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Citizens Against Road Slaughter

**Combatting
Australia's
Road
Slaughter –
What Can Be Done?**

by Colin den Ronden

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INTRODUCTION

One of the problems faced in attempting to reduce the road toll is the lack of consensus about what initiatives and innovations should be introduced. Amongst the public there is an attitude that, as with many other problems faced in life, there is an answer. Hence, many will look for the answer, come up with one, and decry against anyone else who suggests a different answer. What they fail to recognise is that there are many causative factors leading to road trauma, not just one, and that all these factors need to be addressed, preferably simultaneously. Not all these factors have equal force, however. Some initiatives aimed at these factors may be more cost effective than others, or may require a lot more technological development before they can be reasonably considered as cost effective (e.g. computer-controlled cars [see "Blueprint for a car that can't crash". *Sunday Mail Magazine*, 21\6\87]). Other initiatives may be of equal cost but be different in life-saving effectiveness.

As an aid in considering what initiatives can be considered, it is useful to try and identify as comprehensively as possible all the factors involved in road trauma. Very rarely do 'pure accidents' occur. Most road trauma is a result of breaches of traffic laws in one form or another. Thus, initiatives have to be developed which minimise these breaches, and where they do occur, to make the consequences less tragic.

ATTITUDES

Drivers involved in breaches of traffic laws often display an irresponsible attitude. It is this attitude that leads many of them to break traffic laws. It is the wrong attitude that makes people combine drinking with driving. It is the wrong attitude that makes people speed and drive recklessly. To change these attitudes to the right ones we need to look at those factors which shape wrong attitudes.

Most of a person's attitudes are determined before he reaches adulthood. There are four main sources of influence for these attitudes; parents, peers, the education system, and the media. Parents with the wrong attitude will tend to inculcate their children with these attitudes unless there are countervailing forces, or the parents change their attitude significantly. Children riding with their parents may pick up bad road habits, or begin to accept it as normal adult behaviour if their parents drive home drunk. Children picking up these habits will in turn pass these on to their children unless the cycle can be broken. With peer groups, the rewards of being accepted, or the disadvantages of not being accepted, into such a group may outweigh the perceived risks and disadvantages of the consequences of traffic law breaches.

While there has been some application of the stick approach in instilling social values, there has been even less of the carrot approach. The rewards must be internalised through education. Educating children from the earliest ages can be a pre-emptive action against deviant influences from other sources. According to *The AAMI Report-Young Drivers: A Solution to the Killing* the Victorian Road Traffic Authority was developing integrated curriculum units for schools. If the right attitudes are shaped in the schools this will be a progressive innovation. The AAMI Report says "It is attitudes which must be trained. It is road-craft as well as car craft."

Most people are of the opinion that attitudes cannot be tested in a quantifiable way. However, some of the large management consultancy firms have devised attitude tests

to determine whether or not personnel have the right attitudes to be in managerial positions. They have found that it makes economic sense to devise such tests. A Brisbane-based psychologist, Irena Kubarek, has devised such a test for drivers, and some large companies send their commercial drivers to her to be tested. From discussions with her she has revealed that this system is in operation in some Eastern European countries for commercial drivers, and that where it has been introduced there has been a 60% reduction in commercial driver accidents. She has approached the State government in order to get this more widely implemented, but so far without much success.

Attitude testing would provide good results if it was applied to all drivers. In other words, attitude testing should be included as part of the driver's licence test. Attitude-correction courses could be designed for those who fail the test, thus giving them the opportunity to educate themselves into having the right attitude, rather than tempting them to drive unlicensed as many now do. Advanced driving courses should also be included in the licensing process. Persons in the 17-24 age group are most at risk on the road, partly because of inexperience. Special off-road driver training courses should be built where learners can develop experience in safely handling vehicles in a variety of situations. In *Road Trauma, The National Epidemic* the Royal Australian College of Surgeons' Road Trauma Committee recommended off-road training facilities for motorcycle riders, but there is no reason why this concept should not be extended to other types of road users.

Education about attitudes should not be confined to the pre-licence stage. In the waiting areas of the courts literature can be found to inform offenders of their legal rights, but no road safety literature is available to educate offenders on where they went wrong. Making literature available only to those interested in it is sometimes a case of preaching to the converted. To hope for any change one must target the offenders. In the United Kingdom beer coasters have a warning about drunk driving. Approaches by myself to a major brewer in this country to do likewise here gained no response. Obviously, the Australian liquor industry requires legislation to make them abide by their social obligations. Requiring liquor manufacturers to include warnings about drunk driving on their products and liquor outlets to display similar warnings throughout their premises would be an innovation which would not impose any fiscal burden on governments.

