMAN: Are any of these programs, either to enable people to get their learner's permit or to assist them in getting the hours up, based within the prison or youth justice system?

Mr Cameron: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Who funds those programs?

Mr Cameron: Off the top of my head, I do not know. There is a variety of those.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not the commission's responsibility or the council's responsibility?

Mr Cameron: No. There is not central-based funding for a lot of these. We are talking about safety and we are talking about driver's licences and that, but there is a multitude of agencies looking at whether they are at risk, whether they are in prison and looking at their safe return into the community, so there would be a variety of funding sources for those.

The CHAIRMAN: When I hear the term "multiple agencies", the things that come to my mind are obviously lots of people doing good work, but also the big opportunity for there to be gaps and/or duplication of resources. Is there an opportunity here for some form of coordination, information gathering, a central repository of what all the good work out there is; and, if there is an opportunity, where would it be based?

Mr Cameron: The general answer to that would be that I think you can do a lot of collection of things and then you do not actually get any material benefit out of that. If there was a systematic problem—as I say, the net now is broader than it has ever been. For any young people that are in the school-based system, which is generally the vast majority, there is a strong early intervention, a strong educative approach for those young people, not only for road safety and a driver's licence, but for their education and their welfare more broadly. This program, as I say, is centrally funded. It goes statewide. Those trainers are then experienced in working with those other agencies. Within the justice system, there is a strong network there as well. The potential for overlap and duplication of funding I think is less likely, as there are always discussions amongst agencies. If it is not an agency around the Road Safety Council table, agencies are very familiar with reaching out. The days of just silos and not looking across at what others are doing I think are well past us.

So that addresses the coordination of that. There are many areas where you could spend an awful lot of time looking to create a central repository. Back to the member's question, at a local level, or in an institution, there would be a very quick way that people would find out what supports are available.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I have two follow-on questions to that. First of all, if the system is fairly fragmented, which is what I have heard, there is complexity associated with navigating that. Is there any evidence that you have found of disadvantaged youth opting out of the system and opting to drive without a licence? That is the first question. The second question is: given there are a large number of children who are under state care through the Department of Communities, does the department have any arrangements with the Department of Communities to facilitate access to appropriate driver education with those children?

Mr Cameron: Yes. You are asking me a lot of questions across government that I would not know the detailed answers to. The Department of Communities would have programs. I am not aware of the specifics of those. That would need to be sourced separately. What was your first question?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Whether disadvantaged youth are opting out of a complex system. My second question does relate to that, because there is an opportunity for road safety to be improved if vulnerable young people are educated early. So I would have thought the department would have had an interest in that conversation with the Department of Communities, as a pre-emptive conversation.

[11.10 am]

Mr Cameron: The Road Safety Council has an interest and so does the department in children's safety all the time. We do not have an indication that there is a worsening trend there. In the earlier evidence I presented to you, in fact, from the combination of things that have been introduced, we have seen a 60 per cent reduction in the number of people involved in serious and fatal crashes. That is whether they have a licence or not. We do not have a worsening or increasing safety problem amongst young people learning to drive and getting their driver's licence, certainly in the first three years of their experience. That is not to say that there is not always continuous improvement. The simple, short answer is that the trends are going the right way. There have been a lot of things implemented. There is a very wide net. Where there are variations or there are young people at risk, one organisation or another will get involved and look at those issues.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Do you know if there is an increase in the number of prosecutions of young people driving without a licence?

Mr Cameron: I do not have that information. That would be the WA Police.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: That would not form part of your data collection?

Mr Cameron: No—WA Police.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I will ask a broader question around the machinery of government changes, if you like. I am not necessarily sure that the commission, going from Transport to Police, was part of the machinery of government changes or separate, but irrespective of that, how has that gone, what have been the benefits, and what have been perhaps some of the challenges that have been experienced in that move?

Mr Cameron: That could come from the commission, but I did go into the commission in July 2017 as the acting commissioner, which was at the time that change occurred. The immediate benefits that started to be realised were that when you have a separate entity and a separate public service entity, there are a lot of requirements that go with that, as everyone would expect, in terms of financial management, governance, human resource management. All of those policies, procedures, requirements on a large government agency apply to a small, separate one. Going to be attached to WA Police increasingly enabled the staff within the commission to be more focussed on road safety. The commission is not a large organisation. It is not the central repository of everything. As I said earlier—your comments were about whether there is one source or one central repository. Data collection on the key trend issues is collected and collated, but it is always going to be the case in road safety that different agencies all have their different responsibilities. Your question around police prosecutions and things like that—WA Police will always have that. Unless there is a line of inquiry or an issue that arises or we are investigating something, we do not collect that information routinely.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I am sorry to interrupt you, but I would have thought that if there is any trend associated with unlicensed young drivers, that would have been a concern in relation to assessing how the driver training scheme is operating and how that impacts on road safety outcomes. I just find that a bit of —

