

ACT Auditor-General's Office

Performance Audit Report

Road Safety

Department of Urban Services

June 2006



ACT AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE



PA 05/20

The Speaker
ACT Legislative Assembly
Civic Square, London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Speaker

I am pleased to forward to you a Performance Audit Report titled '**Road Safety**', conducted under the authority contained in the *Auditor-General Act 1996*.

I would appreciate if you could arrange for the distribution of the Report to each member of the Legislative Assembly, and its subsequent tabling in the Legislative Assembly pursuant to Section 17(5) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*.

Yours sincerely

Tu Pham
Auditor-General
27 June 2006

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1 REPORT SUMMARY AND AUDIT OPINION

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the results of a performance audit that reviewed the administration of road safety activities in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) by the Department of Urban Services (DUS).

BACKGROUND

1.2 Road safety is a significant issue for the Canberra community. Fatalities, serious injury and property damage caused by road crashes carry high human and financial costs to the community. Prevention is a priority.

1.3 In 2001, the cost of road trauma to the ACT community had been estimated at around \$173 million each year.¹ A different study recently estimates an annual cost of \$93m² for 2003, when fatalities were lower. Applying the 2003 costs to the DUS 2005 crash statistics, the cost of road trauma in the ACT is currently estimated at around \$138m.

1.4 DUS reported the cost of providing services on vehicle safety and driver safety as \$3.8m in its 2004-05 Annual Report. In addition, there are functions such as licensing and registration, not included in the above figures, that contribute to road safety.

1.5 The ACT has had the lowest fatality rate in Australia, with an average in 2004 of 2.78 deaths per 100 000 head of population, compared to the national average of 7.87.³ However, in 2005 the ACT recorded 26 road fatalities. This figure brings the ACT per capita fatality rate to the level of the national average, and represents a doubling of the ACT average of 12.8 fatalities over the five years from 2000 to 2005.

1.6 Many factors affect road safety including road conditions, driver attitude and capability, vehicle safety and enforcement. Effective government action contributes to community confidence in the road safety system and potentially reduces the number of road accidents.

Audit scope, approach, and criteria

1.7 DUS and the Australian Federal Police (AFP) are responsible for the administration of the road safety function in the ACT. The scope of this audit was

¹ ACT Road Safety Strategy 2001-2005

² Connelly, Luke and Richard Supangan, *The economic costs of road traffic crashes: Australia, States and Territories*, Health Services Research Conference, Canberra, November 2005

³ Australian Safety Transport Bureau, *Road Deaths Monthly Bulletin*, December 2005.

limited to DUS as the AFP is a Commonwealth body, and is outside the normal audit mandate. However, Audit consulted with the AFP during the audit.

1.8 Road safety outcomes in terms of fatalities and injuries are also influenced by the quality of emergency and health services. These aspects are not included in this audit.

1.9 The audit approach involved:

- reviewing background information, including legislation, policy, internal audits and evaluations;
- discussions with key DUS staff and other appropriate stakeholders;
- reviewing DUS reports, statistics and databases containing information on road safety; and
- reviewing DUS files relevant to road safety.

1.10 Criteria for the audit are listed in Appendix 1.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES

1.11 The objective of the audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the extent to which the Department of Urban Services has:

- monitored and analysed road safety issues in the ACT;
- effectively coordinated road safety activities; and
- developed and implemented efficient and effective measures to reduce road accidents, especially those resulting in injuries and fatalities.

1.12 This audit assessed:

- the Department's analysis of overall road safety issues and coordination of measures to improve road safety;
- the regulation and monitoring of accredited driving instructors;
- the issuing of drivers licences;
- the examination of vehicles for roadworthiness;
- the operation of speed cameras;
- the roads black-spot program and other infrastructure measures to address road safety;
- educational and promotional activities designed to improve road safety; and
- liaison with the AFP and the community.

1.13 The audit did not evaluate the adequacy of current legislation relating to these activities.

AUDIT OPINION

1.14 The audit opinion drawn against the audit objectives is set out below.

- For the most part, the Department of Urban Services (DUS) has monitored and analysed road safety in the ACT and developed and implemented appropriate measures to reduce road accidents, especially those resulting in injuries and fatalities.
- The lack of assessment of effectiveness of current strategies and measures and the absence of up-to-date statistics on road accidents have in part impeded DUS ability to better target relevant road safety measures.
- There is scope for improvement in overall budgeting and coordination, collection and use of statistical information on accidents, auditing of Accredited Driving Instructors, licensing procedures and use of educational activities.

KEY FINDINGS

1.15 The audit opinion is supported by the following findings:

Coordination of road safety activities

- The Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan support the overall objectives of the Department in relation to road safety.
- Actions detailed in the Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan influenced decision-making processes within DUS.
- There is scope for the establishment of a more coordinated road safety function within DUS.
- DUS has not reviewed the effectiveness of either the Road Safety Strategy or the Road Safety Action Plan. Such review is particularly important, given that in 2005, the ACT experienced a sharp rise in the number of road deaths when compared to the previous three years, and a worsening situation compared to the rest of Australia.
- The Traffic Liaison Committee is the only forum for formal discussion of road safety issues within DUS and, in its current form, does not have its role and activities clearly defined, thus limiting its effectiveness.

Monitoring and analysis of road safety

- Comprehensive and up-to-date data from road accidents was not available as at May 2006, due to a database problem. However, data from 2004 was analysed by September 2005, and DUS advised that the database was repaired by June 2006.
- DUS did not conduct analyses of the relative effectiveness of different types of road safety measures.

Development and implementation of safety measures

- Road crash statistics for 2004 and 2005 were not readily available to assist effective implementation of road safety measures.
- The processes used to determine priority for the black spot programs are sound, but the accuracy of the program was temporarily affected by the lack of updated road crash data.
- Implementation of compliance measures such as traffic cameras is efficient and effective.
- Procedures for vehicle inspections are sound.
- The level of audit activities conducted by DUS on Accredited Driving Instructors (ADIs) was not sufficient to ensure the quality of driving instructors and the integrity of the logbook system.
- There is a risk that a number of drivers who acquire their provisional licence through the logbook system do not meet all the competencies required.
- About 19% of drivers with a Provisional (P) Licence attended the Road Ready Plus course, which allowed for the removal of the P plate and an additional allowance of four demerit points. Audit was concerned that the intended benefits of attending the course were reduced because of reduced workshop hours. In addition, it is not clear to Audit that the benefit of the course was sufficient to outweigh the deterrent to unsafe driving associated with fewer available demerit points and the display of the P plate.
- There may be merit in introducing a driver attitude and awareness course as a step towards gaining a full drivers licence, as in South Australia.
- Licensing is reasonably efficient and effective, but additional measures may be needed for motorcycle riders' licensing.
- There is scope to improve measures for ongoing education of drivers and riders.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

1.16 The audit made seven recommendations to address the audit findings.

1.17 In accordance with section 18 of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, a final draft of this report was provided to the Chief Executive of the Department of Urban Services for consideration and comments. The Chief Executive's overall response is shown below:

The Department concurs that road safety functions have been managed to provide development and implementation of measures to raise community awareness about safe driving practices and improve the road network with the aim of reducing road crashes.

Review of existing strategies and proposed actions will be undertaken towards the end of the current Action Plan period. It is anticipated that

improved data will be available to allow for the introduction of targeted programs in future years.

The Department considers that the recently announced establishment of a Road Safety Unit, along with closer liaison between areas responsible for data collection and analysis through the formation of the Office of Transport, will address the matters raised in the report.

1.18 In addition, the Chief Executive provided responses to each recommendation, as shown below.

Recommendation 1 (page 11)

The Department of Urban Services should assess the effectiveness of the Road Safety Strategy and Plan.

DUS Response:

Agreed.

An assessment of the effectiveness of key measures in the 2005-06 Road Safety Action Plan and the previous 5 year Road Safety Strategy will be undertaken prior to the establishment of a new Action Plan. Consideration will also be given to the outcome of the review of the National Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan as the national framework will provide key indicators for future directions.

Recommendation 2 (page 13)

The Department of Urban Services should improve overall coordination of its road safety function through means such as:

- a. better utilisation of the Traffic Liaison Committee to coordinate input from other agencies such as the NRMA and the AFP;
- b. establishment of a strong road safety coordination unit; and
- c. introduction of an overall road safety budget that can be allocated to various road safety measures as priorities determine.

DUS Response:

Agreed.

From 1 July 2006, the Office of Transport will contain a Road Safety Unit which will draw together and enhance the current level of resourcing for road safety. Functional responsibility for the development of a cross-agency and community based Liaison Committee and the establishment of a defined road safety budget will be established as part of the new structure.

Recommendation 3 (page 21)

The Department of Urban Services should, as a priority, ensure that important road safety statistics can be produced accurately and promptly.

DUS Response:

Agreed.

