

To the Community Development and Justice Committee,

I would firstly like to convey my gratitude and thanks for being given the opportunity to provide my view on how WA and Police are doing in the arena of road safety. It is an area of high interest for me, and one I have plenty to say about.

I am asked to provide my views on how to measure whether Police are doing a good job in the area of road safety, and I think personally herein lies the issue if I interpret the context of the question correctly. And that is that I firmly believe whilst WA Police are the sole and primary enforcers of our road rules and legislation, the responsibility of road safety and our road toll falls on everyone, not just Police, and attempting to evaluate WA Police's performance in this area emphasises a floor in the broader concept and understanding of the issue.

After recently returning from a trip to Melbourne over the Easter break, and seeing the extent of road safety promotion and understanding of the issue within the community, I am once again astounded at how comparatively little WA commits to actually making a serious impact in the area, certainly from a publicly visual perspective. Whilst road safety is a multifaceted and complex topic, it boils down to a couple of key points that really take the focus. Education, awareness, action/adoption, and enforcement.

Every individual who lives in WA is a road user one way or another, be it the driver of the vehicle, or a passenger in another. Therefore road safety is an issue that we must all find an interest in, even if for our own self-regarding purposes of life preservation! Now whilst I'm hesitant to compare state-to-state, country to country when it comes to governance and policy, I do firmly believe WA is a step behind when it comes to road safety. This is not only on a national, but a global level, and this is reflected particularly in our regional road toll which statistically speaking is rising. From awareness to education, whilst WA has some standout techniques in educating the new and current road users of their road responsibilities, there is common sentiment that there simply isn't enough. The Office of Road Safety (ORS) is a body created with the single aim of saving lives on our roads, be it through research, project funding or advertising campaigns, but many people don't see the full extent of the ORS's work.

When it comes to research and project funding, whilst the ORS excels in this area, many of the general public would be surprised to see what work is actually accomplished in this area. It receives little to no media attention, and whilst the ORS website does a great job of making the information public, only those truly interested will ever go looking and find the various reports, statistics and information packs.

When it comes to road safety, the everyday road user is essentially 'lazy'. That is unless the information is brought to them it simply won't be digested! Enter the advertising campaigns

The ORS has run some fantastic campaigns in its history, those such as the 'Enjoy the Ride' and 'You Deserve It' campaigns showed great achievement, and according to the ORS's own campaign evaluations, we're successful in their time of broadcast. The aspect most lacking I think for the road safety campaigns in WA is their consistency and actual push onto the public. Currently, if I were to drive from Perth to Margaret River, I would likely hear no radio commercials related to road safety, and whilst I may come across one of the large highway billboard adverts, for every 1 road safety related message I'll see, there'll be 2 or 3 alcohol adverts on the same stretch of road; by then I've already forgotten what the 1st billboard said.

To go back to my recent trip to Melbourne, I was the passenger in a vehicle driving from the city centre of Melbourne to the 12 Apostles. Only a 230km drive, yet (and I counted) I saw no less than 30 messages relating to either drink driving, speed, driver fatigue, driver distraction or seat belts. These were in the form of roadside billboards, LED traffic alert signs, permanent signage etc. The Traffic Accident Commission (TAC) was not going to let one driver die on that road due to lack of knowledge and every possible attempt to drive home what you and I consider such simple messages. Compare driving to Margaret River (280km) or Kalgoorlie (605km) to the example above, and it doesn't take much to see the difference in the scale of investment.

Whilst I understand this is a different organisation or agency working with different demographics in a different city, with different goals, aims and funding; the concept and end game is the same, and that is saving lives on our roads. By placing the responsibility of road safety on the driver, and quite publicly doing so, there can be a difference made. Going back to Victoria, there wouldn't be too many people who don't know what/who the TAC is. Ask a West Australian about the ORS and you'll get plenty of blank looks. I firmly believe the ORS needs to work towards building the same reputation and profile as the TAC.

In Victoria, there is a genuine desire to drive responsibly, and for two reasons. Firstly because the message is so broadly and frequently broadcasted in the public eye it becomes second nature, there is no avoiding the message. Enforcement comes a close second. Through an extensive network of speed notification cameras and signs, to actual speed enforcement cameras, and many marked Police highway patrol vehicles, the majority of drivers deem the risk simply not worth it. It's a perfect combination of education and enforcement working with each other, and not exclusively from one another.

WA needs to adopt more frequented, and prolonged campaigns that extend beyond the current examples. Campaigns such as 'Enjoy the Ride' are timeless; they present a side of road safety that many people took on board, which caught their attention, and changed their perspective on road safety. We truly need to see the road safety message drilled so far home you simply won't forget it. Presently the ORS is receiving the budget it needs to enact a great emphasis on road safety; it's now time to start spending those dollars.

Again, whilst I write this, I generalise based on my opinion and view from my own perspective and experience, but the techniques of road safety education and enforcement I have seen abroad have led to a level of public acceptance and adoption that has become second nature. There will always be the statistical outliers that will ignore all the rules, all the education, all the enforcement, but the vast majority of road users take it on, and commit to safer roads.

To specifically cover the topic of enforcement, I think WA Police's approach to road safety will be greatly served by an expanded Traffic Enforcement Group. Police that are focused on genuine road safety enforcement, both in the metro and regional areas. These Police should be interacting with the public, not necessarily infringing people for minor offences where genuine mistakes are made (non life threatening situations obviously), but serving notices or warnings so that people are given the opportunity to identify and fix the problem, be it a broken tail light, or maybe failing miserably when it comes to indicating at a roundabout. There is always context to consider, but Police are trained well enough to apply common sense and logic on a case-by-case situation. Police in traffic enforcement shouldn't have their performance measured by how many fines they hand out in a shift, but by how many driver interactions they've had in a day. I firmly stand on a zero tolerance approach on the issues of drink and drug driving, speed, distraction etc.; perpetrators of these offences are blatantly risking lives. We need more Police and physical enforcement on the roads to encourage WA road users to do the right thing, and to catch those who simply aren't. As always however, there must be an education campaign to support any enforcement approach, you can't have one without the other.

When it comes to road safety policing and enforcement, there is a large community belief that there is simply too much political overshadow or influence. Whilst it's important for a strong governance and political leadership structure, the police should be autonomous when it comes to traffic enforcement (and policing generally), and they shouldn't feel compelled to reach so called 'targets' or 'quotas' for infringement notices. As outlined earlier, they should have their performance measured by the number of human interactions made per shift. WA Police is already making a dynamic shift to its new local Policing model, a more inclusive and inviting traffic enforcement group, focused on

educating drivers through interaction as opposed to infringement (as always where contextually appropriate) would lend itself to this reform. This may be seen as a job that Police shouldn't have to do, but if it's not Police, who else can interact with the drivers on our roads?

I don't want for this write-up to be seen as criticising any department or individual, the work being done by all departments, organisations and individuals in the area of road safety is all combining to the bigger picture, but as with everything, there's always room for improvement. WA's road toll is overrepresented on our regional roads, and this is the area where the greatest impact can be made, but we need our policy makers, our campaign makers, our law enforcers and most importantly all WA road users to work in the same direction for the same result, reducing the road toll, and saving lives on our roads.

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you today. I hope I've been able to provide some insight from my own personal experience as an individual who's seen first hand the carnage that can be caused by drink drivers on our roads, and the impact that has on our community. Now as a voice for the people I represent through Enough is Enough WA, I'm glad I am able to have an input and potentially help direct the future of road safety in WA.

Regards,

Tom Davies  
Founder EIEWA