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Submission to The Federal Parliament Senate Inquiry Into Aspects of Road Safety In Australia

SUMMARY:

AIM: To provide the Standing committee with new and relevant information by which they may choose to use or investigate further in the aim of providing a safer driving environment for all road users.

- In this submission you will find a brief background of Roadcraft, a "Not for Profit" Community owned organisation located on 57 Hectares in Gympie Qld. Roadcraft has been providing quality risk reduction driver education to road users of all ages for over **34 years**.
- We have provided the committee with information on what we do, stand for and what we have learnt about the human tendencies and responses when faced with the driving task.
- Roadcraft is currently involved in the initial stages of a Research Linkage Project with QUT and CARSS Q, funded by the ARC, in a joint study of the potential effectiveness and the role simulators may be able to play in the relevant and appropriate education of new drivers.
- Our submission outlines why conventional driver Education development programs have been less effective in the past and why they were in effect the **wrong model**.
- We have outlined what we believe is the right model.
- The underlying philosophy of all Roadcraft courses is to foster and promote attitudinal change. We share our philosophical approach and outline what is really happening on our roads from the driving perspective.
- The information in this submission may be new to most reading it and may challenge some of the conventional approaches and ways of thinking about safety and risk management.
- Roadcraft poses the question: Why should we educate drivers? And provides a logical, socially acceptable, economical approach to achieving safer roads.
- Roadcraft challenges the current Fatal 5 campaign, suggesting it should be the Fatal
 8 and outlines easily introduced strategies to provide immediate attitude changes in Drivers.
- In the attached submission we give a list of recommendations that are affordable and easily implemented as well as a long term strategy based on our collective experience.

We thank the Senate for providing the opportunity to make this submission and look forward to your response.

Yours Truly

Robin George Bailey
Operations Coordinator

Roadcraft Driver Education

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Into

Aspects of Road Safety

In

Australia

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

An overview of Roadcraft: WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO and WHAT WE STAND FOR.

Roadcraft's commitment is to prevent road trauma by providing effective road safety education to road users of all ages.

Roadcraft is a "Not for Profit" Community owned organisation located on 57 Hectares in Gympie Qld.

Roadcraft has been providing quality driver education to road users of all ages for over 34 years. Over time, we have developed courses that are truly effective covering all areas from secondary students, learner and licenced drivers, 4WD and corporate clients.

Corporate clients who have fully embraced Roadcraft's training philosophy and programs have consistently given excellent feedback on how these courses positively enhance their safe driving and risk reduction practices.

Our courses are designed not just to develop vehicle control skills, but more importantly we employ a philosophical approach to instil a higher awareness and develop a greater risk appreciation of the consequences of inappropriate risk taking behaviours.

The concept and development of Roadcraft came into being in the late 1970's and was initiated by the Rotary Club of Gympie with the assistance of many dedicated people from other service clubs and the community.

Roadcraft is governed by a Management Committee consisting of local residents and business people who have a dedication to the reduction of trauma on our roads.

Our two highest priorities are to educate all road users in how to develop advanced observation techniques by using their vision more effectively, and how to avoid being involved in potentially dangerous traffic situations by managing their time and space. If drivers can identify risk and avoid danger earlier, there is less need for more advanced driving skills, and they can then ensure they arrive in a more relaxed and purposeful state of mind.

At Roadcraft, we employ a team of Educators with a high level of experience in driver education and course design. Our Driver Educators are all qualified and arguably some of Australia's leading people in this field. Our purpose built driver training facility at Gympie provides the safest possible educational environment.

Our courses all contain a balanced blend of theory and practice, each reinforcing the other. Without the theory, understanding is not possible. Without the practice, translation of the theory to the real-life road environment experience is not possible.

Student Driver Education

Roadcraft Driver Education works with children from Grade 1 to High School age coming from as far afield as Gin Gin and Bundaberg from the North to Mountain Creek and Nambour south and Kingaroy to the West.

Year 11 - 12 students with limited or no driving experience, learners and provisional licence holders are taught to identify, understand and avoid hazards on the road as well as develop the ability to anticipate effectively. Participants are encouraged to make mistakes in the simulated and safe environment where they can experience the results and gain the appropriate knowledge and understanding without the serious consequences associated in the real driving world.