While there has been a delay in the release of some reports, the primary report on 2004 Road Traffic Crashes was released in September 2005. Analysis of the 2004 and 2005 data is being undertaken to assist with the development of future Black Spot programs. Interrogation of the data will also identify key factors or patterns in recent road crashes, which will assist with the development of targeted education campaigns.

As a small jurisdiction, fluctuations in crash data can result in wide statistical variations, therefore use of national data reports is often of great assistance in recognising trends in unsafe driving practices. The release in May 2006 of the Department of Transport and Regional Services 'Community Attitudes to Road Safety' report, based on data collected in February and March 2005, will provide critical data for the development of the next ACT Road Safety Action Plan.

Recommendation 4 (page 21)

The Department of Urban Services should take into account the risk of interstate crashes when developing and implementing measures such as awareness campaigns and driver education reforms.

DUS Response:

Agreed.

The newly formed Road Safety Unit will employ a Road Safety Officer with responsibility to assess both ACT and interstate data, where available, and develop appropriate awareness campaigns.

Recommendation 5 (page 33)

The Department of Urban Services should improve its processes for ensuring the quality of driving instructors by:

- a. ensuring all driving instructors are subject to audits at least a specified number of times in a year;
- b. requiring driving instructors to use a vehicle that will safely accommodate a DUS auditor for on-road auditing; and
- c. establishing a set of risk-based guidelines to help auditors select which driving instructor to audit.

DUS Response:

Agreed.

All Accredited Driving Instructors (ADI) that are training and assessing licence applicants will be audited a minimum of once every six months. Additional audits will be conducted in accordance with the risk based guidelines to be established under recommendation c. The guidelines will account for the number of applicants assessed by the ADI, previous audit results, applicants feedback on ADIs and a higher level of auditing for new ADIs.

Consultation with stakeholders would be undertaken prior to any changes requiring ADIs to use certain types of vehicle. To introduce such a requirement would result in a change to the Code of Practice for Accredited Driving Instructors. The Code is a disallowable instrument signed by the Chief Executive of the Road Transport Authority.

Recommendation 6 (page 36)

In the light of the increase in accidents involving motorcyclists, the Department of Urban Services should review the regime for motorcycle licensing with a view to introducing an on-road component.

DUS Response:

Agreed in part.

The existing pre-learner licence course and assessment is conducted off-road in a controlled environment. The course provides nine hours motorcycle instruction and includes theory and practical components. This course provides riding skills for people prior to commencing on-road riding.

The Minister for Territory and Municipal Services has given in-principle support to enhance the existing pre-provisional motorcycle rider training course to make the course compulsory for all persons moving from a learner licence to a provisional licence. This course contains an on-road component.

Recommendation 7 (page 38)

The Department of Urban Services should prepare options for Government on measures to improve driver attitude and awareness such as:

- a. requiring all novice drivers to undertake a driver attitude and awareness course before a full licence is granted;
- b. compulsory remedial training for licence-holders after serious or numerous offences; and
- c. enhanced road safety awareness campaigns.

DUS Response:

Agreed in part.

The Department considers that the Road Ready Plus Course, particularly when expanded to five (5) hours with the introduction of an additional module covering a Driver Development Plan, meets driver attitude and awareness training for provisional licence holders. The recently introduced voluntary Driver Awareness Course in South Australia and compulsory Driver Qualification Test in operation in NSW will be investigated as part of any future review of Road Ready Plus.

The Department will be commissioning a feasibility study to assess a Speed Awareness Course, currently in operation in the United Kingdom, for persons who have committed repeat speeding offences. The course would be similar to the 'Sober Driver' course currently required for recidivist drink drivers.

The establishment of the Road Safety Unit in the Office of Transport will enable a co-ordinated approach to the development of future road safety awareness campaigns.

2 COORDINATION

Introduction

2.1 This chapter discusses the coordination arrangements within the Department of Urban Services on road safety, and also coordination between the Department and significant stakeholders. It includes the setting of overall policies and strategies affecting road safety.

KEY FINDINGS

- The Road Safety Strategy and Plan support the overall objectives of DUS in relation to road safety.
- Actions detailed in the Road Safety Strategy and Plan influenced decision-making processes within DUS.
- There is scope for the establishment of a more coordinated road safety function within DUS.
- DUS has not reviewed the effectiveness of either the Road Safety Strategy or the Road Safety Action Plan. Such review is particularly important, given that in 2005, the ACT experienced a sharp rise in the number of road deaths when compared to the previous three years, and also a worsening situation compared to the rest of Australia.
- The Traffic Liaison Committee is the only forum for formal discussion of road safety issues within DUS and, in its current form, does not have its role and activities clearly defined, thus limiting its effectiveness.

ROAD SAFETY STRATEGIES

2.2 There are several national strategies and plans that are relevant to road safety. These include the National Road Safety Strategy and the National Road Safety Action Plan. These documents have a significant influence on the ACT Road Safety Strategy 2001-2005 and the two-year Road Safety Action Plans.

ACT Road Safety Strategy 2001-2005

2.3 A ten-year national road safety strategy, which forms the framework under which all Australian States and Territory strategic plans operate, was released in November 2000. DUS developed an ACT Road Safety Strategy that was consistent with this national initiative.

2.4 The ACT Road Safety Strategy aimed to significantly reduce road deaths and injuries in the ACT. Key strategies included:

- community involvement and coordination;

- education, training and encouragement of safe practice;
- enforcement;
- transport planning and engineering;
- new technology and safe vehicles;
- research, monitoring, evaluation and reporting; and
- safe driving reminders.

2.5 DUS has not conducted any review to assess whether it has achieved the aims of the Road Safety Strategy. DUS indicated that a review is planned for the future but a timeframe has not been confirmed.

2.6 The ACT Road Safety Strategy expired in December 2005. DUS advised that it does not intend to replace this strategy. Instead, it will use the ten-year national plan together with the two-year National Road Safety Action Plan. This plan is developed by the National Road Safety Taskforce, on which DUS represents ACT Government interests. The next National Road Safety Action Plan, for 2007 and 2008, is expected to be completed by October 2006, and DUS expects to develop the next 2007 and 2008 ACT Action Plan in the same timeframe.

Road Safety Action Plan

2.7 The ACT Road Safety Action Plan is the functional component of the ACT Road Safety Strategy 2001-2005. Covering the calendar years 2005 and 2006, the plan aims to reduce road deaths and injuries in the ACT by focusing on:

- continuing existing effective measures;
- enhancing or achieving wider implementation of measures with further potential; and
- introducing new measures consistent with the following strategic objectives:
 - improved road user behaviour;
 - improved safety of roads;
 - improved vehicle compatibility and occupant protection;
 - the use of new technology to reduce human error;
 - improved equity among road users;
 - improved trauma, medical and retrieval services;
 - improved road safety policy and programs through research of safety outcomes; and
 - the encouragement of alternatives to motor vehicle use.

2.8 The plan was produced in conjunction with stakeholders including the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust, ACT Policing and the Department of Education.

2.9 The plan contained a summary of actions to support the overall strategic objectives of the plan. Actions included reviews of the *Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Act 1977*, high crash locations for Black Spot treatments, current speed camera policy and conducting high profile advertising enforcement campaigns. Responsibility for these actions was allocated between DUS, ACT Policing and stakeholders.

2.10 The audit reviewed the list of planned actions for the previous plan for 2003 and 2004, and identified actions that were to be completed either in whole or in part by the Department. Of these, the audit identified a high percentage that were completed, including the introduction of the 50 kph speed limit, the review of high crash locations for black spot treatments, and the evaluation of the Road Ready program. The audit did not review the 2005-2006 plan as it does not expire until December 2006.

2.11 Audit observed that although the plan discusses continuing existing effective measures, and enhancing measures with further potential, there was little analysis of whether measures were effective. This issue is discussed further in chapter 3.

Conclusion

2.12 The Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan support the overall objectives of the Department in relation to road safety. The audit found that the plan influenced actions by DUS. However, neither the Strategy nor the Plan assesses the effectiveness of various elements of road safety (engineering, enforcement or education) nor sets priorities accordingly to ensure the best use of funding.

Recommendation 1

The Department of Urban Services should assess the effectiveness of the Road Safety Strategy and Plan.

COORDINATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN SERVICES

Organisational structure

2.13 The Municipal Services Division within DUS covers a wide range of functions including two areas, Road Transport and Roads ACT, that specifically pertain to road safety.

2.14 Road Transport administers and provides advice on road transport policy and legislation. This includes laws relating to driver licensing, vehicle registration, vehicle standards, parking, road safety and public transport (including licensing and accreditation of buses, taxis and hire cars).

2.15 In relation to road safety, Roads ACT has responsibility for the management, use and maintenance of the ACT roads, bridges, footpaths, traffic lights and street

lighting, and for analysis and publication of road crash data. Roads ACT also develop a capital works program each year and is responsible for the management of Canberra's traffic. Roads ACT also provides line-marking, project management, sign design and manufacture, and emergency works.

