



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of the **Premier and Cabinet**
Office of Road Safety

Our ref: DPC/50609

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Dear Dr Worth

Office of Road Safety's Submission to the Education Health Standing Committee's Inquiry Into the Adequacy and Appropriateness of Prevention and Treatment Services for Alcohol and Illicit Drug Problems in WA

The Office of Road Safety (ORS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee's inquiry with a particular focus on the first two Terms of Reference, namely:

- a) the evidence base, content, implementation and resourcing (including teacher training) for health education and other interventions on alcohol and illicit drugs for school-aged students;
- b) the evidence base, adequacy, accessibility and appropriateness of the broad ranges of services for the treatment and support of people with alcohol and drug problems and their families, and the most appropriate ways to ensure integrated care ...

The prevention of drink and drug driving is a significant issue for road safety. Just over one in four road deaths in WA involved at least one driver who was over the legal 0.05 limit and 65 per cent of these deaths involved drivers who were three times over the legal limit. At the same time there is growing concern about the contribution of drugs (particularly cannabis and amphetamine type stimulants, particularly among certain groups, such as truck drivers) to fatal and serious crashes.

Road safety in Western Australia is managed within a well-defined administrative framework in accordance with the *Road Safety Council Act 2002*. The Road Safety Council (RSC)¹ and the Office of Road Safety (ORS) advise Government on evidence based programs and initiatives for reducing the level of road trauma. The RSC is also responsible for the administration of the Road Trauma Trust Fund which, in accordance with the legislation, receives one-third of speed and red light camera moneys each year to fund the road safety programs recommended by the RSC and approved by the Government.

¹ The RSC consists of an independent Chairperson and representatives from a range of both government and non-government agencies with responsibility for road safety (Office of Road Safety, Insurance Commission WA, WA Police, Department of Health, Main Roads WA, Department of Education and Training, WA Local Government Association, the Department of Transport and RAC Ltd representing road user groups).

In March 2009, the Government endorsed the RSC's recommended road safety strategy *Towards Zero: Road Safety Strategy 2008-2020*² which is based upon a 12 year vision of a road transport system where crashes resulting in death and serious injury are virtually eliminated. *Towards Zero* applies a long term, ultimate level of aspiration for the implementation of the Safe System to WA.

If fully implemented, we could see up to 11,000 fewer people killed or seriously injured on WA roads between 2008 and 2020. To achieve this, the strategy adopts the Safe System approach which views the road transport system holistically by seeking to manage the interaction between road users, roads and roadsides, travel speeds and vehicles using four cornerstones:

- *Safe Road Use*: Integrating behaviour change programs with improved enforcement to make them more powerful and addressing impaired driving (alcohol, drugs, fatigue and distraction), restraint use, graduated licensing and speed choice.
- *Safe Roads and Roadsides*: Investing in Safe System infrastructure improvements.
- *Safe Speeds*: Enhancing speed enforcement and further reflecting on the appropriateness of WA's speed limits.
- *Safe Vehicles*: Promoting the take up of safer vehicles and key safety features, particularly by government and corporate fleets.

In *Towards Zero*, the Government has committed to considering the best means of reducing repeat drink driving through alcohol assessment and treatment programs and technological solutions. The widespread use of alcohol interlocks could significantly reduce drink driving as a primary risk factor for road safety during *Towards Zero*'s 12 year life.

Over the past decade, the RSC and ORS have progressively developed and implemented a range of best practice education, prevention and treatment programs within the Safe Road Use cornerstone to address drink and drug driving road safety issues. I understand that some RSC agencies including the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Training, will make separate detailed submissions about the road safety programs they deliver that are relevant to the Committee's terms of reference.

In addition to those programs, the ORS itself undertakes a range of activities with the aim of reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on WA roads through the prevention of drink and drug driving. These activities include research into the evidence and prevalence of drink and drug driving and co-ordinating the implementation of best practice prevention initiatives. The ORS undertakes the following functions which may be relevant to the Committee's inquiry:

- Participates in the WA Drug and Alcohol Senior Officers Group which has responsibility for cross-agency development, implementation and monitoring of the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy. ORS has committed to a number of key actions in relation to the prevention of harm related to alcohol and drug consumption through education and treatment.

² *Towards Zero* can be found at www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=strategiesNewStrategy2008-2020.

- Develops novice driver strategy and policy including a recommendation to extend alcohol and drug driving restrictions to drivers supervising learners. This measure is aimed at preventing novices from engaging in drink driving through requiring supervisors to role model appropriate behaviour.
- Oversees the management of Insurance Commission of WA funded projects. This includes the Road Aware component of the School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) program. SDERA is the state Government's primary drug and road safety education strategy for young people and works with schools and community to provide prevention education aimed at keeping young people safer.

