

Safer Roads, Safer Queensland Forum

Summary and key themes

Date: Friday 10 April 2015

Place: Undumbi Room, Level 5 Parliamentary Annexe, Parliament House

Background

On 10 April 2015, a 'Safer Roads, Safer Queensland' forum was hosted by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, the Honourable Jo-Ann Miller MP, and the Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports, the Honourable Mark Bailey MP.

The forum was a first step in a concerted campaign to improve safety on Queensland's vast road network following the tragic loss of life on the road over Easter.

Over the past 30 years, significant improvements have been made in Queensland's road toll, and delegates were invited to share their expertise on how to build on this positive trend into the future.

The forum heard from a wide range of experts, including those from research institutions, road user groups, new car assessments, engineering and infrastructure groups, motoring and insurance organisations, local government, legal firms, the rail industry, driver trainers, unions and state government policy and law enforcement agencies.

Each delegate was offered an opportunity to discuss their ideas with the government about the road safety issues facing Queensland and the actions that could be considered now and into the future to address these issues.

Where to from here

The Queensland Government sincerely thanks all participants for their valuable time and insights.

During the forum, a great many ideas were put forward. The key themes and discussion points, as well as a sample of specific initiatives discussed, are summarised below. This input, together with more detailed submissions received and initiatives raised on the day, will now be used to develop a new road safety strategy for Queensland, and an action plan to guide efforts over the next two years.

Key themes

Note: the below summary aims to capture the key discussion themes raised by a range of participants at the forum, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Queensland Government or all of the participants.

1. Road safety reflects our social and transport context

Broader social issues play out on our roads every day. For example, people drive and ride fatigued because of long hours of work in destinations further away from home, distracted by technology or impaired by alcohol and drug dependencies.

People are also less tolerant, patient and courteous with other road users when tired, busy, distracted or impaired by drugs or alcohol, and can be more inclined to make mistakes.

These behaviours can be difficult to change. They are part of daily living and social norms. But this does not mean we shouldn't keep trying.

Participants suggested:

- Government alone will not be able to solve these issues, and must work with broader community and stakeholders to better understand and address the underlying causes of dangerous and aggressive behaviour on the road.
- A Queensland road safety strategy and action plan help set a direction for stakeholders.
- Efficient and cost-effective public transport and the use of taxis can help to relieve the pressure on the roads and provide alternative modes of travel.
- There could be opportunities to make better use of rail freight to complement road freight options.

2. The true road toll is broader than fatalities

Traditionally the majority of media and public attention has been on road fatalities. However, serious injuries are a significant part of the human and economic costs of road trauma and are deserving of greater attention.

Participants suggested:

- Public discussion about the road toll should be more inclusive of the range of trauma experienced by communities.
- This discussion should include a focus on personal stories of those involved in trauma.
- Data analysis of hospitalised casualties will be important in understanding the full story of road trauma.

3. Road trauma is economically and socially expensive; addressing it is an investment

The total economic, social and emotional costs of serious road trauma are enormous and enduring. The economic cost of serious crashes alone (involving at least one fatal or hospitalised casualty) in Queensland is estimated at over \$4 billion. The individual costs of medical care, lost productivity and diminished quality of life are also steep. Then there are other associated costs, including for example, costs to individuals and businesses associated with traffic congestion following a crash.

- One submission recommended a stronger connection between the beneficiary of reduced road trauma (health system, emergency services, treasury, insurance and business) and the solutions (safer roads, vehicles and road users) to address investment in road safety.

4. The 'Fatal Five' are still relevant, driver distraction and fatigue growing issues

The 'Fatal Five' (speeding, drink/drug driving, fatigue, no seatbelts and distraction) continue to be dangerous behaviours on the road reflected in road toll data. Our health system manages the results of Fatal Five behaviours every day, with trauma specialists continuing to witness moments of lawlessness and/or mistakes and poor judgement that result in death or debilitating injury, particularly related to alcohol and drugs.

Distraction and fatigue were highlighted as particular and growing issues for all road users, most likely to be under-reported in the data.

Participants suggested:

- Addressing distraction through both education (noting the current Easter 'Distraction Action Plan' campaign) and enforcement (particularly of mobile phone use).
- Fatal Five offenders might benefit from education/rehabilitation programs, or initiatives such as mandatory alcohol interlocks before re-licensing.

5. Communities must be part of the solution

Everyone has a role to play in making our roads safer, including road authorities, urban planners, vehicle manufacturers, fleet managers, business owners, and the people who use the roads.

Participants suggested:

- Solutions will be more effective if they are co-designed and co-produced with stakeholders. There might be greater opportunities for community and stakeholder group involvement such as through Join the Drive to Save Lives.
- Solutions should balance a 'general' approach to implementing what we know works across the network, with more agile and targeted approaches to solving local problems with local solutions, and addressing specific road user groups including vulnerable road users and heavy vehicle safety.
- Queensland should continue robust research, draw on ideas from around the world, adapt initiatives to local circumstances, and link and integrate data sets and research activities.

6. Whole of life education and skills development help people to make safer on-road decisions

If road safety reflects our social fabric, there could be more opportunities to influence, educate and skill people for safer road use - from young children through to older road users (whole of life learning).

For example, early school education to influence desirable attitudes, encouraging children to talk to their parents about their driving, breaking through to 17-24 year olds who are over-represented in the road toll, targeted skills development for learner drivers/riders, refresher information to adult and returning drivers/riders, and information and skills refreshers for older drivers.