In our two day courses students are coached and nurtured by Educators whose primary aim is to assist them to:

- develop the appropriate safe attitude to the road environment
- build their understanding and ability to deal effectively with peer pressure
- build respect for road law
- become safer more aware drivers by employing Low Risk Driving Techniques
- greatly enhance their appreciation and understanding of the risks associated with the driving task
- reduce or even eliminate risk while driving

And, all at the beginning of their driving career.

Roadcraft also caters for 'Special Needs" students over a two-day course. These students are encouraged to develop their appreciation of the driving task, ability to drive safely and manage traffic situations in simulated purposefully designed exercises on the Roadcraft circuits.

Professional Services

Roadcraft is the chosen provider of the Queensland Ambulance Service to provide all their Driver Education.

Corporate clients who have fully embraced Roadcraft's education programs consistently report greatly reduced crash rates. Our courses all contain a careful balance of theory and practical hands on driving, each reinforcing the other. Without the theory, complete understanding is not possible. Without the practical, effective translation of the theory to the real-life road environment is not possible.

Our involvement in both academic and practical research ensures thorough understanding of what it takes to reduce risk and maximise safety in the driving environment. The Roadcraft training complex at Gympie is a purpose-built facility which provides the safest possible environment for participants to learn the Low Risk Driving Techniques required in in order to stay safer on the roads.

Roadcraft prefers to work with relatively small numbers on a course so that we can address any particular individual learning needs or issues that may be of concern, and we can give individual attention to every participant assisting them to develop the techniques and systems advocated.

Membership

Membership of Roadcraft is open to any interested person in the community. At present, there are some forty members, but many more in the local community, including local Service Clubs, support Roadcraft and the work we do in reducing road trauma. Members do not necessarily benefit directly themselves from this membership.

RATIONALE:

Each year road crashes cause unnecessary trauma to too many Queensland families. Too many students suffer either death or serious injury soon after leaving school, or obtaining their provisional licences. Statistics show that the first three months of a young driver's provisional licence are the most at risk period in their driving career. We believe that we can help avoid this trauma by educating students at this early stage in their driving experience.

There are numerous driver safety programs aimed at our young drivers, but at Roadcraft we have well developed and respected programs that have been recognised and acknowledged for their track record of over thirty years.

Participant feedback from every course is examined to ensure the appropriate understanding and attitude adjustments have been reflected. Courses are continually evaluated and modified if necessary to meet the learning needs and objectives of the individual participants and safe driving expectations of the community. The latest trends and educational resources are available through Roadcraft's constant internal development process and association with the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland.

The primary objective of all Roadcraft courses is to achieve behavioural change through the presentation and development of appropriate knowledge and understanding. All our courses are presented in a positive framework for maximum learning outcomes. Courses are fully integrated units and cover driver attitude, vehicle dynamics and the environment. We use closely correlated theoretical and practical exercises to ensure an understanding and commitment to the application and retention of safe driving concepts.

Roadcraft supports and embraces any positive steps towards the safer, more efficient use of our transport systems, vehicles and community access.

We do not profess to be experts in any of these fields. However we do feel we have the knowledge and understanding that has been gained and developed over the 34 years of Roadcraft's existence to provide valuable and relevant information to the Standing committee for its consideration.

We are currently involved in the initial stages of a Research Linkage Project with QUT and CARSS Q, funded by the ARC, in a joint study of the potential effectiveness and the role simulators may be able to play in the relevant and appropriate education of new drivers, as

well as the efficacy and long term effects of Roadcraft Courses towards developing safer, more aware and attentive drivers.

We understand the bad press much of the conventional Defensive Driver Training establishments and courses has attracted over the years and can easily explain why THIS WAS so.

Many of these courses were designed and run by competition or performance orientated trainers who likely had the best of intentions, but did not understand the quantum difference between competition driving and every day road driving.

Basically the two are at complete opposite ends of the spectrum as Competition driving is about applying advanced driving techniques, not appropriate for road use and using everything you can to save time while driving to save fractions of a second in an effort to win. This then leads to an attitude of higher risk acceptance than is appropriate, where some drivers become much more aggressive and less tolerant of other drivers because they are losing time. This is absolutely fatal for normal on-road driving where the reality is we need **more Time and More Space**, at all times, to maximise our safety and reduce the risk.

So while the intentions were good, in most cases the results were the development of drivers who believed they were better and therefore more able to react appropriately in risky situations. This obviously leads to an attitude that is not conducive to safer, more aware and attentive driving practices.

