



ACRS

The Australian College of Road Safety

News Letter



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Victorian Chapter

OLDER ROAD USERS EDITION

Welcome to the second edition of the ACRS – Victorian Chapter Newsletter. The previous edition (September 2003) focused on the issue of Young Drivers so in contrast this latest edition will examine the other end of the age spectrum – older road users.

Over the years 1996 - 2000 there were 439 older road users killed and over 3,800 seriously injured on Victorian roads. In 2001, 120 people over the age of 60 were killed in Victoria, accounting for 27% of all road fatalities whilst only 17% of the Victorian population are aged 60 years or more.

However, older road users have fewer road accidents in absolute terms than their younger counterparts, yet their accident involvement rates per kilometre travelled places them in a high-risk group¹. Their increased risk of crash involvement is related to the physical and cognitive deteriorations experienced with increased age. Furthermore, having been involved in an accident, older persons are likely to have more severe crash outcomes as a result of increasing frailty associated with ageing².

A substantial increase in the proportion of older persons in the population is forecast over the next 30 years. It is estimated that by 2031 those aged 65 years and above will represent 21.5% of the population³. This increase in the population of older persons will make the issue of older road user vulnerability more critical in coming years. Furthermore, coupled with the increase in the older population, the licensing rate of those aged 65 years and above is also expected to increase⁴.

The ACRS through its policies recognises the need for research into the physical limitations of older road users, the mobility needs of this growing population sub-group, and for broader scoping research into how these factors may combine to affect the safety of all road users.

OLDER ROAD USERS INQUIRY

The Victorian Road Safety Committee comprises seven Members of Parliament drawn from both houses and all parties. The function of the Committee is to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with road trauma or safety on roads and related matters, if the Committee is required or permitted so to do by or under the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968.

Resulting from this function the Committee recently released its *Inquiry into Road Safety for Older Road Users*. The terms of reference used by the Committee were to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on the issues affecting the safety of older road users, and in particular to report on:

- The extent to which older drivers, older pedestrians and other older road users are involved in motor vehicle accidents on Victorian roads, and the factors affecting severity of crash outcome for all older road users;
- Strategies and programs which assist older road users to retain their mobility;
- The suitability of the current arrangements for competency and medical testing for older drivers;

- The duration of licences issued to drivers, and the issue of restrictions, including those that can currently be placed on the licence, based on impairment of a driver's ability to drive safely;
- The role of health services and government and other agencies in assisting older drivers to manage the transition from driver to non-driver;
- The mobility options available for older persons who give up driving, including public transport and the road safety implications of any alternative means of transport; and
- The need for change to legislation or statutory requirements to implement any recommendations made as a result of this inquiry.

In conducting this inquiry, the Committee sought information from Government and non-Government Agencies, the community, aged care organisations, interstate and overseas jurisdictions and public transport providers. Over 180 submissions were received and discussions held with more than 160 people.

Following its inquiry the Committee published 41 recommendations covering a range of driver licensing, health, mobility, infrastructure, and education issues.

For more information about Victorian Road Safety Committee or to view a copy of the *Inquiry into Road Safety for Older Road Users* and its recommendations go to:
<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/rsc>

THE AUSTRROADS MODEL

Specifically one of the recommendations from *the Inquiry into Road Safety for Older Road Users* was for "VicRoads to trial the Austroads model licensing procedure in Victoria and, if successful, adopt the model". The Austroads model takes the basic framework of the current VicRoads medical review process. Through a report prepared by MUARC it was stated that the most effective method of detecting and removing impaired drivers from the roads was to adopt a "referral" process whereby unsafe drivers are reported to licensing authorities by various sources, followed by an evaluation to determine the extent of assessment required of each driver.

The elements of the Austroads model are:

- Older driver testing is based on functional ability rather than chronological age;
- Development of a network of community reference sources;
- Use of a three-tiered assessment procedure, incorporating valid referral tools, screening tests and in-depth assessment tools; and
- Use of re-training and rehabilitation procedures and the expansion of the licensing agency's role to include advising drivers about alternative transport options if they need to stop driving.