The media, especially television, has great potential in shaping people's attitudes, in educating them for better or worse. Criticisms of the media invariably draw the response from media spokesmen that they only reflect society's values, and that they give people only what they want. They reason that if they did not work on the principle of supply and demand competitors would force them out of business. This is only partially true. The media is selective in what it presents, and therefore filters its information. A feedback mechanism is established, amplifying certain values. Thus, the media can act like a resonator; in reflecting some social values it shapes certain ones at the expense of others.

Awareness has to be created amongst producers and scriptwriters of programmes and advertisements of the harmful effects they can produce. Criticisms to organizations such as the Advertising Standards Council draw retorts like "The situations are obviously exaggerated . . . and would be perceived to be so by the ordinary viewer." (Letter from ASC 30\9\87). ". . . viewers are able to distinguish fantasy from reality

and would not relate the scenes shown to ordinary driving conditions." (Letter from ASC 25\9\87). However, what they fail to recognise is that there are some impressionable and irresponsible people in the viewing audience who are not ordinary viewers. It only requires a minority of the population to cause the majority of damage. If voluntary watchdog organizations cannot lift their own standards then there is a case for government initiatives to regulate the media. This applies even more so to satellite programmes beamed to hotels, and where the owner of the channel is also a major brewer.

Calls for the banning of alcohol advertisements draw the response that 'advertising does not increase the incidence of drinking, and that it only increases the brewer's share of the market at the expense of competitors. This may be so in the short term, but in the long term it socialises those of younger years into believing that alcohol is a normal and necessary part of everyday life. Its harmful effects are not apparent as they are delayed effects. There is a difficulty in obtaining detailed statistics on advertising expenditure which would cover a long period. If these could be obtained there is also the difficulty of devising some kind of calculus to show the correlation between advertising and consumption in the long term. Such research may be costly and only confirm what common sense tells us; that banning alcohol advertisements would be a positive initiative in reducing the road toll.

Besides education, the other way for authorities to shape attitudes is through legal requirements and deterrents. The graduated licence scheme proposed by the Federal Office of Road Safety is an initiative which would restrict new drivers to driving under supervision, driving in daylight hours only, and driving without passengers. Another initiative to reduce the nexus between drinking is to follow the example of some states in the U.S. which increased the drinking age to 21. Making a zero BAC level the only legal level for driving would eventually make it also socially unacceptable. Removing the more serious offences from the Traffic Acts and placing them under the Criminal Code would be an innovation which would publicly recognise these crimes as crimes, rather than being classified as traffic misdemeanours. The stigma of being regarded as a criminal would provide further deterrence. Further stigmatisation could involve publicising the names and photographs of persons convicted of dangerous driving in local newspapers, and requiring drunk drivers to carry a sticker on their vehicle which called attention to their offence.

However, it is not sufficient just to gaoil offenders. What is required is to emulate the Japanese innovation of creating special prisons for traffic offenders whereby they can be rehabilitated instead of just imprisoned. Many offenders also have a drinking problem, which can affect their driving even when sober. Whilst in custody they should be tested to determine if they have this problem, and should be disqualified until it can be proved that they no longer have this problem. Governments should allow such testing. These test can be conducted in a number of ways. Certain chemicals, such as *gamma glutamyltranspeptidase* are produced in the bodies of problem drinkers, in amounts related to the degree of the problem. (*British Medical Journal*, Vol 290, 163\85) The psychologist Irena Kubarek, mentioned earlier, has revealed that equipment is available which, through testing reflexes, shows whether or not subjects have a drug or drinking problem.

Further initiatives need to be introduced which will stop some of the traffic offenders slipping through law enforcement nets and continuing driving. For example, all persons charged with drunk driving should be finger-printed. This would prevent the use of fake licences and bogus names being used by persons with long and serious traffic records. Another initiative is the RACS recommendation that there be compulsory BAC testing of all drivers involved in casualty smashes and all casualties over 15 who attend hospital for treatment.

Judicial discretion, precedents and the methods of jury selection have resulted in the dilution of the effectiveness of much existing legislation, and further initiatives are required here. The courts' power of adjournment in those cases where the penalty for conviction is cancellation of licence should be restricted. Governments should legislate for mandatory minimum penalties instead of maximum penalties. Presently the courts assume that the maximum penalty should be reserved for the 'mythical' worst case, and hence deal out lenient sentences. With automatic remissions and parole a mockery is often made of original legislation, Mandatory gaol sentences should apply where a death occurs as a result of drunk or reckless driving. Motorists exceeding the speed limit by more than 30kmh should have their licences cancelled.