Mr Cameron: We do not have a worsening trend, that we are aware of, in this situation.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: You have identified a trend, but you cannot identify what the components are within that trend, because I have already asked some questions about that. I just get this sense of uncertainty around some of those issues. Certainly, if you want to provide some additional comment out of this session, I would be happy to receive it, but that leaves a question mark around the efficiency of that coordination across government that we started the conversation with at the beginning. There does seem to me some gaps, particularly around the areas of disadvantaged youth, and a question mark around those disadvantaged youth, whom the state has a specific responsibility for.

Mr Cameron: Back to the commission. In terms of the broad concept of taking a small, separate entity, with all of the additional governance requirements, moving to be attached to WA police enabled that working relationship, after an initial period where you need to attach and become familiar with systems. It has enabled the commission staff to now be much focused on road safety. The resources are dedicated there. The human resources matters, the financial systems and that are all then supported through a larger parent agency, which is not uncommon in the history of the Office of Road Safety or the Road Safety Commission. It has been in government departments and has been able to draw that wider support from a larger government agency. That is probably a summary remark. Did you have any more?

The CHAIRMAN: One thing that strikes me as intriguing is that earlier we asked about some stats around unlicensed driving and you said that is really police data.

Mr Cameron: No, you asked me about prosecutions, and that is police information. As David indicated, we know from previous inquiries that there is about a 20 per cent crash involvement of unlicensed drivers.

Mr Slack-Smith: Across all KSI crashes.

Mr Cameron: Across all KSI.

The CHAIRMAN: But being part of police, do you not get access to that data, whether it is prosecution data or enforcement data or any of the like? If you are part of WA Police, is that data not automatically available to you?

Mr Slack-Smith: Technically, yes. Within the WA Police Force, all requests from business units regarding data from different, disparate corporate systems go through the business intelligence and analytics office. If there was a line of inquiry that we were wanting to follow up, the prosecution database would be where a lot of this information is held. We would put a request in through that office and receive our output back sometime after that request.

The CHAIRMAN: So from that perspective, you are like any other agency? You make an application and seek the data?

Mr Slack-Smith: One of the difficulties that we had when we were outside of police is that, being outside of police, there were sensitivities with what they can release. So if we were outside of police, we would not have been able to have that request fulfilled in the same way that we are being within police.

The CHAIRMAN: We found that as a parliamentary committee so, yes, we sympathise with you on that.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: With regard to licensing centres, there is always media going on about the fact that it takes people three months to book their test, or an inordinate length of time. Also the fact that people work, and taking time off work. What is being done to make it easier for people to get

a booking and, potentially, have you thought about doing testing on weekends as well for people who work and cannot get time off work?

Mr Cameron: Short answer, yes. There is quite a lot being done. We are just completing that trial at Kelmscott where we have opened up Saturday morning opportunities. That addresses exactly that. We are looking at the results of that and we will intend to spread that one further. There has been quite a lot of work done. As I said, we are working, and we will encourage the school systems and others to look at strong messages to young people to be better prepared. We have taken on more assessors. In the transition to new technology, which will give us better outcomes, that has required us at times to take away two of our driver assessors because they then do the training. We have done the metropolitan area now, so we are through the worst of that. Some of the comments you are referring to, we have certainly seen that because of the changes we made during last year for the metropolitan area. We are now doing that regionally. I think we have started in Bunbury in the south west and we will roll progressively. We do not think the impact will be as significant, but the benefits of that are a more educative approach and a better outcome for the young drivers.

So we have put on more assessors. There are another six assessors coming onboard this month. We have trained up a number of our customer service officers also. They can provide additional tests when required as well. We identified an increasing trend with no-shows, getting up to around 10 or 11 per cent. There are a few things happening there. We think that when young drivers are doing their hazard perception test, they are automatically just booking their practical driving test for a time in the future when they can get a booking. We are finding that some young people are then forgetting all about that and either not turning up or turning up poorly prepared. So we have now introduced an SMS system and a reminder. That is starting to make a difference. The no-shows are starting to come down. People are getting a reminder, I think it is three days out from their test date, which then enables us to reallocate a booking that they had. We have a system now which does require people to check every day, because there are changes every day. We do releases for six months ahead, we do releases for three months, but we do keep some on a daily basis. It will depend on where you are. It does enable people, because we are now getting the no-shows reduced, we are able to re-release those test opportunities. Quite often we were having assessors there and people would not turn up.