2.16 Audit noted some areas of overlapping responsibilities, where both Road Transport and Roads ACT play a role, such as policy advice on road safety.

Informal communication between functions

2.17 Audit noted that the informal communication links between Road Transport and Roads ACT were strong. This was also noted in the Department's dealings with stakeholder groups. Audit was concerned that communication both within the Department and with stakeholders relies heavily on personal relationships between individuals. This informal communication process poses risks, particularly as the workforce structure evolves.

2.18 Audit observed that there were opportunities for improvement in the joint analysis by Roads ACT and Road Transport of available crash data and the subsequent development of policy to address issues identified.

Traffic Liaison Committee

2.19 DUS chairs the Traffic Liaison Committee (TLC), which also includes representatives from the AFP and NRMA Motoring and Services. The TLC is the only forum for formal discussion of road safety issues within DUS.

2.20 The TLC does not possess any terms of reference, and TLC meetings were attended by non-Executive officers. Audit considers that for the TLC to be effective, its role and activities need to be formally defined, and the presence of senior staff may result in a more effective forum for discussion of ideas and providing authoritative responses to transport issues.

2.21 DUS advised that it is considering changes to the committee to include high-level representation from the Department and ACT Policing along with representatives from community stakeholder groups. This augmented committee will also be charged with overseeing the review (discussed at paragraph 2.5 above) of the outcomes of the Road Safety Strategy.

Formation of an Office of Transport

2.22 DUS recently commissioned a review of the current transport functions with a view to forming a single Office of Transport (OOT).

2.23 In December 2005, consultants to DUS issued a working draft discussing the possible implementation of the OOT structure. It identified structural options intended to suit the future needs of the OOT while trying to achieve an integrated

transport function. In evaluating options, the consultants focussed extensively on other State and Local Government organisations with similar functions to understand how they have achieved an integrated transport function.

2.24 The 2006-07 budget announced that the OOT, effective from 1 July, would include management of the ACT's road related assets, regulation of public passenger transport, heavy vehicles, driver competency, vehicle registration, and the promotion of road user safety. It would also include provision of public transport services and implementation of the *Sustainable Transport Plan*. The OOT will include a Road Safety Unit that will consist of staff drawn from Road Transport and Roads ACT. It will address media and education campaigns, development of road treatments addressing road safety, and input and analysis of ACT road crash data. Audit considers that the formation of the road safety unit offers the possibility of improved road safety coordination within DUS.

2.25 The 2005-06 ACT budget allocated funds to DUS Output 2.1, Road Transport Regulation and Services, which is administered by Road Transport. Funds were also provided to Output 1.2, Roads and Infrastructure, which is administered by Roads ACT. Road safety was not the primary influence on either component of this expenditure. In the 2006-07 budget, there is a single line allocation to the Office of Transport, which covers both functions. At present, there is no specific budget allocation for road safety. Allocation of a sum from within the OOT budget to road safety expenditure would facilitate the effective distribution of funds between traffic engineering, enforcement and education approaches to improving road safety.

2.26 In addition, DUS has not clearly estimated the total amount spent on road safety. Funds allocated to Roads ACT for the black spot program are defined, but spending on road safety by Road Transport is not.

Recommendation 2

The Department of Urban Services should improve overall coordination of its road safety function through means such as:

- a. better utilisation of the Traffic Liaison Committee to coordinate input from other agencies such as the NRMA and the AFP;
- b. establishment of a strong road safety coordination unit; and
- c. introduction of an overall road safety budget that can be allocated to various road safety measures as priorities determine.

COORDINATION WITH ACT STAKEHOLDERS

2.27 Road safety is a complex issue, with a number of organisations each playing a role. Therefore it is important that DUS has effective liaison with other parties able to influence road safety.

NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust

2.28 The NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust was established in 1992 under the *NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust Act 1992*. This Act set out the format for a deed of trust between the two parties, the ACT Government and NRMA Insurance Pty Ltd. The two parties appoint two trustees each, and agree on a chairperson. The trust deed states that the principal objective of the Trust is to enhance road safety for the benefit of the ACT road-using community. This objective is to be achieved by:

- promoting research and implementation of accident and injury counter-measures;
- encouraging road safety education;
- co-operating with other road safety organisations;
- assisting in the care and rehabilitation of road accident victims; and
- providing funds for facilities to promote safe driving practice.

2.29 Initially a grant of \$10 million was made available by NRMA Insurance from third party premiums surplus. These funds and an additional \$2 million interest were committed to road safety projects. Currently the Trust is funded through a \$2.00 Road Safety Contribution from each ACT motor vehicle registration fee, and a matching contribution by NRMA Insurance. The Trust employs a Secretary-Manager who is provided with office space and facilities by DUS. It reports annually to both the Minister and to NRMA Insurance.

2.30 The Government has worked in conjunction with the Trust on several road safety projects such as:

- contributions to the development of awareness campaigns to educate motorists on safe travel on unsealed roads;
- contributions towards the development of a road safety video on risk taking behaviour in young drivers; and
- funding to Australian Roads Research Board to conduct an analysis of traffic offence data by young novice drivers.

2.31 The Trust stated that it believes it is having an impact on road safety, but was unable to quantify the extent.⁴

Australian Federal Police

2.32 ACT Policing is the business unit of the AFP that provides policing services to the ACT. It has a significant input into road safety, as shown by the fact that one of ACT Policing's four key output areas is Traffic Law Enforcement and Road Safety. This involves enforcing traffic laws and promoting safer behaviour on ACT roads

⁴ NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust Annual Report 2003-04

with the objective of reducing the number of crash fatalities and injuries to members of the community.

2.33 Most AFP communication with DUS is on operational topics such as traffic cameras, vehicle inspections and roads design. The AFP considers that arrangements work well. Communication on policy is mostly through the Traffic Liaison Committee.

2.34 The AFP collects information on accidents on written forms. These forms are then sent to DUS for entry on its Integrated Asset Management System (IAMS) database and subsequent analysis. As the AFP only needs some basic information, there may be opportunities to work with the AFP to redesign the current accident report form so that the information needs of both parties are better met.

2.35 DUS will sometimes consult AFP on the reconstruction of an intersection, and the AFP will advise on items such as signs that have become obscured.

Road user organisations

2.36 DUS also consults with organisations representing the interests of road users, such as the NRMA, Motorcycle Riders Association (MRA) and Pedal Power. As a whole, these organisations support the level of consultation from DUS, but there are some concerns about specific issues, such as consultation on the safety implications of construction of on-road bicycle lanes.

2.37 Two community-based consultative groups, the Bicycle User Group and the Motorcycle User Group meet with Roads ACT approximately every two months. They are advised of forthcoming roadworks and provide input on their concerns and requests.

2.38 The community can also provide direct input on road safety issues. This can be through the City Services – Roads ACT contact number (6207 2500) or through the general Canberra Connect number, 132281. DUS states that it receives feedback on road and traffic issues through about 2000 calls per year, about 1000 pieces of correspondence, and through the ACT Government website. From these inputs, around 400 projects a year are undertaken. These are mostly small, for example changing a sign or removing foliage that was obscuring a sign, changing road markings etc.

2.39 Audit found that the lack of reliable data on road accidents adversely affected DUS response to such input from the community. For example, a citizen could state that an intersection was dangerous, but supporting data in terms of accidents at that intersection was not readily available. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

Conclusion

2.40 Consultation between DUS and other parties on road safety is generally satisfactory, but more structured arrangements, possibly in the form of a single road safety committee that involves key stakeholders, and both DUS business units would be more effective.

3 MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF ROAD SAFETY

Introduction

3.1 To effectively address road casualties and accidents, it is important to have sound systems and procedures in place to monitor the accidents that occur and analyse their causes. In addition to statistical data, qualitative information can also be useful. As road safety is a national and international concern, there can be useful lessons learned from other jurisdictions on the causes and prevention of accidents. This chapter discusses the processes used by the Department of Urban Services to collect and analyse road crash data and to use, where appropriate, findings from other jurisdictions to improve road safety.

KEY FINDINGS

- Comprehensive and up-to-date data from road accidents was not available as at May 2006, due to a database problem. However, data from 2004 was analysed by September 2005, and DUS stated the database was repaired by June 2006.
- DUS did not conduct analyses of the relative effectiveness of different types of road safety measures.

CRASH STATISTICS

3.2 DUS maintains a database of road accidents in the ACT. Under the *Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Regulation 2000*, all crashes⁵ that occur within the ACT are to be reported to the AFP within 24 hours. Coded crash forms are entered into an Integrated Asset Management System (IAMS) which is used, among other things, for the storage, analysis and reporting of traffic crashes. Data is collected on such things as the number of vehicles involved, the location, and the type of accident, e.g. head-on, rear-end while turning left, single vehicle leaving road etc. Reports provided by the IAMS are intended to inform decisions on road works and advertising and awareness campaigns.