So the result was predictably, at times, more crashes.

So in effect it was the wrong Model.

The industry has evolved and developed and the emphasis has changed from an over reliance on reactions to a much greater understanding of the effects of Time and Space management and the roles Observation and Fixation avoidance plays in ensuring drivers are responding appropriately. Over the past few years many of the fly by nighters and inappropriate training organisations have faded away.

THE RIGHT MODEL:

We believe we have the **right model at Roadcraft** as we focus on developing superior observation and anticipation abilities, motivating participants to CONCENTRATE ON THE DRIVING TASK and use a variety of best practice techniques and systems to manage their space and time more effectively when driving as well as concentrate on being more aware and attentive, creating a safer driving environment for themselves and those around them.

In fact we do not teach driver training, we teach a philosophical approach to driving.

It should become evident that drivers can easily increase their safety on the road by simply applying the arts of space management and avoiding the human tendency to fixate by concentrating on the job (Driving) more often.

By adapting these simple strategies drivers can become as **crash proof** as is possible.

Ultimately, safety is THE DRIVER'S responsibility; it is the driver that makes the difference on the road.

Drivers have a choice!

The current driver licencing system is adequate for new drivers to learn how to develop the "monkey" skills of starting, turning and stopping a motor vehicle under a basic assumption that if you obey road law you will be safe.

It does not however, address the need to expose new drivers to their natural **HUMAN SURVIVAL RESPONSES** and how these responses can cause them to react inappropriately in an emergency situation, especially when they feel threatened or get a fright, causing them to have a crash. However, if they had been aware of and exposed to these natural responses, they would be more inclined to respond appropriately and likely avoid a crash.

What we have found over many years of educating drivers is that once drivers become aware of these Survival Response tendencies they become motivated to use proven Low Risk Defensive Driving techniques and principles to avoid getting into threatening situations in the first place.

Over the 3 decades of its existence Roadcraft has seen many changes and had many Mission Statements; much thought has gone into this statement to ensure that it represents what we stand for and what we do.

Roadcraft Driver Education's mission is -

'To prevent road trauma by providing effective road safety education to road users of all ages'.

Our courses are purposely designed and developed to maximise the participants' learning experience and motivate them to use proven systems and techniques to minimise their level of risk on the road.

Roadcraft courses focus on developing the appropriate attitudes and understandings that address the risk acceptance of all drivers and particularly young drivers, arming them with the ability to use advanced visual skills, space management techniques, observation skills and anticipate more effectively, minimising the risks faced while driving.

By participating in a Roadcraft course participants also develop a heightened awareness of what it takes to remain crash proof and the techniques appropriate to maximise safety and minimise the risks associated with the driving task.

ROADCRAFT'S PHILASOPHICAL APPROACH

Extract: Note to Roadcraft Educators

The underlying philosophy of all Roadcraft courses is to foster and promote attitudinal change.

This is done by embracing best practice and sharing the proven driver training techniques, systems and principles in order to enhance the participants' understanding of the simple need to maintain more space, look further ahead, concentrate on the task, drive smoothly and be "in the car" in order to stay safer on the roads.

Participants need to leave with the appreciation that human beings have **no natural responses** for driving a motor vehicle. In fact if we rely on our natural reactions they will most likely make any emergency driving situation worse and contribute to a crash.

It is an expectation that all participants attending Roadcraft courses leave with the understanding that they will be much safer on the road by relying on Low Risk Driving principles and techniques and avoiding any need to react at all times, and that if they do react, there has been a breakdown in their technique.

Roadcraft's aim is to have participants complete the course with the understanding that they have a choice in their driving destiny and that their safety is first and foremost their responsibility.

We do not want them to leave believing that they are a better driver or good driver. We want them to appreciate that by using the systems and techniques advocated they will be safer, more aware drivers, thus improving the safety of all road users.

All course information, demonstrations and exercises are to be presented and carried out with the above philosophical tone in mind.

WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING ON OUR ROADS? WHY SHOULD WE EDUCATE DRIVERS?

One of the conclusions many professional driver educators have come to is that most drivers seem to learn very little after they get their licence, and in fact spend very little time and effort endeavouring to develop or improve their driving skills.

In many cases the requirement for licencing is viewed as an inconvenience and the motivation for going through the licencing process is in order to receive the piece of paper that deems one legal to drive on the roads.