Legislation should also be enacted to make hotel licensees and party hosts liable for the cost of road smashes in which their inebriated patrons have been involved. Many people, when confronted with a certain loss (taxi fare, peer disapproval, sleeping on the floor) or a possible loss (risk of being caught for drunk driving) will engage in the risk-taking activity (Homel, 1986). Making the accomplices liable will force them to intervene and thus reduce the occurrence of such situations. More often it is money that talks louder than a social conscience. All such preceding law enforcement initiatives mentioned should receive maximum media exposure when introduced, otherwise without changing perceptions about apprehension and its consequences only minimum results will be achieved. (Homel) A greater visible police presence acts as a deterrence to breaches of the traffic laws. Statistical research has shown that decreases in traffic police numbers coincide with increases in the road toll. (*Public Outcry*, Nov 1985, C.A.R.S.)

Professor Leonard Eron of the University of Illinois released the results of a study into the development of school bullies showing that "aggressive boys are likely to have a criminal conviction or a record of driver's violations as adults." (*Sunday Mail*, 18\8\85). Similar studies by psychology professor Dan Oliveus of Norway's Bergen University (*Sun*, 22\2\88) showed school bullies, "had a fourfold increase in serious criminal behaviour in young adulthood when compared with controlled boys." Obviously breaches of traffic laws by habitual offenders can be an indicator of a general lawless attitude. This suggests scope for initiatives here which could help reduce crime in general as well as address breaches of traffic laws. Governments should legislate to allow authorised researchers access to school records of offenders so that more studies can be conducted in this area. This research would allow the identification and classification of types of individuals likely to develop anti-social attitudes. From this, programmes could be devised to reduce such anti-social behaviour.

SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

All the matters so far discussed relate to changing attitudes through education and penalties. Further deterrent innovations to produce a safer road environment also need to be introduced. Better public transport should be provided so that drunks will be passengers rather than drivers. Where local authorities feel that they must operate such services within costs, and not at a loss, state governments should be prepared to take over such services in order to maximise road safety. Legislation should be enacted requiring compliance with safe designs in regard to road planning. Many local government authorities leave it to personnel inexperienced in road safety, and these people do not see the implications of their work. For example, the placement of power poles at street curves can increase the number of serious crashes. What is required is a more forgiving environment. (Address to C.A.R.S. meeting 1984, Geoff MacDonald, Geoff MacDonald & Associates)

The term 'highway hypnosis' is used to describe the strange behaviour of long-distance drivers who, through fatigue, fail to keep control of their vehicle wherein they often depart from the correct side of the road and collide with on-coming vehicles. Urban drivers tend not to become aware of the mechanism of this phenomenon until they experience long-distance driving themselves. What occurs is that the fatigued driver tends to straddle the centre line so that the centre line is in effect running between his legs when he lines it up with the centre of the steering wheel. This requires less concentration and he is thus driving in a mechanical manner. It is not a conscious decision of the driver to do this, he tends to slip into this behaviour when he is tired and there is little on-coming traffic. He only becomes aware of it when on-coming traffic appears unexpectedly. Accidents can then happen in two ways; first, the driver does not have time to take evasive action and a head-on collision occurs. Second, either driver may take such rapid evasive action to move out of the path of the other vehicle that they may over-correct, lose control of their vehicle and leave the road, to either roll their vehicle or hit roadside objects such as trees.

There is little doubt that this mechanical driving does occur, but can probably be solved by providing another line of a different colour near the middle of each lane. The driver can safely straddle this line, using it as a guide, to avoid straying into the path of on-coming vehicles. This behaviour is not always confined to long-distance drivers, but can also happen to drivers who have had their mental faculties impaired through other causes, such as alcohol, drugs, or stroke. In 1987 the Queensland Main Roads Department advised that the cost for lines painted on the roads was \$180 per kilometre. Rural roads are mostly under the authority of the Main Roads Department. There were 26,500 kms of MRD declared roads which were sealed. The cost of implementing this scheme in Queensland would have been \$100,000. If we considered every rural and urban road in Australia (850,000 kms) the cost for this scheme would have been \$306M. (Submission to Volvo Traffic Safety Award, C. den Ronden, 8\3\87)

One of the greatest problems facing urban drivers when it rains heavily at night is the difficulty of seeing the centre line. The reflection of street and car lights off the wet surface tends to obscure the white dividing line, so that it is often difficult to distinguish it from the track through the water left by the vehicle ahead. On curves in the road drivers cannot tell at all times whether they are on the correct side of the

road. What compounds the problem is that the road maintenance authorities often lay down bitumen with different reflectivities. This problem could be reduced by ascertaining which bitumen highlights the white line most in wet weather, and using that mixture only on all roads. Coloured guidelines could also help the driver distinguish these from the reflections of white light on the wet roadway..