3.3 Due to a technical problem, no crash information from 2004 or 2005 was available for DUS analysis from the IAMS until May 2006. In June 2006, DUS advised that the problem was fixed, and analysis was now possible.

3.4 While IAMS was unavailable, Audit was advised that a limited set of data was available directly from the AFP. The Minister for Urban Services reported some

⁵ The Australian Road Rules (incorporated under this regulation) define a *crash* as including a collision between two or more vehicles; or any other accident or incident involving a vehicle in which a person is killed or injured, property is damaged, or an animal in someone's charge is killed or injured.

preliminary data to the Assembly on 29 March 2006. These data indicated that although 2005 road deaths were abnormally high, the number of on-road crashes in 2005 decreased by 2% and hospital admissions as a result of on-road crashes decreased to 92, a 26% drop from 2004. However, the 452 people who sought medical treatment represented an increase of 22%. In all, these data record injuries to 544 people.

3.5 ACT Policing data for 2005, tabled in the Assembly on 17 March 2006, was different. It showed that there were 1402 injuries, almost double the 2004 figure of 722.⁶ This represents a serious discrepancy in data, which adds importance to the need to have a reliable database of road accidents. Part of the explanation may be the preliminary nature of the Urban Services information, different definitions between 'injuries' and 'sought medical treatment', and that the AFP includes off-road crashes while DUS does not. However, it is of concern that the two sources show opposite trends with respect to casualty crashes between 2004 and 2005.

3.6 Since the audit, DUS advised that it has commenced discussions with the AFP to streamline procedures for the public to report crashes to the police, and the transfer of that information for entry into the Department's database.

3.7 There is limited information on the costs of road accidents. A report released by the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) estimated the average total cost of road crashes in Australia in 1996 at \$1.7 million per crash involving a fatality and \$408,000 per serious injury crash. These figures include human costs such as long-term care, lost labour in the workplace and at home, and loss of quality of life; vehicle costs; and general costs such as travel delays and insurance administration.⁷ Audit was not aware of any more recent information.

Fatalities within the ACT

3.8 In 2005, the ACT experienced a sharp rise in the number of road deaths when compared to the previous three years. The data also indicate a worsening situation in the ACT compared to the rest of Australia. Details are in Table 3.1 below.

⁶ AFP Policing, *ACT Criminal Justice Statistical Profile*, December 2005

⁷ Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, *Report 102, Road Crash Costs in Australia*, 2000

Table 3.1 – Road Deaths in the ACT						
Year	Drivers	Passengers	Pedestrians	Motor cyclists	Bicyclists	Total
2002	5	3	1	1	0	10
2003	4	4	2	1	0	11
2004	5	0	2	2	0	9
2005	8	4	5	8	1	26
% increase from 2004	60%	-	150%	300%	-	189%
% increase/(decrease) nationally from 2004	3.3%	(3.6)%	1.4%	18.9%	(4.7%)	3.3%

Source: Australian Transport Safety Bureau, *Road Deaths Australia Monthly Bulletin*, December 2005.

3.9 In the ACT, motorcyclist deaths have increased from two to eight and cyclist deaths have increased from nil to one. Nationally, over the 12 months from January to December 2005, motorcyclist deaths increased by nearly 20% and bicyclist deaths decreased by approximately 5%.

Table 3.2 – Road Injuries and Deaths – AFP data					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Number of Accidents	11669	11772	10588	9991	10414
With injury	760	756	622	569	1092
Fatal	15	8	11	11	24
Number of Persons					
Injured	960	923	785	722	1402
Killed	16	10	12	11	25

Source: Criminal Justice Statistical Bulletin, December 2005

3.10 Table 3.2 indicates that injuries as well as deaths increased significantly in 2005 compared with 2004. AFP data present different fatality numbers to the DUS data of the previous table.

3.11 There is little ACT-own analysis of causes of road accidents. The main source is the Monash University Accident Research Centre, which analyses national data including the ACT. DUS does, however, identify basic trends such as that the road user groups that have experienced the sharpest rise are motorcyclists, pedestrians and passengers. Also, Roads ACT inspects the road for all fatal accidents.

Interstate crashes involving Canberra residents

3.12 Any crashes involving Canberra residents are a concern to the ACT community. Although ACT measures cannot influence road conditions or enforcement interstate, two other influences on road safety, namely vehicle roadworthiness and driver skill and attitude, can be influenced by ACT actions.

3.13 New South Wales (NSW) surrounds the ACT. Popular travel destinations such as the NSW South Coast and Sydney require ACT drivers to drive through NSW rural and built-up areas. In addition the ACT is adjacent to Queanbeyan, a major rural centre in NSW.

3.14 In March 2005, the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust released a report titled 'Crashes involving ACT vehicles and ACT controllers⁸ in NSW 1999-2003'. The report showed that ACT drivers and ACT registered vehicles were involved in a large number of crashes in NSW.

3.15 Fatal crashes involving ACT drivers/vehicles in NSW, as shown in Table 3.3 below, exceeded the number of fatal crashes recorded in the ACT in 2002 and 2003.

Table 3.3 Fatal Crashes Involving ACT Controllers or Vehicles Interstate.				
Year	Fatal Crashes within ACT	Fatal crashes involving ACT vehicles or controllers in:		
		NSW	VIC	Total interstate
1999	16	12	2	14
2000	16	10	0	10
2001	15	3	1	4
2002	8	11	1	12
2003	10	16	0	16

Source: 'Crashes involving ACT vehicles and ACT controllers in NSW 1999-2003', NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust, March 2005

3.16 There is no updated and readily available information on fatal crashes involving ACT drivers or vehicles interstate. Audit considers that DUS should regularly request this information from relevant authorities to have more comprehensive data on road accidents.

Conclusion

3.17 It is of concern that the data from road accidents during 2004 and 2005 were not available. Such information is important in assisting policy development and decisions regarding road safety in the ACT.

3.18 Crashes interstate are also an issue of serious concern as a relatively high proportion of travel by ACT residents takes place outside the ACT. Information on interstate crashes needs to be taken into account to provide a more comprehensive understanding of road safety for ACT residents.

⁸ This term includes drivers and riders

Recommendation 3

The Department of Urban Services should, as a priority, ensure that important road safety statistics can be produced accurately and promptly.

Recommendation 4

The Department of Urban Services should take into account the risk of interstate crashes when developing and implementing measures such as awareness campaigns and driver education reforms.

Analysis and procurement of available research

3.19 As the ACT is a relatively small jurisdiction, it relies heavily on research conducted by other Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies to inform policy development and decisions. Audit considers this was an appropriate strategy to acquire relevant information, although this should also be supplemented by ACT own research when specific circumstances apply to the ACT.

3.20 Actions included in the ACT Road Safety Action Plan 2005-2006 included the review of interstate research. Based on discussion with officers within Road Safety and noting the use of references in policy documents, DUS appears to be up to date with consideration of overseas and interstate road safety research.

3.21 Research carried out within the ACT on the introduction of the 50 kph speed limit showed that the reduced limit has had very little effect. There was a small decrease in the number of crashes per month, but this was not statistically significant. Speed reductions of approximately 2 kph were observed. The mean speed across all measured 50 kph roads was 50.1 kph. However, the 85% speed (that exceeded by 15% of vehicles) was 59.9 kph.⁹ Audit observed that this result has not been used to influence further DUS action to reduce speeding on minor suburban roads. The study also found there was a similar decrease in speeds along 60 kph roads during the same time period.

⁹ ARRB Transport Research, *Evaluation of 50 km/h residential speed limit in the ACT*, June 2003

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF ROAD SAFETY MEASURES

Introduction

4.1 This chapter discusses the processes by which the Department of Urban Services has implemented or attempted to implement road safety measures.

KEY FINDINGS

- Road crash statistics for 2004 and 2005 were not readily available to assist effective implementation of road safety measures.
- The processes used to determine priority for the black spot programs are sound, but the accuracy of the program was temporarily affected by the lack of updated road crash data.
- Implementation of compliance measures such as traffic cameras is efficient and effective.
- Procedures for vehicle inspections are sound.
- The level of audit activities conducted by DUS on Accredited Driving Instructors (ADIs) was not sufficient to ensure the quality of driving instructors and the integrity of the logbook system.
- There is a risk that a number of drivers who acquire their provisional licence through the logbook system do not meet all the competencies required.
- About 19% of drivers with Provisional (P) Licence attended the Road Ready Plus course, which allowed for the removal of the P plate and an additional allowance of four demerit points. Audit was concerned that the intended benefits of attending the course were reduced because of reduced workshop hours. In addition, it is not clear to Audit that the benefit of the course is sufficient to outweigh the deterrent to unsafe driving associated with fewer available demerit points and the display of the P plate.
- There may be merit in introducing a driver attitude and awareness course as a step towards gaining a full drivers licence, as in SA.
- Licensing is reasonably efficient and effective, but additional measures may be needed for motorcycle riders' licensing.
- There is scope to improve measures for ongoing education of drivers and riders.

