



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Senator the Hon Bill Heffernan
Chair
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Heffernan

I write regarding my statements at the Senate Estimates Hearings on 30 October 2006.

At the time of the hearing, incorrect information was unintentionally given to the question from Senator O'Brien on the ATSB website release of the September 2006 *Road Deaths Australia* monthly bulletin. Senator O'Brien has written to me on this matter and I have attached a copy of his letter to me.

The incorrect excerpt is in the Hansard of 30 October 2006, page 53:

Mr Motha—I can clarify the question you asked about the September Road Deaths Australia, monthly bulletin. That bulletin was released in the usual place on the website, on the road safety/fatalities page.

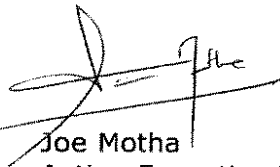
The correct answer is that the bulletin was not on the 'Road Fatality Statistics' page on 20 October 2006 but was placed on that page on 25 October. However, the bulletin was on the website in the 'Publications and Investigation Reports' page on 20 October 2006.

I have attached a chronology of events.

I would be grateful if this correction is placed on the record relating to the session of Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2006, and that this letter be provided to Senator O'Brien in response to his letter to me of 31 October 2006.

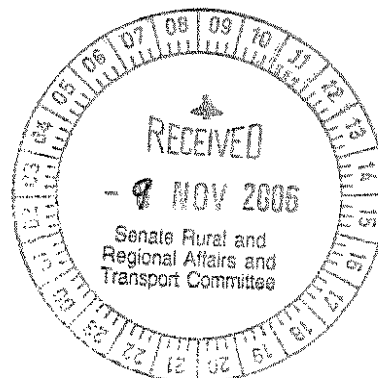
I apologise for any inconvenience that the incorrect information may have caused.

Yours sincerely



Joe Motha
Acting Executive Director

3 November 2006



Chronology of events relating to website release of Road Deaths Australia Monthly Bulletin for September

Friday, 20 October:

The Road Deaths Australia Monthly Bulletin for September was loaded onto the ATSB website at 2:49 pm. The report was loaded to the publications database at <http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2006/mrf092006.aspx>. It is normal practice to load the information into the publications database on the website, and then to provide links to the database from the various pages on the site. This procedure ensures that information can be easily found using the ATSB website search engine capabilities, the database search capability, and internet search engines such as Google.

On an unrecorded date, a phone call was received by the Road Safety Research and Statistics Section in the Road Safety branch. The caller pointed out that the link from the Road Safety Statistics page to the database had not been updated. The ATSB researcher who took the call explained to the caller where the bulletin was located on the website.

Wednesday, 25 October:

The ATSB researcher informed the ATSB officer responsible for on-line publications (who is in the Information and Coordination Section of the ATSB) of the need to update the link on the Road Safety Statistics page. The link was updated at 3:30 pm. The Team Leader of the Information and Coordination Section was not informed that the link had not been updated on 20 October, the same time that the bulletin was loaded on the website.

On the weekend of 28 -29 October, Mr Motha, while preparing for Senate estimates in anticipation of a question regarding road safety statistics, noted that the September bulletin was available on the Road Safety Statistics webpage.

Monday, 30 October:

At the Senate Estimates hearings, Senator O'Brien raised the issue of the delay in updating the link from the Statistics webpage to the publications database. Mr Motha, who was not aware that any changes had been made, acknowledged that "it could well have been a mistake or oversight."

Just after Senator O'Brien asked the question, Mr Stray asked an ATSB officer present at the hearings to phone the Team Leader of the Information and Coordination Section. Mr Stray did this on his understanding that Senator O'Brien was seeking clarification of where the bulletin was located on the website. The Team Leader immediately checked the website and confirmed that the link to the September bulletin was on the Road Safety Statistics page. This information was conveyed to Mr Motha and he informed the committee that "[t]hat bulletin was released in the usual place on the website, on the road safety/fatalities page." His answer was in the context of that same understanding of Senator O'Brien's question.

Tuesday, 31 October:

Senator O'Brien wrote to Mr Motha, pointing out that "although the statistics are correctly loaded now, that was not the case when my office contacted the ATSB..." At the time of answering the question in the Senate, that was not Mr Motha and Mr Stray's understanding of Senator O'Brien's question.