One way to reduce drunk driving would be to require hotels and taverns to install boom gates with automatic card dispensers at the entrances to their car parks. Another machine at the exit would receive cards, and if it was, say, over two hours between the issuing and receiving of the card the booms would be programmed not to rise for that card-holder until twelve hours afterwards. (CARS' Submission to the Liquor Act Review Committee. 13\2\89. C. den Ronden). Legislation which requires hotels and taverns to have large car parks should be repealed as this encourages drunk driving.

The U.S. lowered its road toll when it lowered the speed limit. The lower the speeds the lower is the kinetic energy involved in collisions. Consideration should be given to emulating this initiative. There is no real need for speed. A prudent person would anticipate that he may face traffic hold-ups or a flat tyre and would set off on a journey with a sufficient time margin to meet any deadline. When collisions do occur there is scope for reducing the damages through further initiatives. Compulsory wearing of safety helmets for all pedal cyclists would reduce road trauma in this group of road users. Restricting the riding of motorcycles to those who have had at least four years experience of driving four-wheeled vehicles would reduce road trauma amongst motorcyclists. This latter initiative would inhibit younger riders from getting 'addicted' to the more thrilling (and more dangerous) two-wheeled vehicles before they obtain the necessary road experience. The RACS has proposed the mandatory wearing of approved seat belts in all vehicles including buses, which should provide a safer environment for this class of road user.

More innovations could be introduced with regard to vehicle design and structure. For example, one of the simplest would be for roll bars to be fitted into new vehicles. Compulsory annual road-worthy checks of vehicles has been an idea that has been mooted for some time. However, doubts have been cast upon this because of the unreliability of existing procedures. Testing by a number of small private mechanics increases the chances of dishonesty occurring. Drivers may bribe such mechanics, or feel that the mechanics may be trying to generate business by finding faults where none occur. To be seen as effective, testing should be done by regulatory authorities. Research needs to be done to discover the reasons people drive unroadworthy vehicles (e.g. high cost of repairs through overcharging for parts) so that initiatives can be taken which will alleviate this problem.

The trucking industry also requires special consideration in regard to road safety measures. Research has shown that whereas heavy vehicles collisions are, when compared with other vehicles, not disproportionate to the vehicle-kilometres travelled, they do cause a disproportionate number of deaths. (C. den Ronden 1988). This is to be expected as they have greater momentum. However, this fatality rate creates a greater onus on road safety authorities to ensure that this industry operates more safely. According to Transport Workers' Union Brisbane sub-branch secretary Hughie Williams finance companies were forcing many owner-drivers to take risks on the road. (*Daily Sun*, 26\4\89) Finance companies gave loans too easily to anyone

who wished to buy trucks. Consequently this results in too many trucks on the road for the freight available, and thus increases competition and price-cutting. This price-cutting reduces their income and tempts them to increase the volume of their work through overloading, speeding, and so on.

When the borrowers of loans face large interest payments they are forced to ignore safety practices in order to make ends meet. Governments must regulate such loans to a level which will ensure that truckers can obtain an adequate income. They will then be less tempted to drive long hours in a drugged condition or overload their trucks. According to TWU state secretary Len Ward some transport brokers encourage law breaking by offering bonuses for record-breaking trips, and that such brokers should be gaoled. (*Sunday Sun*, 22\1\89) He has also suggested that we emulate a initiative used in the U.S.; trucks which are overloaded be impounded with the whole cargo and the owner has to pay for its release. (*Sun*, 23\2\89)

POST-TRAUMA MEASURES

Where trauma does occur the consequences can be minimised by providing prompt medical attention. The RACS have proposed including a first-aid course as a prerequisite for a licence, and that all vehicles carry a first-aid kit. Improved medical attention can also be provided by introducing such initiatives as upgrading ambulance services in provincial areas from one-man ambulances to two-man ambulances, introducing paramedics, and introducing Trauma Centres. In the U.S. where trauma centres have been established, 20% of those who would have otherwise died have been resuscitated. West Germany improved on the idea by adding helicopters and thus getting victims to expert attention sooner. (*Scientific American*, Vol 249, Aug 1983).

Road trauma not only involves death and injury to persons, and economic damage, but also emotional trauma to victims and their relatives. The legal process can add significantly to this trauma. Governments should legislate so that it is mandatory for an inquest and/or trial involving a road death to be held within no longer than six months of the death, thus saving the victims' families from great emotional stress.