BLACK SPOT PROGRAMS

4.2 In 1996, the Federal Government introduced the Black Spot Program as part of its commitment to reducing crashes on Australian roads. The program targets those road locations where crashes are most frequently occurring, relying on crash data

provided by states and territories to determine these locations. In 2004-05, the ACT received \$638 000 through this program.

4.3 The ACT also funds its own black spots program, the Road Safety Improvements Program, administered by Roads ACT. In 2004-05, this program received \$250 000 funding.

Determination of black spots

4.4 The ACT Road Safety Improvements Program considers locations with a high potential for casualty crashes while the Federal Black Spots program considers only locations with a proven history of crashes that resulted in death or injury.

4.5 The Federal definition of black spots is as follows:

For discrete sites (e.g. an intersection, mid-block or short road section) the minimum eligibility criterion will be a history of at least three casualty crashes over a five-year period.

For road lengths the minimum eligibility criterion is an average of 0.2 casualty crashes per kilometre per annum over the length in question measured over five years OR the length must be amongst the top 10% of sites identified in each state which have an identified higher crash rate than other roads.

4.6 Roads ACT uses a ranking system that weights severity of accident types. For each location, a total score is created by adding:

- the number of fatal crashes multiplied by 16;
- the number of injury crashes multiplied by 4; and
- the number of property damage only crashes.

4.7 The top 300 intersections and 150 mid-block locations ranked on this basis are continuously monitored over seven-year and two-year periods. This ensures that both long-term averages and recent trends are identified. Intersections and mid-block locations ranked in this way form the basis for projects to improve the locality's safety. These moving trends are identified over both seven and two year periods. As previously noted, crash data were not readily available for 2004 or 2005 until May 2006 due to a malfunction of the IAMS system.

4.8 Roads ACT produces collision diagrams for black spot locations identified in crash ranking reports. The data also include information on other related factors such as weather conditions, time of day and any visibility restrictions.

4.9 Once DUS staff identify a top crash site, they consider a range of possible remedial actions. These might include, for example, reconstruction of an intersection, improved signage and installation of traffic calming measures. A cost benefit analysis is then conducted to establish which solution to implement. Funding is then sought

through either through appropriation, the ACT Road Safety Improvements program, the Federal Black Spots program or the DUS capital works program.

4.10 Audit selected a sample of 15 Federal Black Spots and nine ACT Road Safety Improvement sites to ascertain what action was taken by DUS to address top crash sites as they are identified. For 100% of the sampled cases, the audit was able to identify that:

- a cost-effectiveness analysis or similar had been conducted;
- the nature of the remedial work planned was the most cost-effective of the options analysed;
- a tender process was conducted through Procurement ACT;
- work had commenced with the successful tenderer; and
- a follow up, where appropriate, was conducted on the crash site once improvements were completed.

Conclusion

4.11 The processes used to identify black spots and implement corrective measures are sound and should assist an effective use of funding to address roadwork-related road safety concern.

VEHICLES

4.12 Vehicle inspections are conducted on both a scheduled and random basis in the ACT depending on vehicle type. According to the DUS Statement of Performance, 57 186 vehicle inspections (compared with an ACT vehicle fleet of over 200 000 vehicles) were conducted in the 2004-05 financial year. This figure includes both the random and scheduled inspections. The AFP also conducts random inspections on roadsides; these figures are not included within DUS's reported figure.

4.13 Before 1980, all ACT registered vehicles had to be inspected annually at one of the Government inspection stations. From 15 October 1980, vehicles that were one year old were no longer required to be presented for inspection. By 1995 only vehicles over ten years of age were required to be presented for inspection and, after a preliminary check, those could also be exempted from a full inspection. As a result of a 1996 internal review of the operations of Transport Regulation, several major changes occurred to inspection arrangements. These changes included the closure of the Phillip inspection station and the introduction of inspections on transfer of registration once a light vehicle reached six years of age. Random on-road inspection functions were increased and car park inspections were introduced.

Review of Current Arrangements

4.14 Road Transport conducted a review of Vehicle Inspection Arrangements in 2003. The review included:

- exploration of the option of mandatory periodic inspections for vehicles five years of age and then every second year after that;
- investigating re-opening a public vehicle inspection station to service South Canberra; and
- reviewing the efficacy of random on-road and car park inspections.

4.15 A cost benefit analysis was conducted on three separate options:

- (a) reintroduce periodic (annual) inspections for light vehicles;
- (b) introduce mandatory periodic inspections for vehicles five years of age and then every second year after; and
- (c) maintain current ACT inspection arrangements for light vehicles.

4.16 The Review indicated that options (a) and (b) were not expected to produce significant additional safety benefits when compared to the current arrangements. This was based on the judgement that random inspections provide a better assurance of roadworthiness than periodic inspections, together with the small influence of roadworthiness on crashes. Audit concurs. For example, a research report for the Federal Office of Road Safety could not find any evidence that periodic inspections improves safety.¹⁰ This can arise because some owners only ensure their vehicles are roadworthy at the date of inspection, whereas random inspections provide an incentive to be roadworthy all year.

4.17 The results of the ACT review suggested significant financial benefits, up to \$6.3 million in savings to the Government, in maintaining current arrangements compared to option (a). The review also assessed the cost to vehicle owners for time taken to undergo annual inspections. This cost was estimated at approximately \$5.5 million annually.

Random vehicle inspections

4.18 Any vehicle on a road or road related area in the ACT may be subject to a random vehicle inspection. This includes vehicles, whether occupied or not, in car parks and other road related areas.

4.19 DUS and the AFP inspected 48 801 vehicles in roadside or carpark inspections in 2004-05. The percentage of vehicles inspected that receive defects notices from random car park inspections has remained constant over the last five years at between 4% and 5%. Roadside inspection defects have remained constant at between 6% and 7%. The higher defect rate for roadside inspections is due to the additional testing available to roadside testers, i.e. blinkers, headlights etc, and an ability to target cars considered more likely to fail inspections, i.e. older cars and cars with visible and audible defects.

¹⁰ Keatsdale Pty. Ltd for the Federal Office of Road Safety, *Cost Effectiveness Of Periodic Motor Vehicle Inspection*, 1999

4.20 When initial random inspections were first conducted in the ACT, the failure rate was between 12-15%. DUS considers the decline in the defect rate provides some indication that the community has moved towards year round maintenance of their vehicles rather than just in the lead up to inspections.

4.21 Vehicle inspections sites are selected on a basis designed to cover the majority of the ACT annually. Information from the AFP and community concerns relating to problem areas are also taken into account when selecting sites on a monthly basis.

4.22 Results from inspections are recorded on manual tally sheets for each site. Defect notices are left with the vehicle, and copies are retained for later entering into the DUS database 'rego.act'. Summary information from the tally sheets – number of vehicles inspected and numbers with minor or major defects – is entered into a Road User Services database. A summary of this information is then also entered manually into a third database that is also used by Road Transport to monitor its performance against the performance measure. Audit observed that this process achieved the objective of recording and reporting on performance. However, there were opportunities to simplify the process and reduce the possibility of transcription errors by reducing the number of databases involved.

4.23 Reasons for defect notices, e.g. bald tyres or defective lights, are only included on the rego.act database. This database could be used to extract information on the types of defects being recorded, but there is no evidence that such analyses had been conducted. Such analyses should be conducted from time to time in order to detect whether particular problems need to be addressed.

4.24 Registered owners of vehicles that are observed to be defective receive a series of letters containing firstly a warning, then suspension of registration, and finally cancellation of registration unless they provide evidence that the defect has been fixed (or the vehicle disposed of to the wreckers). After vehicles are deregistered, no further targeted enforcement is undertaken. Instead, enforcement relies on the now unregistered vehicle being subsequently detected by the AFP. Stakeholders have observed that there is a problem, as in every jurisdiction, in getting unregistered vehicles and disqualified drivers off the road.

Scheduled vehicle inspections

4.25 Only public vehicles (taxis, hire cars and buses) are required to be inspected annually. Vehicles weighing more than 4.5 tonnes are required to be inspected every two years. Light vehicles do not require inspection, except upon transfer of ownership if the vehicle is over six years of age.

4.26 DUS commissioned an internal audit in July 2003 on Quality Assurance of Privatised Vehicle Inspections.

4.27 The Quality Assurance Program involves a range of audit procedures to provide assurance that the authorised inspectors are adequately performing the

inspections within the requirements of the Authorised Inspection Stations (AIS). The audit procedures included the following:

- regular checks of inspection reports and defect clearances forwarded to the Department;
- random checks of premises, personnel and equipment;
- random checks of approved premises' copies of certificates of inspection; and
- random checks of vehicles recently checked by an approved examiner.

