

Ian Luff and Stewart Nicholls  
Drive to Survive™

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Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

## Overview

Respected motoring expert Ian Luff established Ian Luff Motivation Australia Pty Ltd to deliver excellence in driver training and education in 1983.

Since this time Ian has trained over 200,000 people and worked with 10 Australian World Champions in the field of driver tuition and motivation. Recently Ian Luff and Business Development Director Stewart Nicholls were invited by the current NSW Roads Minister Mr Duncan Gay to help with an advisory panel regarding learner driver training. Out of this expert panel came the emergence of the Safer Drivers Course for Learner Drivers.

This has been a great move forward in the learning process that allows Learner drivers to benefit from more safety-orientated education during the learner driver process. This has been a positive move in the right direction relating to driver education policy, but more needs to be done to help save lives on our roads. It now seems that in 2015 Vic Roads is looking to model the same program in that state based on this safer driver program.

Ian Luff is an Australian motor racing champion with a mechanical engineering degree. Ian looks at the practicality of driver related issues on a regular basis, having appeared in the media on many occasions when asked for his road related expert advice, Ian is a very recognisable character who cuts through the rubbish to get to the root of the issue at hand. While Ian does not have a psychology degree, he has the infield experience of coaching many people over a long period of time; his ability to read people and their behaviour is exemplary due to this process.

Ian is a very accomplished public speaker and is often drawn upon to motivate large audiences including an extensive media background on the subject of road safety.

Stewart Nicholls has extensive car club experience, joining CAMS when he was just 15 years of age and competing at Australian Rally Championship level. Stewart also served some 7 years on the CAMS NSW Rally Advisory Panel with two of those years as Chairman. Stewart's business background extends to International franchising and business development. He is also a qualified motor mechanic.

Together Ian Luff and Stewart Nicholls bring a wealth of experience and a practical approach to road safety and motoring related issues.

## Road Safety – A complex Issue

### Speeding

It has long been reported that speeding is the most common cause of road related fatalities, however in reality it is inappropriate speed for the conditions that is more the problem along with a host of other complicating factors.

Speeding serves as a great revenue raising linchpin for Governments to penalise otherwise safe drivers. In saying this we acknowledge that the law must be adhered to in order for us to live in an orderly society. But are these laws being used correctly to help reduce road trauma?

To focus and report solely that speeding is the cause of most casualty crashes is mostly wrong, it gives a false impression that if you are not speeding you will be okay in the event of a crash. Sadly this is not true and you can die at the legal speed limit of 60km/h or below. When they say speed was a factor in a crash this has the connotation that the driver was breaking the speed limit and this was the reason for the crash. This is puerile in it's basis, as no doubt the speed they were travelling at impacted on the outcome of the occupants, but most likely the cause was from other factors.

Factors like:

- Fatigue
- Inattention – Lack of concentration
- Distraction
- Driver competency
- Impatience
- Drinking or driving under the influence of substances like drugs

It would be genuinely rare that speeding in itself is the sole cause of a serious crash.

The public has become increasingly sceptical about this line of rhetoric from the Government and Police. There is a serious lack of credibility behind measures that solely target speeding due to the other factors that contribute to crashing as listed above. Often this is dismissed as revenue raising and perhaps this is a problem in addressing the road trauma debate, the argument that speeding is the cause of all crashes has worn thin with the public who believe otherwise. The marketing and PR campaigns have not worked in this regard and over Policing as we have seen in Victoria has not helped to lower the road toll.

## Road Rules

We believe an independent audit of ALL road rules, including speed limits needs to be conducted with national standards to be introduced that are consistent across the nation, with all types of traffic issues considered. The road rules largely stem from a system that started with horse and cart and have been added too over time. Many road users are also unaware of some of the rules that apply, due to the complexities of these rules. They need to be simplified and clearly relayed to road users, when was the last time a road rule bulletin was sent to licence holders? It doesn't happen, again the psychological affect this has on road users is that this doesn't matter because they were not informed about it. The classic examples of this are how people still can't negotiate a roundabout properly or keep left unless overtaking on major arteries.