INTEREST GROUPS

More initiatives need to be taken by governments in assisting road safety orientated community groups. Recently the Federal Office of Road Safety introduced a kit, *Road Safety Resource Package for Community Groups*, which is a fine initiative on their part. As mentioned in this package most groups depend exclusively on volunteer labour and rely on the organizational skills of one or two key individuals." C.A.R.S. for example, has never received any funding from governments at any level. Such groups operate in areas and provide services (such as court support and grief counselling) which government road safety agencies do not. Where government agencies do provide anything similar, they are fragmented between different departments. In fact, government agencies refer people to C.A.R.S.

Previously, government agencies concerned with road safety assumed that they themselves were the experts in the field, and that community groups had only a small role to play in getting any initiatives implemented. However, such agencies are limited in the ways they can have initiatives implemented, and some agencies have

acted more like public relations units for the Minister for Transport. Recommendations for any initiatives have to go through channels, the Minister has to be convinced, who in turn must convince other members of his party and Parliament. Anywhere along the chain people with personal biases may provide obstacles to these innovations. Parliamentarians do not have an encyclopaedic knowledge of every issue that comes before them, and are often just as uninformed as members of the public on issues of road safety.

In Queensland C.A.R.S. answered this situation by introducing its own initiative. A journal, *The Public Outcry*, was produced every month, and copies were sent to every member of State Parliament as well as the media, the judiciary and every police station throughout the state. Thus each of these groups became well-informed about matters concerning the law, the plight of victims, statistical research and potential initiatives. Publication of this journal eventually ceased due to lack of funds. C.A.R.S. also designed and produced its own road safety literature to address issues which were not covered in existing road safety pamphlets, and actively distributed this literature free to the public at displays.

Community groups, where resources permit, are free to pursue innovative lines of research and activity, and not have the scope of their activities constrained by the duty statements that restrict public servants working in the same field. The research that is done is aimed at identifying or clarifying previously hidden factors in the road toll and at finding ways to reduce the road toll and increasing public awareness, rather than finding ways to conduct yet another academic exercise which will barely see the light of day beyond those interested in the field. Community groups are not confined to becoming involved only in their own governments' administration of road safety, but can provide advice and suggest innovations to other governments. (Letter to P.M. Thatcher & other party leaders, 12\11\85, Letter to Pres. Reagan, 22\1\87, C. den Ronden). This is seen as essential at times because positive or negative initiatives by governments from other regions can influence what happens in our own region. An example of this is that Victoria appears to be the pace-setter in such initiatives, such as Random Breath Testing, and other states are content to follow, sometimes over a decade later. Such organizations also have to fight rear-guard actions against powerful moneyed interest groups, such as the liquor lobby and lawyer-dominated Civil Liberties Councils who often seek to erode any gains already made. At times research has to be done just to counter their misinformation.

CONCLUSION

Governments have a significant role to play in reducing the road toll. Social forces which shape the attitudes of individuals cannot be fought mainly at the individual level. Catch-cries by politicians that 'finally it is up to the individual' when it comes to road safety are an abdication of responsibility by governments. The political atmosphere that allows or inhibits such initiatives being implemented is sometimes set by interest groups. Hence, governments in turn should assist those groups which are interested in making our roads safer. Victoria has been fortunate in that it has headquartered the national body of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons, a group which has shown that its interest in road safety is unquestionable. Other states have to wait for small groups of the public to emerge and raise their voice. These groups can provide many innovative ideas and should get an unhindered hearing.

Cowboy owners attacked

SUN 23/02/89

TRUCK owners and company managers who forced their drivers to break the law should be punished along with the drivers, Transport Workers Union State secretary Len Ward said today.

He said the State Government had to face up to its responsibility to police the transport industry as part of the drive for road safety.

The union strongly supported the planned police crackdown on cowboy truckies but believed the government should do more than that.

"The current philosophy of allowing the industry to govern itself is not working and cannot work because of the large number of rogues who have entered the industry to the detriment of responsible owners and drivers," Mr Ward said.

"These rogues cut corners, show a disregard for road safety, cut rates and adopt a cowboy attitude.

"This forces the responsible people to cut corners in order to compete and keep their businesses operating.

"We applaud the proposal to clamp down on the cowboys but the government should also be punishing the managers and owners who force responsible drivers to break the law."

By
WAYNE WATSON

Mr Ward said some coach companies openly advertised they could get from Brisbane to Sydney up to 90 minutes ahead of their competitors.