4.28 The objectives of the internal audit were to:

- assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Privatised Inspection Quality Assurance Program;
- determine whether the related processes and procedures are being undertaken in accordance with documented policies and procedures; and
- make recommendations relating to the internal control framework or efficiency and effectiveness improvements.

4.29 It was found that, in general, procedures documented were adequate and were being complied with.

Conclusion

4.30 The audit considers that the policy decisions behind random and scheduled vehicle inspections are sound and well considered, although the enforcement in relation to the use of deregistered cars is problematic. The Department appears to thoroughly review and assess current arrangements as required.

DRIVERS' LICENSING

Learner drivers

4.31 To obtain an ACT Learner Driver Licence, applicants must:

- be at least 15 years and nine months old; and
- successfully complete a Road Ready Learner Licence course, including a computerised knowledge test on the ACT Road Rules.

Provisional drivers

4.32 In the ACT, learner drivers can obtain a provisional licence by two methods. The first is via a Government on-road test through Road User Services, which is part of Road Transport. The second method is via competency-based assessment by an ACT accredited driving instructor (also known as the 'logbook' method).

4.33 In the 12 months from 1 May 2005 to 30 April 2006, 5049 provisional licences for car drivers were issued, and a further 448 for motorcycle riders.

4.34 Provisional licences are issued for three years. P plates must be displayed while the driver holds a provisional licence and accumulation of four or more demerit points during that time will result in suspension of the licence for three months.

4.35 The use of provisional licences is common to all Australian States and Territories. Some jurisdictions have more stringent processes than the ACT. For example, NSW and South Australia have two classes of provisional licences, P1 and P2. A South Australian driver commences with a P1 licence and can only progress to a P2 if they have held the P1 licence for at least 12 months, passed a Hazard Perception test and:

- had no demerit points; or
- they have incurred three or fewer demerit points and successfully completed a Driver Awareness course. This is an eight-hour course that covers theoretical and practical components addressing poor hazard perception, over confidence and risky behaviour; or
- have held a P1 licence for 24 months.

4.36 South Australian drivers can progress from a P2 licence to a full licence if:

- they have held the P2 licence for at least six months;
- they have held P1 and P2 licences for a total of at least two years;
- they are at least 19 years of age if they have accrued no penalty points;
- they are at least 20 years of age if they have accrued 1 to 3 penalty points.

4.37 NSW has a similar system of P1 and P2 licences. A driver can progress from P1 to P2 after 12 months if they pass a Hazard Perception test. A P2 licence must be held for at least 24 months, after which a driver can attempt a Driver Qualification Test. This is a computer-based test that assesses knowledge of safe driving practices and ability to recognise and respond appropriately to potentially dangerous situations.

4.38 Provisional licence holders in NSW face additional restrictions, including observing a maximum speed limit (90 kph for P1 licence holder and 100 kph for P2), a prohibition on driving certain high performance vehicles, and a zero blood alcohol concentration. The restrictions on provisional licence holders are stricter than those applied in the ACT.

4.39 In NSW and SA, drivers must be on P plates for a minimum of three and two years respectively. These periods are comparable with the ACT period of three years. However, each of the NSW and SA systems incorporate at least one compulsory test during that period designed to reinforce road safety principles.

4.40 In the ACT, a driver or rider who holds a provisional licence for a period of six months, is 26 years or younger and completes an optional Road Ready Plus course

may remove the P plates. The demerit points allowance is also increased by four points to eight points (compared with the full licence allowance of 12 points). The course, which is offered by a private provider, involves preparatory exercises and then a five-hour workshop (now reduced to three hours), involving facilitated discussion and exercises. It is held in an indoor setting, and is designed to enable participants to identify, relate to and thereby avoid, high-risk behaviours and high-risk situations.

4.41 DUS initiated the Road Ready Plus course in 2001 following consideration of international research and local market research. The course was developed using adult learning principles by the University of Canberra.

4.42 DUS commissioned an evaluation of the effectiveness of the course in late 2003. Uptake of the course by 2003 was about 19% of all provisional licence holders. The evaluation concluded that the course reinforced positive attitudes of already safe drivers and provided at least some support for those who have acquired demerit points and could benefit from some additional insights into their driving. The evaluation, based on self-report data, found that there may be some small, but positive differences in crash involvement for those who undertake the Road Ready Plus course compared with those who do not. There was no reliable evidence that participation in the course reduced the likelihood of future offences, although there were some small reductions among drivers who undertook the program 9-14 months after becoming licensed.¹¹

4.43 The 2003 evaluation on the Road Ready Plus course recommended that the course be delivered for the full five hours and that it be subject to an assessment process to ensure the commitment of those attending, rather than be based on attendance.

4.44 Audit considers that the 2003 evaluation, while useful, is based on self-report data, and hence not sufficiently robust to inform DUS of the effectiveness or otherwise of the Road Ready Plus course, particularly with the trade-off with other deterrent factors. It would be better to assess the effectiveness of this course based on reliable and objective data collected by DUS that links participation in the course with outcomes such as numbers of accidents and infringements.

4.45 Audit is further concerned that the workshop time involved in the course had reduced from the original five hours to three hours, and attendees are still not assessed. This course requirement is less than originally intended. It appears to be less comprehensive than the Driver Awareness course offered in SA and described at paragraph 4.35 above. Audit noted that the majority attended the ACT Road Ready Plus course with the main objective of removing their P plates and receiving an additional demerit point allowance, rather than becoming a safer driver.

4.46 Audit is concerned that that the benefit of a three-hours workshop will not be sufficient to allow for the early removal of the display of the P plate. In addition, it is not clear to Audit that the benefit of the course is sufficient to outweigh the deterrent

¹¹ Di Pietro, Gayle et al for the Department of Urban Services, *Evaluation of the Inexperienced Solo Driver Program Road Ready Plus* (undated)

to unsafe driving associated with fewer available demerit points and the display of the P plate.

4.47 Audit notes that the display of P plates is generally considered necessary to indicate the relative low level of driving experience by drivers, and to facilitate the enforcement of restrictions applied to the P licensees (e.g. a permitted blood alcohol concentration of below 0.02). As indicated above, some jurisdictions require the display of a P plate for a minimum of two years, even with additional training received. The display of P plate together with the low demerit points allowance, are important features in the P licensing arrangement, that are designed to reduce road accidents.

4.48 In recognition of the benefits flowing from driver awareness and attitude courses on novice drivers, there is merit for DUS to consider making such courses compulsory prior to issuing a full licence.

4.49 Alternatively, should incentives be needed to attract novice drivers to such courses, other incentives should be considered in liaison with the industry, such as lower insurance premiums.

4.50 Audit was advised that DUS is considering adding to the Road Ready Plus course a requirement for participants to complete a personal 'Driver Development Plan'. Participants would describe the application of their personal risk plan to recent driving experience, understand and generate strategies to avoid or minimize the effects of distractions, appreciate their own potential role in contributing to crash causation and their ability to influence these as drivers and understand and acknowledge the need to continue developing and implementing personal risk management strategies. Audit considers that DUS should also evaluate the merit of adding an on-road training component to improve this measure.

4.51 DUS advised that the Road Ready Plus course is being reviewed by some other jurisdictions for possible adoption.

Accredited driving instructors

4.52 To become an Accredited Driving Instructor (ADI), a person is required to undertake and pass an approved driving instructors course with the ACT Government contracted course provider, Transport Industry Skills Centre. The course is not subsidised by the ACT Government. On completion of the course, successful applicants receive a Certificate IV in Driver Instruction. Applicants must also have the dual control feature of their driver training vehicles subjected to an engineering check, pass a police character check and a medical test, and have adequate insurance.

4.53 An audit review of a sample of ADI files showed that the processes for accreditation of new instructors, and annual re-accreditation, were sound. At May 2006, there were 75 Accredited Driving Instructors in the ACT, although DUS stated that not all were active.

4.54 Road User Services officers of DUS carry out audits of ADIs. DUS plans to conduct 440 audits of ADIs per year, and about 600 including audits of motorcycle and heavy vehicle instructors. Most audits involve observing driving instructors giving what is intended to be the final driving lesson that will complete the sign-off of the student's logbook. Driving instructors are asked to inform DUS whenever they are planning such a final lesson. A DUS auditor may arrive unannounced and then ride in the back of the car observing both the student's proficiency and the driving instructor's performance.

4.55 DUS also conducts some unexpected audits in the middle of a course of driving instruction. In this case, an officer will get in touch with the instructor, ask where they will be giving a lesson on that day, and then attend and observe the lesson. Some audits are only paper-based, of the instructor's records and the student's logbook. DUS stated that about 75% of audits were on-road.