- Ideally, people would not only adopt safer behaviours themselves, but would demand it from everyone involved in the road system.

The Queensland Government interacts with people at many 'touch points' in their life, such as at school, when they get a licence, register a vehicle or pay a fine, which all provide opportunities to inform and educate.

- Participants suggested there might be opportunities to better 'balance' interactions between information, advice, fees and fines, and incentives to adopt safer road use behaviour.

Highly visible social change campaigns are powerful education tools. Join the Drive to Save Lives is a current example that seeks to draw from past successes of 'social change' such as Slip, Slop, Slap and anti-smoking campaigns, and use innovative social media and humour to target younger road users, who are notoriously difficult to reach.

Participants suggested:

- Highly visible campaigns based on the Fatal Five.
- A greater whole-of-Queensland approach to road safety public education, including partnering with stakeholders to amplify road safety messages.
- Educating people in resuscitation and first aid that could save lives on the road.

However, this is not just a role for governments. People can be more responsive to non-government messages. For example, they might be more inclined to listen to a work mate or a family member.

7. Investing in a protective road environment saves lives

A protective road environment includes roads, roadsides, speeds, rest areas, road works and level crossings. A protective road environment can only be achieved by road authorities, planners and private sector partners working together from concept through to design, delivery and maintenance. It also requires sustained investment priority.

Queensland is a vast state with long stretches of road and diverse urban environments to build and maintain.

Participants suggested:

- Investment in our roads should deliver a safe system and a safe work environment. Failure to do so leads to situations such as:
 - dangerous and unforgiving roadsides with risk of run-off road crashes
 - undivided high-speed roads with risk of head-on crashes
 - intersections with no turning provision and management of approach speeds
 - urban arterials with insufficient provision for pedestrians to walk along and cross the road safely
 - limited provision for the needs of cyclists and motorcyclists.
- Road infrastructure safety requires SMART targets: Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and with Timelines. The use of star rating targets relating directly to road infrastructure performance provides one option.
- Where investing in 4 or 5 star roads and separating vulnerable road users from other traffic is not economically feasible, speed restrictions, enforcement and innovative design solutions play a greater role. There must be a trade-off between the quality of infrastructure and the speed and design of roads to address the road toll.
- Undertaking crash data analysis, highway safety reviews, road safety audits and fatal crash audits are important tools in understanding and addressing areas of greatest risk.
- The number of speed zone variations in some locations can mean that people focus on the speedometer and not on situational awareness and watching for roadside hazards.

Design solutions are important in improving the safety of vulnerable road users (pedestrians, motorcycles and cyclists) and roadside workers.

Participants suggested:

- Well designed and planned rest areas encourage all road users (including heavy vehicles) to take a break and avoid driving fatigued.
- Design solutions could help people to better understand the risk ahead and make more sensible decisions about their driving behaviour.
- A review of design standards to ensure road infrastructure design aligns with the 'safe system' principles.

8. Enforcement is effective

The Queensland Police Service established a dedicated Road Policing Command in June 2013 and undertakes a mix of covert and overt intelligence-led operations to encourage safer road use. The Queensland Police Service is also considering greater use of enforcement technology, including Automatic Number Plate Recognition, which participants agreed would help to address dangerous unlicensed and unregistered motorists.

Participants suggested:

- There are opportunities to investigate balancing enforcement with encouragement and incentives for good driving behaviours.
- There was discussion about the current penalties in place. Some participants felt that penalties are already high and further penalties, such as double demerit points, would be counter-productive to the road safety message. Some questioned whether warnings would be more effective than penalties, particularly in creating a more positive attitude towards road safety measures such as speed limits.
- A highly visible police presence is effective.
- Enforcement is more effective when it is personalised, targeted and immediately addresses an unsafe behaviour or issue.
- Point-to-point cameras would be effective in reducing speeds on higher volume sections of the Bruce and Warrego highways.

- There would be benefit in exploring options for the owners of vehicles being informed if their drivers have been fined so they can address unsafe behaviours in the workplace (particularly heavy vehicles).

9. Technology solutions are already here to be harnessed

Technology is a double-edged sword for road safety. On the one hand, it has increased distractions for road users through GPS, phones and other smart devices and can lead to dependencies on smarter in-vehicle technologies. On the other hand, it has helped to achieve substantial safety gains, particularly with more advanced vehicle safety features.

Participants suggested:

- Appropriate take up of Intelligent Transport Systems, which offer great potential into the future. Blackbox technology, telematics and other in-vehicle camera technologies are also becoming more available to monitor and help to correct driver behaviour.
- Encouragement for people to better protect themselves by purchasing safer vehicles (and maintaining roadworthiness) and encouragement of vehicle sellers to spend more time teaching people how to use the technology in their vehicles.
- Technology to increase the visibility of vulnerable road users such as motorcycles.

10. Data tells the full story of road trauma

A large amount of data is collected across various organisations, which is not necessarily linked and used to its full advantage. For example, the lack of health data linked with police and transport data means that it is difficult to tell the full story of serious injuries. Although a complex issue, there are opportunities for longer term work to improve data collection and analysis.

Participants suggested:

- Timely and detailed reporting of crash data, including information from Queensland hospitals. Data is more helpful if it goes beyond straight statistics and can assist people to understand what happened and why. This information could be used to identify more targeted initiatives to address the risks that led up to a crash, as well as those that might have lessened the impact of the crash once it happened.
- The adoption of nationally consistent data on fatalities and serious injuries.

A monthly analysis of data to guide the work of agencies, including transport and main roads, health and insurance organisations.