In fact the licensing system exacerbates the situation by allowing untrained, questionably experienced drivers (parents, friends, relatives) to train the new drivers (many of these so called experienced drivers have poor driving standards and have themselves developed bad habits that are not necessarily conducive to safe driving).

Human beings have no natural responses for driving a motor-car. In fact if we rely on our natural reactions they will most likely make any emergency driving situation worse and contribute to a crash.

There is a saying we share with our clients: "Your eyes don't tell you what you see. You tell your eyes what to look for". From our observations it is apparent that many or even most of the drivers on the roads, whether they've been driving two years or twenty years have not learnt "where to look or what to look for" in normal driving situations, let alone life threatening ones.

Very few drivers are aware of the role **fixation** plays in the cause of crashes.

Human ability to use hard focus is what comes into play when we become life threatened so we look at the threat. This has serious and fatal consequences at standard metropolitan speeds.

Not the Fatal 5 - But the Fatal 8: It's not just the fatal 5 that Drivers need to be aware of. It should be RENAMED THE FATAL 8

- 1. SPEEDING or travelling at the wrong speed for the conditions
- 2. DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF Drugs or Alcohol
- 3. DRIVING WHILE FATIGUED
- 4. FAILING TO WEAR SEAT BELTS
- **5.** DRIVING DISTRACTED (MOBILE PHONES)
- **6. LACK OF SPACE** just one second would create up to a 90% reduction in crashes
- **7. POOR OBSERVATION** by looking further ahead the driver gets more time to process and respond appropriately
- **8. FIXATION** "The unidentified killer". Fixation has the potential to kill at normal highway speeds

CONCLUSION:

At Roadcraft we believe that as a community we can no longer afford the luxury of letting our children learn to drive by passing a licence test that is highly inappropriate and ineffective in terms of ensuring that the new driver has the **real driving experiences to anticipate and respond appropriately** in everyday driving situations.

If we, as a community, are serious about reducing the tragic road toll in this country, the system needs to address the issues of safety and inexperience head on. The public should insist that all drivers be exposed to as many possible normal, and in particular emergency driving situations, as is possible and practicable in order to develop their "systems of response", enhancing their ability to anticipate and respond appropriately in normal driving situations and emergency driving situations that occur in day to day driving.

Better still by being exposed to their own inadequacies it is possible **to motivate** more drivers to use **industry accepted low risk driving practices** and develop appropriate attitudes as well as **reduce** the inappropriate **high degree of risk acceptance** we find in many of our young, and often not so young, drivers.

What exposure or training do they have for emergency situations, where these same drivers are exposed to trial and error experiences, in life threatening time frames, when they need to learn what works and what doesn't work while their life depends on the result, with only too often fatal consequences?

With the annual cost of road trauma in Australia climbing towards the **27,000,000,000** (2013) dollar mark, it is not a valid argument to suggest it would be too costly to implement the facilities and practices required to make our roads safer.

In fact there is no excuse for not doing so!

"We have the knowledge. We have the beginnings of the infrastructure. We have the ability. If we could reduce the carnage on our roads by a mere 10% we could save in dollar terms (not to understate the human side) \$2,700,000,000! Surely that would go a long way towards the costs involved.

Maybe the problem with the current system is that it is based on an incorrect premise:

Drivers should or will obey road law and nothing will go wrong.

If we change this premise to read:

Drivers will make mistakes, and terrible and frightening things can and do happen.

It is now perhaps more obvious where the input should be directed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Roadcraft believes that all drivers, but in particular new drivers, be educated on
 - The Human Survival Responses that come into play when we get a fright or are placed in a life threatening situation, that are not appropriate for driving.
 - These tendencies include the reactions of fixation and over react on the controls, exacerbating any inappropriate responses and making any hazardous situation worse.
 - We have found that once drivers become aware of these tendencies they
 develop an attitude that is conducive to developing safer, more aware and
 attentive driving practices.
- 2. Educate all drivers on the lifesaving benefits of having more Time and Space at all times.

Place much more focus on reducing the incidence of Tailgating as it contributes to up to 60% of crashes on the roads. So one could argue that if we could reduce tailgating by that amount there would be a 60% reduction in crashes.

- 3. Change all rhetoric when referring to "Accidents" in the media or from government departments to describing them as "Crashes" as they are not accidents. In 90% of cases they could be avoided.
- 4. Make it mandatory for all learner drivers to attend an appropriately developed, relevant and practical hands on Driver Education course based on the Roadcraft Model before getting their licence.