4.56 Each audit of an ADI will lead to an assessment of pass, fail or warning. If the auditor disagrees with the instructor's assessment that the student is a competent driver, the instructor will fail the audit and the auditor will intervene to prevent the issuing of a certificate of completion. Of the 468 audits between 1 May 2005 and 30 April 2006, there were 28 failed audits and 13 warnings. Depending on the nature of the failure or pattern of failures, the ADI may be asked to attend a meeting with DUS to discuss their instructional skills. After a fail for a serious matter or a series of fails for minor or administrative matters, the relevant manager at DUS will review the instructor's file, and may decide to ask the driving instructor to 'show cause' why their licence should not be suspended or cancelled. Three licences have been suspended, each for three months, in the last five years.

4.57 Audit considered that the level of audit activities conducted by DUS on the ADIs is not sufficient to ensure the quality of driving instructors. Audit estimates that annually, some 3750 drivers received their P licences through the logbook system. On the assumption of 10 driving lessons on average per licensee, the ADIs provided some 37 500 driving lessons annually. DUS conducted less than 400 on-road audits, or about 1% of these driving lessons. Audit considers the frequency and quality of DUS audits of ADIs are critical to protect the integrity and robustness of the licensing system, given that ADIs are authorised to assess and sign-off the competencies of drivers under the logbook system. DUS needs to ensure the frequency of audits is sufficient to provide this assurance.

4.58 DUS selection of audits on the ADIs is judgemental. DUS auditors will review the list of final driving lessons, consider when the last audit was and its result, and review where necessary the ADI file, before deciding which ADIs to audit. There is scope to make this process more consistently risk-based. For example, in the sample of 15 ADIs examined by the Audit Office, the number of audits in the previous 12 months ranged from zero to eight, and there did not seem a clear connection between frequency of audits and previous performance. In one case, there were no audits at all in the previous 12 months; in this case DUS stated that the ADI only passed about one student a month.

4.59 Audit considers that one measure of the quality of the final assessment process of the logbook system would be that the proportion of students who fail the final assessment would not vary significantly whether or not there was a DUS auditor attending. At present, DUS does not ask ADIs to report on whether their students pass the final assessment, and neither does it record the student pass rate during audits, so these failure rates are unknown.

4.60 On limited information, Audit understands that the failure rate for the logbook-based final assessment when an auditor is not present is very low. The fail rate for students attending the on-road driving examination conducted by DUS officers is 43%. Although the 43% failure rate partly reflects that students attending the on-road test may not be as well-prepared, and in an unfamiliar and stressful situation, it may also be an indication that the final assessment by the ADIs may not be sufficiently rigorous compared to Government conducted tests.

4.61 The ADIs are required to notify DUS when they plan final assessments of their students. It is reasonable to assume that ADIs have assessed their students as meeting all the competencies required under the logbook system, and are ready to have the P licence after this final assessment. This is supported by comments by several drivers who recently received their licences through the logbook method. These drivers advised Audit that the final assessment with their ADIs was cursory, and could consist of little more than a short drive directly to the shopfront so the student could submit the logbook and apply for the licence.

4.62 Yet when the DUS auditors were present at these final lessons, the proportion of student failures was relatively high. In the random sample of audits of ADIs examined by the Audit Office, 10 referred to audits of final assessment lessons, and of these, two students were assessed as not fully competent. Although this sample is small, it indicates a student fail rate of around 20% when there is an auditor present.

4.63 Given the above, and even taking into account that students may be more nervous when auditors are present, there remains a risk that in the final assessments given by the ADIs where no DUS auditors were present, some students would be passed by their ADIs without meeting all the competencies.

4.64 The overall rate of failed audits of 6% (28 out of 468) as recorded by DUS is not necessarily a good indication of the ADI's actual performance. There may be cases where the ADI passed an audit by assessing a student as failing the final assessment, but would have passed the student if the Auditor were not present.

4.65 If, say, 5% of students are passed by their ADIs at their final assessments without being fully competent, there would be over 200 new drivers a year who may gain their driving licence through the logbook system, without having the required skills and knowledge for safe driving.

4.66 Given the serious implication of poorly qualified driving instructors and their final assessment of competencies of drivers on road safety, Audit considers that tighter audit and follow-up enforcement procedures should be implemented.

4.67 Audit also considers there should be a set of guidelines to help DUS auditors choose which audits to conduct. These might include, for example:

- ADIs, even if part-time, should be audited at least a specified number of times per year;
- ADIs who fail an audit should be re-tested within a specified number of occasions of providing a final driving lesson; and
- audits should normally be comprehensive (on-road plus documentation) with additional audits of documentation for ADIs who have previously shown deficiency in this area.

4.68 DUS could also consider correlating traffic offences by drivers in their first year of holding a probationary licence with the driving instructor under whom they qualified. Although not conclusive, this could be used to identify instructors who may need additional guidance or auditing.

4.69 Audit also observed that there were wide variations in the proportion of paper-only audits. For one ADI, there were no on-road audits, only inspection of records. DUS stated that in this case, the ADI's vehicle was too small to accommodate the auditor safely in the back seat. Audit considers this situation is not acceptable, as all ADIs should be required to have vehicles that can safely accommodate a DUS auditor for on-road auditing.

4.70 Audit also considered complaints from students, which covered a range of issues. Complaints about overcharging are referred to the Office of Fair Trading. Others may involve students feeling that they are being asked to do too many lessons. DUS may ask to see the instructor's lesson checklist. Other complaints include such things as inappropriate language or behaviour. Such complaints are referred to the driver for comment and held on the ADI file. One such complaint was found in the audit sample of 15 ADIs, and was appropriately handled.

Recommendation 5

The Department of Urban Services should improve its processes for ensuring the quality of driving instructors by:

- a. ensuring all driving instructors are subject to audits at least a specified number of times in a year;
- b. requiring driving instructors to use a vehicle that will safely accommodate a DUS auditor for on-road auditing; and
- c. establishing a set of risk-based guidelines to help auditors select which driving instructor to audit.

Competency-based versus test-based driver assessment

4.71 DUS does not keep statistics on the number of licences granted via the logbook or competency method as opposed to the on-road test method. Estimates are that about 75% of licensees gain their licence through the logbook method.

4.72 In South Australia, there is a similar arrangement in which a driver may obtain a Provisional Drivers Licence by either a Competency-Based Driver Training and Assessment scheme or a Vehicle on-Road Test. A study by the University of Adelaide in 2000 covering P licences between 1995 and 1997 generally concluded that the mode of gaining a licence had little effect on the rate of crash involvement and traffic offences in the first 12 months of driving on a Provisional Licence. It should be noted that in South Australia, all learner drivers require a minimum of 50 driving hours before gaining a provisional licence. The ACT has no such requirement.

4.73 In the ACT, there are no statistics currently collected to assist with such reviews. Audit considers that, given that the South Australian and ACT schemes are different, it is important to determine which of the pathways to gaining an ACT drivers' licence produces safer drivers. This would involve planning for the collection of relevant statistics on driver licensing processes and road accidents and infringements by drivers who have recently gained a licence. This suggestion was also made in a 2001 internal audit report, but was not implemented.

Older drivers

4.74 Once drivers reach 75, a doctor's examination is required annually to retain an ACT driver's licence. However, there is no retesting of road rule knowledge or skills. This policy is consistent with other Australian States and Territories.

4.75 In 2005, the *Australian Capital Territory: Population Projections* indicated that over the period to 2009 the ACT's older driver population would increase by 1% and the number of younger drivers would decrease. The Department has identified this as an issue it will need to address in its 2005-2006 ACT Road Safety Action Plan. However, no specific actions have been identified or implemented in recent years.

4.76 There have been some recent calls from some segments of the community for re-testing of older drivers. A study based on data from 1995 and 1996 showed that the relative risk was higher for those over 70. Results are in Table 4.1 below. Audit considers that more recent statistics on road accidents attributed to different age groups would be helpful to inform decisions.

Table 4.1 - Variation of casualty rate with age.		
Age group	Serious driver casualties per 1000 million km driven	Relative risk
Less than 20	400	11.2
20-24	144	4.0
25-29	69	1.9
30-34	60	1.7
35-39	44	1.2
40-44	38	1.1
45-49	37	1.0
50-54	36	1.0
55-59	36	1.0
60-64	69	1.9
65-69	67	1.8
70-74	118	3.3
75-79	214	6.0
80-84	227	6.3
85+	2029	56.6

Source: Fildes, Brian et al, *A national licence assessment program for older drivers in Australasia*, Insurance Commission of Western Australia Conference on Road Safety, 1999

Motor Cyclists Licensing

4.77 To obtain an ACT Learner Motorcycle Licence, applicants must:

- be at least 16 years and nine months old;
- undertake a government approved rider training course; and
- if an applicant does not already hold a Driver’s Licence, they must also successfully complete a Road Ready Learner Licence course, including a computerised knowledge test on the ACT Road Rules.