Drivers on some coaches and in some freight firms were instructed that they had to meet ridiculously tight schedules which were impossible to meet without exceeding the speed limit.

Where police were able to prove that a schedule could be met only if the driver was speeding, there should be provision for the manager who set the schedule to be punished.

"At present in this country the poor driver cops it for everything," he said.

"Admittedly they should not break the law, but they are often put in a position where if they do not break the law they lose their jobs.

"In parts of the United States where a truck is overloaded the entire truck and its cargo are impounded and the owner must pay to have it released.

"Where that law applies there is a very low incidence of overloading because the owners will not take a risk when they have to pay the eventual fine themselves," Mr Ward said.

Brokers are killers, says TWU official

SUNDAY SUN 22/01/89

HEAVY transport drivers carrying perishables to southern markets are being forced to travel at speeds up to 140km/h.

One man recently was given 26 hours to drive a fully-laden vehicle with an all-up weight of 38 tonnes from Brisbane to Melbourne.

He had to maintain an average speed of 68km/h to make it — and when he was two and a half hours late because he had a tyre blowout, \$525 was deducted from his payment.

Transport Workers Union Queensland secretary Mr Len Ward last week branded some long distance transport brokers as killers.

He said they were offering to move goods at impossibly low rates, and then hawking loads to owner-drivers at rates that forced them to speed and take other risks to carry out their contracts.

"The driver who was docked finished loading fruit and vegetables in Brisbane at 10pm on Saturday, and was told to be at the Melbourne markets at midnight on Sunday," he said.

"He had a blow-out on the way and had to change a wheel. He was two and a half hours late getting to Melbourne, and was penalised."

Mr Ward said the driver would have had to maintain a speed of 68km/h all the way to Melbourne to get there on time.

"He would not have been able to stop for meals, rest, or to service or refuel his vehicle at that speed," he said.

"Even so, he would have been exceeding the speed limit through townships."

Mr Ward said that when he asked that the driver be paid in full, he was called a "standover communist bastard".

"I would like to see the man who put that impossible time on the driver standing in the middle of the road when one of these trucks comes hurtling down the highway," he said.

"He might then get a different view of things."

Mr Ward said some transport brokers had no consideration for truck drivers or other road users.

"They are in it to make a profit, and they will be as cutthroat and ruthless as they can," he said.

Mr Ward said the chairman of the Traffic Safety Advisory Council, Mr Ted van Fleet, had been quoted recently as having heard reports of truck drivers being paid bonuses for record-breaking trips.

"The people who make these offers should be jailed," he said. "They are only encouraging drivers to break the law and jeopardise their own and other road users' lives."

Mr Ward said there was a glaring anomaly in negotiated freight rates between Sydney and Brisbane.

The rate for Sydney-Brisbane was \$58 a tonne, but the "backloading" rate from Brisbane to Sydney was only \$38 a tonne.

"There is more cargo coming to Brisbane than is going out to Sydney and Melbourne," he said.

"This means owner-drivers who have to cope with high interest rates on their truck loans and still make some sort of a living will cut rates even further and then speed or drive for long hours without rest to get a faster turn around and more work.

"They are working themselves into the ground and causing dangers on the roads simply because low rates are forcing them into it."

BLUEPRINT FOR A CAR THAT CAN'T CRASH!

By FRANCIS COOPER

IT'S THE vehicle motorists have been looking for since the internal combustion engine was invented... the car which automatically steers clear of all accident situations.

As traffic congestion increases by over 10 percent a year in all major cities, scientists now acknowledge that accident-free driving is getting beyond the ability of mere humans.

We need help to drive safely — and a new range of in-car computers is being developed to create a vehicle which, in normal driving circumstances, simply can't crash.

In America, General Motors is collaborating with the IBM computer giant to create an on-board computer which can take over control of the car when danger threatens — and react 1000 times faster than the quickest human brain.

The latest micro-electronics and sensor technology, developed from offshoots of the US space shuttle technology, can anticipate danger from other vehicles and take evasive action, either by steering or braking.

Says GM technical development controller John Wint: "Sensors on the vehicle constantly collect information which is fed into the computer.

"In an emergency, the computer will override manual controls and take evasive action, usually before the driver has actually realised anything is wrong.

"The sensors can calculate speed, distance and direction of any object, from an approaching lorry to a gatepost. Experimental vehicles, fitted with prototypes of this equipment, have already carried out extensive tests, with very encouraging results."

That's only one way scientists are trying to unsnarl traffic problems which threaten to produce the ultimate traffic jam within 25 years.