Other inadequacies in the system are for example a Learner driver in Victoria can travel at the posted speed limit (same as a licenced driver), but once in NSW they have to drop back to a maximum of 90km/h. This creates a speed differentiation that frankly causes frustration to other road users and makes the learner unsafe (it was 80km/h until Ian Luff argued that it needed to be raised). Or Melbourne's "Hook turn" that is only taught in Victoria, yet a road user from NSW could drive through the CBD of Melbourne and has no clue they are breaking the law. There are many inconsistencies and these are just two that we can name without too much problem at all, the question is how many more are there across the country?

We believe a raising of the speed limit on roads like the Hume Hwy and New England Hwy (as an example) and many outback roads will not affect the road toll and in more likelihood will reduce fatigue related crashes by reducing travel times, this has been largely criticised by many Government reports as the speed kills campaign continues to be the driver of their road safety initiatives. This needs to be trialled and a proper report carried out on its effectiveness. The public would also embrace this process as a sensible approach to the problem. It is also well known that fatigue related fatalities occur on these kinds of roads, again a proper assessment of the types of crashes on major roads needs to be introduced.

## Driver Education

We believe post licence driver education programs should be mandatory for all road users every 5 years to ensure they are up to date with current vehicle technology and best practice road safety advice. This education should not be subsidised by the Government but should be a user pay system. A maximum fee of \$300 for the training should be in place to ensure affordability and given this is every 5 years would mean a yearly cost of just \$60 or \$5 per month of driving over that period. Or perhaps make the program such that they get a free licence for 5 years if they participate in a driving program as a voluntary option.

We would argue this training if conducted properly would reduce the road toll and create a much safer road environment. If Governments were serious about reducing the road toll and not just revenue raising, why would it not adopt such a policy? Improving driver competency through better education and life saving information is a positive approach to a negative subject. This is largely what is driving the success of the Safer Drivers Course for Learner Drivers that we were instrumental in the inception of.

However some people still want to argue that post license driver training increases the likelihood of a driver having a crash. They claim this education makes drivers over confident and increases their likelihood of taking risks. This kind of mentality is frankly why road safety policy has been diminished to the constant argument of speeding, lets dumb down the environment because our drivers have a lower competency. How can you calculate the crashes that have been avoided by the drivers who have had further driver training? How can you argue that education doesn't work? This is the issue facing driver-training advocates (like us) and stopping a more rational approach to the issue. The onus is always placed on us to prove the education works. Really, who can argue against education in any field, driving is no different; you can't know what you don't know!

Governments are still touting this baseless argument across this country when pushed on the subject. They refer to supposed studies that were carried out long ago. The driver education standard and approach has changed significantly since these studies were undertaken, thus making these assumptions out of date and now irrelevant. It is still stated by supposed experts that driver education causes road users to become over confident and that it encourages drivers to become racing car drivers. This is not the practice of organisations like **Drive to Survive** who prefer to work on the cognitive knowledge and behaviour of a driver through self-discovery.

We have found that drivers are lead to believe they are a good driver because they passed the test and were given a licence to drive; therefore they must be a good driver. However when shown many safety related common mistakes that drivers make they are always amazed at what they didn't know. This level of unconscious incompetence leads to poor driving habits and a false sense of security. When we make a driver aware of their faults, from tailgating to misuse of the ABS braking systems or why distractions are lethal, this leads to behaviour change through being conscious of their inadequacies. Leading to consciously competent drivers.

Furthermore the psychologists and road safety consultants that are used by bureaucrats tend to push their own agendas to help perpetuate their own consultancy needs, therefore often pushing these out-dated philosophies through into Government without consultation with experts who deliver road safety training at the coalface.

This type of training would not need to be over regulated but with simple guidelines in place and could be achieved say in a 4-year rollout period. From our own research we believe the majority of taxpayers and voters would overwhelmingly agree with this policy and embrace the idea. A standard could be offered to ensure the training is consistent and would be available to all road users as an accreditation process in order to regain your licence each 5 years. This would also create a new industry; one that is education based and will provide thousands of people with work opportunities.