[11.20 am]

The other thing we have had to sort of try to provide strong messages around is sometimes they are turning up in a vehicle that is not suitable. Sometimes the vehicle is not registered, there are roadworthy concerns and things like that, so we are trying to make sure that people are prepared, if they are not in a driving school situation, with an appropriate vehicle. We are doing quite a lot. As I say, there was certainly an effect last year when we moved to this iAssess process; we acknowledge that. We think we are through the hump of that now and we are getting a lot more no-shows. We are also now looking at the stage at when young people can book a practical driving assessment. We do have examples where the young person clearly did not expect to fail, they have sat their test and it is two or three days before they are going to get a job. In those cases, certainly when they contact us, we are doing whatever we can through a staff member to try to identify a suitable opportunity for them—maybe not at their local centre, but somewhere else.

The CHAIRMAN: We have done a lot. Are there things that we could be doing that we are not doing, either through a best practice point of view?

Mr Cameron: The answer is yes. There is always more we can do and we will keep looking. One that we are looking at at the moment is, as I say, there seems to be an automatic booking of the practical test when people are doing the hazard perception test. We are looking into that. We do not have

the data and the information to make decisions on that, but we are looking at whether that would potentially enable young people to be better prepared, to reduce the no-shows and that sort of stuff, because the no-shows are at 10 or 11 per cent and re-tests at perhaps two-thirds. We are seeing that one-quarter of young people coming through fail not only the initial assessment, but also the supplementary one as well. So that is a quarter that we could encourage to be better prepared. We are looking at what else we can do to encourage them to be better prepared. Unfortunately, I think sometimes in the haste and the hurly-burly, people forget that this is about getting a safety outcome, and we are getting a safety outcome but, clearly, we want to improve accessibility as well.

The CHAIRMAN: I think we are all on the same page there, in wanting to get those safety outcomes.

Mr Cameron: Yes, and improve accessibility.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. That is, I think, still a key ingredient in getting those safety outcomes. To rephrase what you said, two-thirds of re-tests, so only one-third of people showing up to a driver assessment are there for the first time.

Mr Cameron: By default, I think that is, yes. There is a difference between the figures. We have figures on novice drivers versus all drivers. We have tests in other states.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: In terms of the assessors and their fail and pass record, do you look at trends between centres and between assessors to see how many are passing and failing? So one assessor might be failing 90 per cent and all your others might be failing 30 per cent. Do you look at an analysis between centres and assessors and then actually go and find out why that is happening and potentially make changes if they are necessary?

Mr Cameron: Yes to every question. That is probably the shortest answer I will ever give, but yes to every question, and not to be glib about it. We have identified and we do monitor that. As I say, that is a progressive thing. We have certainly seen some differences. Some of the claims that might be made occasionally, we cannot substantiate, so I would make that comment, but we are looking at the different pass rates between assessors at the same centre, and then across centres. We are doing a lot around the training and the education around that. There are particular standards and particular processes that we are looking for. The other big enabler to support us in that and provide feedback is now those iAssess tablets which are essentially recording and observing the driver instruction, for a number of reasons. One is to help us get a greater consistency in application. We are also taking a more educative approach. Historically, there would be tales about one person did one simple thing wrong and just got a fail. If it is a significant and serious safety matter, that would be treated differently. If it is of a relatively minor nature, our assessors are very positive now about coming onboard with a more educative approach, so in your case, "Tony, look, do you realise you did this?" or whatever. As long as that was not a significant safety risk—you went through a red light or ran a stop sign or something like that—that would not necessarily be treated the same way as it was before, so trying to take a more educative approach. We do have all those diagnostics and we are monitoring that. That is something that we are very conscious of.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That has been pretty comprehensive. Unless there are any other questions from the members, we will finish off here.

Thank you for your evidence today. We will send you a transcript of the hearing to correct minor errors, if you could make those corrections within 10 working days from the date that you get the transcript. If you do not get around to correcting it or do not send it back to us, we will deem it as being correct in your mind. You cannot use that process to introduce new material or to change the sense of your evidence, but of course, as a parliamentary committee, if you go away thinking there

is something you did not tell us today that you think we need to know, please let us know. We are happy to receive that at any time. We indicated today that you would send us some further information, so after the hearing, we will write back to you just highlighting those areas and seeking your response. We thank you for your time and for making yourself available to the committee. We will close the hearing.

Hearing concluded at 11.26 am