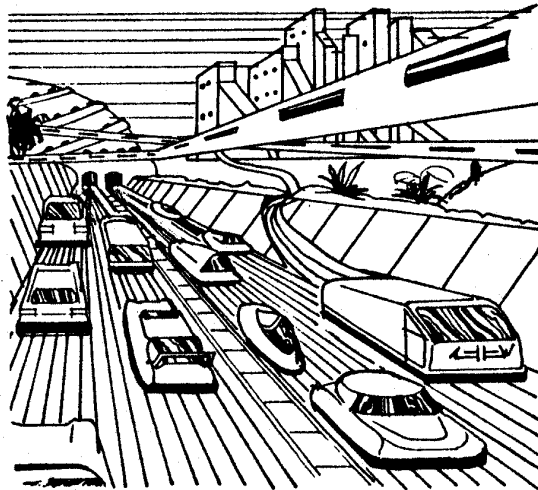
Other possibilities range from elevated tubes, which would carry cars at 160 km/h, to computerised "Big Brothers" which control traffic flow by hooking cars on to under-road guidance systems.

In Europe, the major car guidance project is "Prometheus" — standing for "program for a European traffic redesign with highest efficiency and unlimited safety."

But that doesn't mean, according to a British Department of Transport expert, that next year's cars will be belting up the motorway, nose-to-nose at 200 km/h with on-board computers at the wheel.

Even so, the next five to 10 years could see a major driving revolution in the way we travel to work, to the shops, or on a long-distance holiday.

A Prometheus spokesman explained: "The project starts from the principle that most problems of today's



Is this the shape of tomorrow's motoring? Urban traffic with on-board computers... above, tubes carrying cars at 160km/h.

traffic are caused by lack of communication between different groups of road users. The intention is to remedy this deficiency with the creation of new information and control systems.

"The result of all this high-tech study will be, it's hoped, virtually accident-free private transport, flowing smoothly, with a substantially higher degree of economy and environmental acceptability."

In the past two years, scientists working for leading car manufacturers have already made a start on sensory technology which, put basically, gives a vehicle eyes.

"Whether these work by laser or computer-linked sensor aerials, the effect will be the same," one Toyota scientist told me. "Cars will be able to 'see' each other,

allowing the computer to take appropriate action.

"And this, it is hoped, will lead to the development of a vehicle whose operation is safeguarded by computers, and whose driver will be able to switch to fully-automatic at low speeds."

But the experts readily admit that caution is advisable when it comes to futuristic brainwaves in car and traffic technology. For half a century, bright ideas have been filling up waste-paper bins.

For instance, whatever happened to the vehicle which was to be controlled by the wink of an eye? An American idea, backed by technology from NASA, this was the car in which the driver merely had to look at instructions on a dashboard panel.

That was enough to make the car "stop quickly", "stop slowly", "turn left", "increase speed", and so on.

The theory worked on a principle of an infra-red beam from special spectacles activating the particular instruction which the driver decided to look at.

One step up the space-age ladder was the car which was piloted by nothing but thought.

Several universities in the 1960s planned to create machinery which could be operated by brain-power. Attached to appropriate nerve terminals, on the wrists and ankles were wires which intercepted muscular commands coming from the driver's brain. These were then transmitted by radio signal to control mechanisms which, in turn, set off servo-motors to carry out the particular job.

The idea behind both of these schemes was to speed up human reaction and so make driving safer.

Now scientists accept that computers can think faster than humans, and that accidents will only become things of the past if electronics take over when humans have got themselves into a mess.

Says GM's John Wint: "It will be hard, at first, to trust an electronic box of tricks to steer you out of trouble, but that's the way I see motoring going in the 21st century." □

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School bullies turn criminal

CHICAGO.— The class bully who terrorised his peers on the playground has about a one-in-four chance of having a criminal record by the age of 30, researchers say.

These findings demonstrate that physically aggressive boys are likely to have a criminal conviction or a record of drivers' violations as adults," a University of Illinois-Chicago psychology professor, Leonard Eron, said.

The risk of other children having criminal records as adults is about one in 20, he said.

The study, which began with 875 third-graders in Columbia County, New York, in 1960, also found that women who were aggressors as children were more likely to severely punish their children.

"Children learn a certain way of behaving and solving prob-

lems," Eron said. "It sticks with them and they don't lose it," he said.

Eron said the one-in-four chance of becoming an adult law-breaker was determined by analysing factors such as how punitive the parents were, whether they rejected their children, and the amount of violence the children saw on television.

DAVID S. AP

School bullies destined for a life of crime

SCHOOL bullies are more likely than other children to be headed for a life of crime.