## Venues

Safe venues need to be created in many areas to help with allowing these road safety programs to be conducted, again providing employment in a road related educational industry. These venues could also be used to support the motor industry and club based motorsport activities, providing outlets for

young people to speed safely away from the public road system. This need for venues is consistently called for by the public and motoring enthusiasts who recognise there is a lack of venues for this purpose.

This is proven to help young people reduce their desire to speed on public roads, having affordable motoring venues that encourage them to do this behaviour on the track or private road course is a much safer idea than the public roads. Once drivers have an outlet, they no longer want to express this reckless behaviour on the public roads; we have seen countless examples of this exact process working. To simply brand these citizens as hooners and expect this label to encourage them to change their behaviour is ill thought out, people especially young people do not respond to threats but rather positive encouragement to participate in a sport that will help the economy through industry and growth.

We use the analogy that you would not play cricket in a shopping centre with a cricket ball and bat, this would be dangerously reckless and people's safety would be put at risk. Yet we provide legitimacy to this sport (cricket) by providing a cricket pitch and ground to play this sport on. Motor sport is no different, if we have more venues, clubs could again thrive and young people would develop a sense of belonging to that club with no need to carry this out on the public roads. This is a proven process of **'taking speed off the roads'**<sup>TM</sup>.

## Road Standards

The standard of roads in Australia has improved significantly, however there needs to be a good hard look at improving traffic flow, infrastructure is being built with only the needs of the current requirements as a priority. As population epicentres grow like in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, the public roads become increasingly congested leading to driver frustration, boredom and risk taking behaviour.

New housing approval is granted without any improvement in the road network. This is highlighted in Western Sydney where 7000 new homes are being built in the Oran Park (set to expand to 128,000) town centre area, with majority of those people going to use the already over crowded M5 and M7 motorway.

The M5 Motorway is currently undergoing a significant upgrade with huge inconvenience to toll users yet it will still be inadequate once finalised. This widening is only going from 2 lanes to 3, however when it reaches the M5 tunnel towards the airport it drops back to two lanes, creating a new bottle neck for traffic. The Hume Hwy just before the M5 (the funnel road) is 4 lanes wide and has a huge capacity, but will be restricted by the 3 lane M5 and the two lane tunnel, again inadequate planning of an upgrade to a user pays road system that generates over \$220M per annum for its owners. This is just one example of the same issue being repeated across the country, stifling growth and productivity. It's a case of planning approval being granted before infrastructure upgrading.

We believe road standards go hand in hand with road safety and far too long have Governments used the motorist as a revenue source without giving back to their needs.

Local councils control a vast array of road system that do not come under the main road authority, councils are neither financially able to sustain these roads or make them safe with their lack of knowledge and experience with managing road systems.

Some 50% of all serious road crashes occur on council managed roads with a distinct lack of planning and safety measures thought of when in the design phase of this infrastructure. Pinch points appear, traffic restrictions are placed on local roads to reduce traffic flow in residential areas (suits council objectives) and this causes further build up on major roads and arteries.

The process of blocking off local traffic areas has reduced driver options for travel and increased traffic on major arteries, this is a planning issue due to council control of road systems.

## **Driving Environment – leading to driver complacency**

When Ian Luff got started in road safety training it was largely driver skill focussed due to the difficulty it took to drive a vehicle in 1972. Vehicle technology was poor, with very little driver aids at all. No ABS brakes, stability control, air conditioning, power steering, cruise control, low powered engines and many more inadequacies were the norm. Drivers needed skill to control the car that would skid in the wet, not stop well and were frankly unsafe (in today's standards).

Jump forward to 2015 and the modern motorcar practically drives itself, so driver competency has reduced, not just the skill required to control a vehicle but the ease in how it drives that leads to drivers becoming bored behind the wheel. Especially when traffic congestion and long periods of stopping at traffic lights occur.

This boredom leads to distraction, with things like mobile phones, personal grooming and the like taking priority over driving duties. Concentration levels and anticipation are then pushed aside. The dangers are still present today that where when driving in 1972 albeit the roads are far more congested.