At Roadcraft we believe this should be the minimum goal for the future.

Together we can stop the senseless carnage on our roads.

We have a choice.

RELEVANT STATISTICS FROM 2013:

- Injury is the single biggest killer of Australian youth; more than all other causes combined.
- 45% of all young Australian injury deaths are due to road traffic crashes.
- Of all hospitalisations of young Australians, almost half are drivers involved in a road traffic crash and another quarter are passengers.
- Young drivers (17 25 years) represent one-quarter of all Australian road deaths, but are only 10-15% of the licenced driver population.
- A 17 year old driver with a P1 licence is four times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than a driver over 26 years.
- The biggest killer of young drivers is speeding and around 80 percent of those killed are males.
- One-third of all speeding drivers and riders in fatal crashes are males aged 17-25; 6 percent are females aged 17-25.
- Two thirds of the Australian population live in capital cities and metropolitan areas but more than half of the road fatalities occur on rural and remote roads.
- Current estimations are that at least 700 people are killed annually in rural areas, with many thousands seriously injured.
- Road safety is the greatest threat to human life in workplaces, resulting in the deaths of around 450 Australians in the course of their work every year.
- Current figures supplied by the Royal Australian College of Surgeons indicate that each week there are on average 25 deaths and 600 serious injuries on our roads (that's 1300 deaths and 32,500 serious injuries per year).
- The social impacts of the above mentioned are devastating and the annual cost to the Australian economy is estimated to be **\$27 billion**.

Not Accidents – They are almost always avoidable so therefore they are Crashes.

Observations and comments that may of interest:

So, most drivers drive inside the **reaction zone**. By being in the **reaction zone** a driver needs to be concentrating as hard as a leading V8 supercar driver like Craig Lowndes. Why would you choose to have to drive every day like that, when by simply adding an extra 2 seconds of space, you go from being in a position where you either crash or don't; to a position where what would have been a crash is now not even a close shave or near miss?

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Managing space when driving is one the few situations where **more is less.**

More space = Less crashes. In order to build the knowledge, understanding and appreciation, we use simulated crash scenarios to motivate drivers to apply low risk driving strategies and systems into their everyday routine.

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We don't just tell people about the potential dangers, we help them have real time, hands on experiences that let them make their own decisions and motivate them to become safer by applying low risk driving techniques into their everyday driving. It is like a health pill, it will only work if you take it consistently and regularly.

(4) (4)

We teach drivers where to look, what to look for, why to do it and when; Because,

You go where you look. So therefore, you must always look where you want to go, early.

We can only respond to what we see, but we will only respond appropriately to what we understand. So the sooner we see a problem and understand it, the more time or space we will have to deal with it and the less the need or potential to react inappropriately.

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More Space - Keeps me Safe

When a driver chooses to take control of their own safety and introduce low risk driving into their everyday, the whole driving environment changes and everyone around them is a winner.

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We motivate people to choose to control their own driving destiny.

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Human beings have <u>no natural responses</u> for driving a motorcar. In fact if we rely on our natural reactions they will most likely make any emergency driving situation worse and contribute to a crash.

Roadcraft has developed specific hands on exercises to demonstrate the fact that humans are not natural at the driving task and heighten the participant's awareness and understanding of these human deficiencies that are seldom appreciated by uneducated drivers.

We have found that it is **possible to change risk acceptance** by educating drivers using well thought out and implemented exercises that demonstrate our natural tendencies and how inadequate they usually are in emergency situations.

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It is apparent by the statistical evidence that legislating new laws has no real bearing on improving the quality of driver on the roads, and in fact could contribute to the proliferation of poorer drivers, who take more risks and have less understanding of the forces they are dealing with when they do.

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You see we tend to teach our children how to obey road law, which is important, we teach them how to drive a motor car, i.e., start, stop, steer, change gear, give way, etc. **But how much knowledge or many skills do we teach them in order to save themselves in an emergency situation?**

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The better we build the roads the faster we go!

The safer we make the cars the more the risk acceptance!

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"So, how do we justify the huge difference in input in terms of training and expenditure between the driver and the pilot?" Isn't the driver of a motor vehicle also in charge of a lethal weapon that has the potential to kill and or maim and cause destruction, especially when you consider that almost every Australian will probably own or drive one in their lifetime?