Dan Olweus, a professor of psychology at the University of Bergen in Norway, says Scandinavian studies indicate the common phenomenon of bullying in the schools can also damage the emotional health of victims.

Sixty per cent of boys considered to be bullies in Grades 6 through 9 had at least one court conviction by the time they were 24.

Forty per cent of the bullies had three or more court convictions by the same age.

Only 10 per cent of children who were not bullies got into trouble with the law at that age.

"The school bullies thus had a fourfold increase in serious criminal behavior in young adulthood when compared with controlled boys," said Dr Olweus.

Studies in Norway and Sweden show about 9 per

cent of students are victims of bullying and about 7 per cent are bullies.

Bullying is about twice as common in Grades 2 through 6 compared to Grades 7 through 9. Boys are much more likely to be bullies than girls.

Dr Olweus presented his findings in a paper he delivered at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Boston.

Although there are no direct estimates of the extent of bullying in US schools, Dr Olweus estimated that 4.8 million American students in Grades 1 through 9 would be involved in bullying, with 2.7 million being victims and 2.1 million being the bullies.

"We know thousands and thousands of students are afraid of going to school in the morning for fear of being bullied and feel anxious and threatened while in school," he said.

Reduced

"It is not surprising that the victims' devaluation of themselves sometimes becomes so overwhelming they see suicide as the only possible solution," he said.

But he said a Norway program showing parents and teachers how to curtail bullying demonstrated steps could be taken to reduce the amount of bullying in the schools.

"A preliminary analysis of 2400 students from 42 schools in Norway found bullying dropped by at least 50 per cent in two years," he said.

"Anti-social behavior in general such as theft, vandalism, and truancy, showed a marked drop during these years," he said.



ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL

BB:mc:ASC5971,5977
30 September 1987.

Ms. P. den Ronden JP
Citizens Against Slaughter Ltd
PO Box 231
LUTWYCHE QLD 4030

Dear Madam,

Re: Zupps Used Cars - Television Commercial

I refer to your letter of 4 August, 1987 in which you made a complaint about the above commercial.

Council met on Wednesday, 16 September, 1987 and determined as follows:

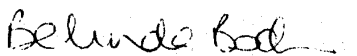
Council viewed the commercials, the first of which depicted a scene of a father driving his daughter to the church in time for her wedding. The father takes the "back road" and finds the bridge is out, however the car, being a "Zupps Used Car", is able to leap over the gap in the bridge.

The second commercial features a woman, in dressing gown and hair rollers, driving her husband to a job interview. It is a morning when nothing has gone as planned and finally a removal van is blocking their path. The woman, driving a "Zupps Used Car" pulls the car up onto two wheels to pass.

Council was of the opinion that these sequences would be recognised by the viewer as stunt sequences and not part of the ordinary drivers ability when manoeuvring a vehicle. The situations are obviously exaggerated to make a point about the cars advertised and would be perceived to be so by the ordinary viewer.

The complaint was not upheld.

Yours faithfully,


Belinda Boden
Administrative Secretary

ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL



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BB:ys:ASC5838, 5839, 5970
5976.5989
25 September, 1987

Ms. P. den Ronden J.P.
Secretary
Citizens Against Road Slaughter Ltd
PO Box 231
LUTWICHE QLD 4030

Dear Madam,

Re: Holden Astra - Television Commercials

I refer to your letter of 4 August, 1987 in which you made a complaint about the above commercials.

Council met on Wednesday, 16 September, 1987 and determined as follows:

Council viewed the television commercials, the first of which comprised a scene in an office where a young man is given a bundle of papers to attend to, presumably late in the afternoon, before the morning. A car pulls up alongside his desk and the driver, also the same young man, suggests the young man has got to "getaway".

The young man gets into the driver's seat and proceeds to drive down the office corridor with other staff moving out of his way. At one point he shouts to his boss "get out of the way you old goat". The car proceeds from the office onto a roadway and heads off into the distance.

The second commercial shows a young man at a piano in a nightclub. Again a car pulls up alongside him and his likeness proceeds to tell him he has got to "getaway". The young man gets into the driver's seat and drives between the tables and then onto a roadway.

Council was of the opinion that viewers are able to distinguish fantasy from reality and would not relate the scenes shown to ordinary driving conditions. The scenes are definitely far-fetched and not likely or even possible to be copied in normal conditions. The word "getaway" is now often used to describe for example holidays meaning to get away to more pleasant surroundings.

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Council noted that the advertiser had removed from the first advertisement the derogatory remark made toward the older gentleman.

The complaint was not upheld.

Yours faithfully,

Belinda Boden

Belinda Boden
Administrative Secretary

ROAD TOLL FACTORS