4.78 Applicants for a learner motorcycle licence must successfully complete a pre-learner rider-training course. The nine hour course is conducted over two half days at the Sutton Road Driver Training Centre, and covers the theoretical and practical aspects of motorcycling. Professional instructors lead learners through a series of discussions, demonstrations and riding exercises dealing with the systems required to operate a motorcycle safely. Once this training is completed satisfactorily, a rider can apply for a Learner Licence. This is valid for 24 months with no renewals.

4.79 To obtain an ACT Provisional Motorcycle Licence, applicants must have held a learner licence for a minimum of three months and not be currently disqualified or suspended from driving. They must then pass a Skill Test, which consists of test

segments that measure ability to handle a motorcycle, including starting, accelerating, turning and braking. To pass, all of the test segments must be completed successfully.

4.80 The ACT Government has recently put forward a proposed change to the legislation that would require provisional riders to undergo additional training prior to the issuing of a full licence. Currently the ACT does not require any on-road testing. Given the significance of defensive riding and adherence to road rules, DUS should consider the need for an on-road component to motorcycle licensing. Such a component is, for example, used in NSW.

Conclusion

4.81 Current drivers licensing arrangements appear for the most part appropriate and consistent with practices in other States.

4.82 Although DUS carries out appropriate review mechanisms aimed at ensuring the quality of the current drivers licensing processes, better and more frequent monitoring of Accredited Driving Instructors should be implemented. The processes for motorcycle licensing could also be reconsidered to ensure motorcyclists are subject to on-road testing.

Recommendation 6

In the light of the increase in accidents involving motorcyclists, the Department of Urban Services should review the regime for motorcycle licensing with a view to introducing an on-road component.

EDUCATION OF DRIVERS AND RIDERS

4.83 Road safety messages specifically targeted at the ACT are generally delivered either by the Department, AFP or the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust. The ACT also benefits from advertising on local media by the NSW authorities.

4.84 Campaigns run by DUS relating to problem areas were a result of analysis of crash data, research conducted by institutions such as Monash University and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. These campaigns, which appeared on rotation over 2004 and 2005, included:

- on-road cycle lanes;
- pedestrian safety;
- motorcycle safety;
- tailgating;
- roundabouts;
- slip lanes; and
- mobile phone use.

4.85 These campaigns were mostly conducted via the press, with some use of billboard advertising. DUS may also wish to consider new media options directed to younger clients such as internet or movie advertisements.

4.86 The Department also worked closely with the Australasian College of Road Safety and the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust to deliver a series of workshops to about 80-100 people, included a broad range stakeholders and members of the public. Topics included Speeding, Road Safety - Community Responsibilities, Drug Driving, Regional Road Safety Initiatives and Road Safety Initiatives (featuring a presentation on European trends).

4.87 In addition to advertising campaigns, the ACT runs specific programs aimed at educating young people about road safety. The Road Ready program is currently administered through the Department of Education in conjunction with DUS. It is designed to help young people in the ACT become safer and more competent drivers and takes young people from preparing for a learner licence, to learning to drive, through to driving solo on a provisional licence, and eventually moving onto a full licence. Most ACT secondary schools offer the course as part of the year 10 program. For those who have already left school, the course can be taken at a Road Ready Centre. Stakeholders have supported the quality and effectiveness of these programs.

4.88 DUS relies primarily on the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust to develop campaigns, due to tightness of budget. The Department has not conducted a review of effectiveness of campaigns.

Driver attitude

4.89 Several stakeholders were of the opinion that a significant influence on road accidents was driver attitude (rather than skill, or conditions of the road or the vehicle). This led to a view that measures to change attitudes, whether education or enforcement, were a high priority.

4.90 Under the current licensing regime, drivers can get a licence at 17 and never have to resit or undergo additional training. Currently, if an accident or traffic stop leads to questions about a driver's competency, the AFP can request a reassessment. DUS could consider recommending to Government that drivers and riders should undergo compulsory remedial training (as an alternative to licence suspension or cancellation) if convicted of serious or numerous offences.

4.91 As discussed at paragraph 4.48, there appear to be positive influences on novice drivers from attendance at driver attitude and awareness courses.

Recommendation 7

The Department of Urban Services should prepare options for Government on measures to improve driver attitude and awareness such as:

- a. requiring all novice drivers to undertake a driver attitude and awareness course before a full licence is granted;
- b. compulsory remedial training for licence-holders after serious or numerous offences; and
- c. enhanced road safety awareness campaigns.

ENFORCEMENT

4.92 There are four main types of enforcement of road safety legislation in the ACT:

- speed and red light cameras;
- enforcement of drink driving and drug driving laws;
- vehicle inspections and other registration requirements on vehicles; and
- licensing requirements on drivers.

4.93 The latter two issues were discussed earlier, and the AFP is responsible for random breath testing within the ACT, and also enforcing the prohibition against drug driving. As AFP operations are not part of this audit, the issue is not discussed further here. This section therefore only discusses the operation of fixed and mobile speed cameras in the ACT.

Speed and red light cameras

4.94 Speed limits are based on national standards, e.g. to set the speed limit at 50 kph in local streets. DUS interprets these agreements according to local conditions; for example, speed limits were changed on some roads when lanes were narrowed to allow for bicycle lanes.

4.95 Speed cameras in the ACT are used to improve road safety by deterring drivers and riders from speeding and running red lights. Within the ACT, two forms of camera devices are used, fixed site cameras (speed/red light cameras) and mobile cameras.

4.96 Mobile speed cameras were introduced to the ACT in October 1999. Currently there are five cameras in operation. For the period 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2005, there were 3.2 million occasions when vehicles had their speed checked via mobile speed cameras with 10 500 (or less than 1%) vehicles receiving infringement notices. Since the first full year of camera use, infringement notices issued via mobile cameras have dropped by nearly 58%.

4.97 Fixed site or red light cameras were introduced in December 2000. Fixed cameras selected for the ACT are capable of detecting both red light and speeding offences, and are designed to operate 24 hours a day in all lighting conditions. Currently nine cameras are in operation across the ACT.

4.98 Table 4.2 shows that the proportion of vehicles speeding through speed camera sites dropped significantly between 2001 and 2003, but has not improved much since. The number of infringements issued through fixed cameras has increased as six additional cameras have been installed since the camera introduction in 2000.

Table 4.2 – Number of infringement notices issued via fixed and mobile speed cameras 2001-2005.						
Year	Numbers of speed checks by		Number of infringements issued via		Infringement rate	
	mobile cameras	fixed cameras	mobile cameras	fixed cameras	mobile cameras	fixed cameras
2001	2.1 million	11.6 million	25 115	24 294	1.20%	0.21%
2002	2.4 million	27.0 million	14 274	41 122	0.59%	0.15%
2003	2.8 million	25.6 million	10 755	28 058	0.38%	0.11%
2004	3.5 million	25.2 million	12 241	28 590	0.35%	0.11%
2005	3.2 million	26.7 million	10,575	35,790	0.33%	0.13%

Camera Site selection

4.99 The Traffic Liaison Committee oversees site selection for mobile speed cameras, using crash history data, public input and speed surveys to identify more dangerous areas.

4.100 Based on this advice, officers from the AFP and the Traffic Camera Office (TCO) assess potential sites against field evaluation criteria, before a mobile speed camera can operate from that site. The TCO then creates a schedule of locations, which the AFP approves or amends as necessary on a weekly basis. The TCO conducts research of crash data, reviews prior problem areas, responds to community concerns and consults with the AFP before selecting a site. Audit considers that sites are selected primarily with a view to addressing safety issues.

4.101 Speed and red light cameras are only operated on roads designated as arterial, major collector or minor collector. The specific sites where cameras can be positioned are listed in the *Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Regulation 2000*.

4.102 The AFP can use other means to enforce speeding laws anywhere in the ACT. However, the scope of this audit did not include AFP operations.

Conclusion

4.103 The current policy decisions behind the current speed and red light camera locations appear sound and address the Departments overall objectives in regards to speeding and road safety.

APPENDIX 1 - AUDIT CRITERIA

The audit was conducted against the following criteria:

- There is effective co-operation amongst business units responsible for elements of road safety.
- The agency has conducted appropriate research into the issues involved with road safety and collected and analysed data where available;
- Appropriate communication and liaison is maintained with stakeholders and advocate groups such as AFP, NRMA Trust, Motor Riders Association, Dept of Education and Pedal Power in order to facilitate the business of the Department;
- A strategic plan or similar document is prepared to guide road safety activities. It should include aims, objectives and targets.
- There is efficient and effective implementation of road safety measures, including those related to road conditions, vehicles, and drivers

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