Add to this problem generation Y and generation Z who have very short concentration spans and we have a recipe for disaster. The temptation to talk on the phone while driving, text message or engage in some kind of social media session is great due to the ease in which it is to drive a modern vehicle.

This is exacerbated with the lack of understanding of modern vehicle technology. We find at our driving programs 90% of all attendees have no idea how to use the technology fitted to their vehicles. Safety features like ABS brakes are not used correctly, nor are stability control and this again leads to tragedy on the road.

The dangers of tailgating and stopping distances of a motor vehicle are never taught to the driver, and they are not taught anticipation skills that allows them to avoid a crash in the first place, but this is only relevant if they are alert and not distracted.

All of this comes back to a lack of understanding through training.

## **Driver Standards**

Ian Luff has long campaigned that the learning process of a new driver is flawed, with parents passing on their bad habits to their students (children). These habits are never redressed and this continues the cycle of producing poor drivers with low competency standards.

Learner driver instructors are predominantly pressured into just teaching young people how to pass the test, this avoids the many different safe driving techniques that are required by drivers to keep them safe on the public roads.

Once they get their licence they generally don't do anything until age 80 when they go for a medical exam to ensure they are still able to drive physically. Nowhere along the way was the driver's competency tested or retrained and they gained their licence already with a faulty process. Over time bad habits form, complacency sets in and standards drop.

Police play a vital role in driver compliance, yet we see a focus just on speeding and drink driving, however there are many other offences that lead to driving standards being maintained that are overlooked by this approach. The lack of visible policing for these issues is apparent, with replacement of this with speed cameras as a way of perceived policing/compliance only sees a further drop in driving standards encouraged.

We see, drivers who sit in the right lane on major roads, don't use their indicator, are using mobile phones and motorists who break the law almost daily with no redressing. But this is passed off due to the reports that indicate these are not major life threatening issues, however it is the standard of driving that is not enforced or retrained. So in essence the motorist is a victim of the system they are subscribed to.

Drivers are unaware about basic vehicle maintenance, being the last point of contact with the road; tyres are vital to a vehicles safety. This basic information is often lost on young people with many factors relating to driving such as mechanical maintenance lost. This impacts on drivers ability to maintain a safe motor vehicle.

Police also don't appear to check vehicle compliance and only appear to pick on so called Hoons, when their vehicles are most likely more safer than the car mum and dad drive their kids to school in.

## **Cost to motorists**

The general costs to motorists are a major issue, this starts with vehicle tax, licence costs, lessons to learn to drive, registration, CTP insurance, fuel tax, road tolls, fines and the list goes on.

This is even before we have discussed aspects like maintenance and other cost related stresses on the motorists.

An overhaul of motor vehicle expenses needs to be undertaken. If we reduce transport costs, we increase productivity and we also allow people to have more discretionary spending that will boost the economy. This will also have a flow on affect of increasing jobs in the motoring sector and help grow the country.

Why are there no Tax incentives for manufacturers to introduce environmentally friendly vehicles like Hydrogen powered cars? Again this would give new industry a boost and reduce carbon emissions through incentive based encouragement.

Like it or not the motoring sector is a huge part of the Australian economy, this sector is not being managed effectively by any level of Government in Australia.

We have recently seen the demise of local manufacturing, however that doesn't mean the motoring sector is dead, far from it, every manufacturer has a host of supportive infrastructure that helps sustain their brand here in this country. Profits don't all go off shore with local spending a huge part of any local business operation.

How these manufacturers are treated here in Australia is appalling, they are not encouraged to offer environmentally friendly vehicles, they are not encouraged to do any research and development of models in Australia's harsh climate. By supporting car companies and encouraging growth in that sector you will attract their wealth to be spent within this country, like they do in Germany at the famous Nurburgring. This investment should be spent here in Australia if they were encouraged too and this would bring jobs and expertise in that area.

There are many issues to be discussed and many items that need to be placed on the agenda, we haven't even begun to discuss the sporting aspect of motoring and that is something we are also open to sharing along with our extensive backgrounds in this area.

We trust you find our submission to be of interest and can see the value in having a further broader discussion on this topic.

Yours Sincerely,

Stewart Nicholls

Ian Luff