The SDERA program contains specific content relating to the appropriate use of drugs and alcohol in a road safety context. Hence wider promotion and uptake of this program across WA would be of considerable benefit in facilitating the communication of preventative alcohol and other drug messages to children and young people.

ORS recently commissioned Quantum Consulting Australia and staff from the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland (CARRS-Q) to undertake an evaluation of the Road Aware Drivers component of the SDERA program. In their draft report (received in April 2009), the consultants have recommended that an enhanced marketing and communication strategy be developed to increase the awareness and take-up of the Keys for Life aspect of the program. It is suggested that the marketing should target schools that have not implemented the program or have discontinued program implementation and high risk groups particularly those in regional areas of WA. It is likely that additional funding will be required to implement the consultants' recommendations.

- Develops drink driving strategy and policy. Drink driving is a significant issue for road safety. Just over one in four road deaths in WA involved at least one driver who was over the legal 0.05 limit and 65 per cent of these deaths involved drivers who were three times over the legal limit.

A comprehensive package of evidence-based and proven initiatives, referred to as the Repeat Drink Driving Strategy (RDDS) to reduce the incidence of drink driving related offences and the associated harm in WA has been developed. The RDDS includes:

- an alcohol ignition interlock scheme;
- vehicle sanctions with provision to impound or confiscate the vehicles of repeat drink driving offenders and those who drive without a valid licence;
- rehabilitation for repeat drink driving offenders with serious alcohol problems; and
- initiatives to limit unlicensed driving including compulsory carriage of licence and increased detection of those driving without a valid licence.

The original recommendations for the RDDS were made in 2003 and implementation has been significantly delayed. The Minister for Road Safety has recently confirmed in the media the Government's intention to introduce the RDDS. The RDDS is a comprehensive initiative involving multi-agency action. If approved,

successful implementation of the RDDS will rely heavily on effective actions being implemented by different agencies.

Through the implementation of an effective penalty and rehabilitation program for repeat drink driving offenders, the proposed RDDS legislation has the potential to minimise the harm associated with drink driving. Its early intervention and rehabilitation elements would make a valuable contribution to deterring drinking at harmful levels.

- Develops and implements strategy and policy to address specific issues related to drink driving in Indigenous communities. The particular issues related to drink driving amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders clearly need special consideration. Indigenous people are disproportionately represented among drink driving offenders and the proportion of Indigenous offenders significantly increases with the number and severity of drink driving offences. Indigenous people are over represented in both fatal and serious road crashes where the death rate is about three times that for non-Indigenous people.

A package of measures has been identified in consultation with agencies that work with and/or represent Indigenous people to reduce the incidence of Indigenous drink driving and unlicensed driving (including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention) including the systems within which they might best be established. These measures are referred to as the Indigenous Drink Driving and Licensing Strategy (IDDL Strategy) and are intended to support the RDDS when implemented.

During 2007, the then Cabinet approved the *Reducing Indigenous Imprisonment: Fine Default and Licensing Strategy* report, which resulted from the Wyatt Report (2007) and provided a whole of government response to improve driver licensing rates, and reduce drink driving and fine default among Indigenous communities. The initiatives contained in the IDDL Strategy were included in the suite of measures proposed in the Wyatt Report and subsequently in the *Reducing Indigenous Imprisonment: Fine Default and Licensing Strategy*.

The implementation of the recommendations of the Wyatt Report would result in significant improvements in the prevention and treatment of drink driving related problems in Indigenous communities.

- Develops drug driving strategy and policy. There is growing concern about the contribution of drugs (particularly cannabis and amphetamine type stimulants, particularly among certain groups, such as truck drivers) to fatal and serious crashes. These drugs have been shown to impair driving skills or increase the level of risk taking behaviour, resulting from the psychoactive effects of the drug.

New legislative measures under the *Road Traffic Amendment (Drugs) Act 2007*, aimed at reducing the incidence of drug driving on Western Australian roads, came into force on 12 October 2007. The drug driving reforms addressed both random roadside screening of drivers for the presence of three illegal drugs (THC cannabis, methamphetamine and MDMA ecstasy) and enhanced police capability in identifying and prosecuting drivers who are visibly impaired by drugs of any kind.

In April 2009, independent consultants from the Centre for Automotive Safety Research (CASR) from the University of Adelaide completed a review of the amended legislation and the associated drug driving law enforcement and made recommendations for possible improvements³. The review recommended the extension of the level of enforcement of drug impaired driving laws. A Government response to the review's recommendations is currently being prepared by ORS and the WA Police.

As discussed with Lisa Fanciulli on the phone, this letter is a summary of the key issues. Further information can be provided in a more detailed submission in late August, if requested.

Yours sincerely



Iain Cameron
Executive Director

31 July 2009

³ The review can be found at <http://www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au/documents/ReviewofWesternAustralianDrugDrivingLaws2009.pdf>