An additional key feature of the model is the introduction of case managers to guide older persons through the assessment process.



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YEARS AHEAD: ROAD SAFETY FOR SENIORS

Professionals and/or interested individuals working in the area of older road user safety may be interested to know about the re-development of the 'Years Ahead' program.

'Years Ahead' is an RACV road safety awareness program especially designed for older road users. The overall objective of the program is to promote safe road user behaviours, encourage older drivers to take responsibility for their driving futures and ensure that they assess their own driving performance regularly.

The program involves a one hour discussion based presentation and is available free of charge to organized groups of older people throughout most of Victoria. Groups can be as small as 15 people or as large as 80 people.

Since the program was launched in March 1997, an overwhelming number of groups have requested Years Ahead sessions. The program has recently been revamped and is now tailored to address the particular issues faced by Metropolitan and Rural audiences.

The presentation covers the following areas:

- Driving and road safety tips for drivers
- Passengers and pedestrians
- The importance of choosing a safe vehicle
- The importance of being fit to drive
- The impact of health and medications on driving
- How to assess your own driving ability
- Information about alternative transport options
- How to plan for future mobility.

To find out more about the RACV Years Ahead program, please phone (03) 9790 2915.



LATEST RESEARCH

The annual Road Safety Research, Policing & Education Conference was recently held in Sydney. The following list includes papers presented at the conference which relate to some of the issues already discussed in this newsletter:

Andrea, D., Charlton, J., Fildes, B. & Hammer, M. (2003). Visual Scanning of Older Drivers: Implications for ITS and Vehicle Design. *Proceedings of Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference, 24-26 September 2003*. Sydney, Australia.

Corlett, E. Y. & White, M. A. (2003). Now You See It, Now You Don't. Preliminary Investigation of Age Related Decrements in Peripheral Vision. *Proceedings of Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference, 24-26 September 2003*. Sydney, Australia.

Seymour, R. & Christie, R. (2003). Vehicle Safety Knowledge and Older Driver Decision Making. *Proceedings of Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference, 24-26 September 2003*. Sydney, Australia.

COMING EVENTS



ACRS – Victorian Chapter Seminar

"The Car - Friend or Foe of Safety?"

Thursday, 4 December 3.30 to 5:30pm

VicRoads Theatre, 60 Denmark Street, Kew

Topics include:

- Vehicle safety's role in reducing the road toll
- Vehicle Safety – the Latest Technology
- ANCAP Crash Test update
- Best Practice in fleets

Guest Speaker – Mr Lauchlan McIntosh, Chair ANCAP Committee

If you wish to attend please Email details to jgspeas@bigpond.com.au before 30 November 2003

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) has released a Call for Abstracts for the 2005 Annual Meeting and Exhibit to be held in Melbourne 7-10 August 2005. This event is one of the largest and most prestigious international transport conferences, and 2005 is the first time it has been held in the Southern Hemisphere.

Abstracts are due by 5 January 2004. The Call for Abstracts and submittal instructions are available at: www.ite.org

FUTURE & PAST EDITIONS



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¹ Fildes, B., Corben, B., Kent, S., Oxley, J., Le, T., & Ryan, P. (1994). *Older Road User Crashes*. Report No. 61, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Melbourne, Australia.

² Transportation Research Board (1988). *Transportation in an Aging Society: Improving Mobility and Safety for Older Persons. Volume 1: Committee Report and Recommendations*. Special Report 218. Washington, USA.

³ Young, C. (1990). *How serious is the ageing problem and what can be done about it?*. Working Papers in Demography No. 18, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, Canberra.

⁴ Fildes, B. (1997). *Safety of Older Drivers: Strategy for future research and action initiatives* Report No. 118, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Melbourne, Australia

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