



SUBMISSION

TO

PARLIAMENTARY TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE:

EDUCATING DRIVERS TO STOP DRIVING TIRED



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Summary

In this report the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland Limited (RACQ) addresses the following matters which we reserved the right to comment on until the second round of submissions to Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee's Inquiry into Crashes Involving Driver and Rider Fatigue in Queensland:

- How should fatigue be defined?
- Should Queensland adhere to ATSB's definition of fatigue?
- Is there a more effective method of identifying fatigue related crashes in Queensland?
- Successes of various countermeasures in reducing fatigue crashes

and the issues raised in Issues Paper No. 9 – *Educating Drivers to Stop Driving Tired*:

- Are current education initiatives about fatigue driving reaching groups most at risk and resulting in behaviour change? How can they be improved?

From RACQ's perspective it was beneficial to have the opportunity to read other first round submissions and the Club is now in a better position to comment on the abovementioned matters.

Based on information presented about methods to define fatigue related crashes, RACQ believes there is a need for Queensland Transport (QT) to justify using a surrogate crash measure to determine the number of fatigue related crashes in Queensland in addition to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) assessed crash measure.

Other jurisdictions need to be consulted to determine whether they perceive value in the ATSB definition, and if so, then QT should ensure that the data they provide to ATSB is constructed upon guidelines consistent with those used by other jurisdictions to allow an accurate comparison of statistics.

Ideally RACQ believes that improving methods to quantify fatigue and its effect on driving ability will assist in developing a more accurate definition of fatigue in the future.

While Queensland Transport has experienced some success in raising awareness of fatigue in previous public education initiatives for driver fatigue, there is a need to specifically target high-risk groups in future programs in order to promote higher levels of behavioural change. Future public education initiatives should also consider the promotion of driving while fatigued as a socially unacceptable behaviour.

Fatigue related crashes may be a symptom of a tired society and therefore they should not be viewed as the sole responsibility of government departments primarily associated with roads and transport.

A 'whole of government approach' should be applied to involve agencies, industry, and community to undertake further research into fatigue, to promote sleep as the only real cure for fatigue, and to ensure that public education messages reach a wider audience.

List of Recommendations

Recommendations made in this submission are as follows:

- Queensland Transport (QT) justify the need for their surrogate crash measure in determining the number of fatigue related crashes in Queensland.
- QT justify the case for using their surrogate measure's crash data in addition to Queensland Police Service (QPS) assessed fatigue crashes.
- Better understand:
 - other states' measures used to define fatigue related crashes;
 - whether other states' measures are believed to be accurate in gauging the number of fatigue crashes; and
 - why other states have not adopted surrogate crash measures such as QT's.
- Determine whether other jurisdictions see any value in the ATSB definition. If so, then QT should ensure that data they provide to ATSB is constructed upon guidelines consistent with those used by other jurisdictions to allow an accurate comparison.
- QPS, in conjunction with other relevant departments, improve training for police officers in determining whether fatigue is a factor in crashes investigated.
- QPS should collect and provide additional information in their Traffic Incident Recording System (TIRS), e.g., crash victim sleep and travel history.
- Encourage QT, QPS and other departments such as Queensland Health (QH) to work cooperatively and undertake further research into improving methods for quantifying driver fatigue levels.
- Heavy vehicle drivers be educated about the problems associated with driving while suffering the effects of fatigue as well as the appropriate legislation that sets the maximum number of driving hours for them and the penalties for failing to comply with the legislation.
- QT evaluate the impact of legislation on fatigue management strategies in reducing crashes for taxi, limousine and bus drivers.
- Continue to support the Driver Reviver program and disseminate the results of QT's analysis of the impact of the program in reducing the number of fatigue related crashes in Queensland.
- Consider increasing the operating hours of relevant Driver Reviver sites to cover the high-risk fatigue period during 10pm to 6am.
- Assist local communities to deliver fatigue-awareness and prevention activities during non-holiday periods.

- Allocate additional funding to provide and adequately sign a network of quality rest areas and roadside stopping places.
- QT and Department of Main Roads (DMR) evaluate the impact of engineering measures on fatigue-related crashes in Queensland e.g., audible edge lines, rumble strips.
- Allocate additional funding to provide, promote and enhance road-based fatigue countermeasures in Queensland.
- QT continue its effective use of media based public education campaigns with regard to increasing awareness of driver and rider fatigue as a significant road safety issue.
- Develop programs for identified target groups of drivers and riders to increase their awareness of the affects of fatigue.
- Ensure that information and advice relating to driver and rider fatigue is readily accessible, consistent, accurate, and appropriate to members of high-risk groups.
- Educate about how busy lifestyles can make people more susceptible to driving while tired and to avoid accumulating a 'sleep debt'.
- Continue promoting a 15 minute break every two hours while driving long trips, as well as the warning signs and effects of fatigue.
- Consider promoting 'power naps' as a means to provide some refreshment for drivers during the journey in conjunction with encouraging regular good quality sleep prior to travelling.
- Future public education programs should emphasise the fact that the only cure for fatigue is good quality sleep.
- Improve the impact of future public education campaigns through the promotion of driving while tired being viewed as a socially unacceptable behaviour.
- Apply a 'whole of government' approach towards preventing people from driving while suffering the effects of fatigue by engaging government, agencies, industry, and community to address the issue of a 'tired society' and fatigue in general.

1.0 How Should Fatigue Be Defined?

In its initial submission, RACQ reserved its right to comment on how fatigue should be defined until the first round of submissions to the Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (QPTC) inquiry were completed. After reading those submissions RACQ now understands there are a variety of measures used to define fatigue not only around Australia but also within Queensland.

The RACQ (2004, p7) stated that:

“Driver fatigue is usually referred to as driving tired or the driver experiencing a level of sleepiness when alertness and cognitive performance are diminished (slower reactions and impaired visual scanning) and the ability for them to drive safely is impaired significantly even before the individual falls asleep (Smith and Trinder 2000, p3-4)”.

Queensland Transport (QT) referred to the general definition of fatigue offered by Dalziel and Job (2000) which identifies that the biological effects of fatigue diminish the individual’s driving ability and may cause them to fall asleep (QT 2004, p3).

Centre of Accident Research and Road Safety (CARRS-Q) suggests there is not likely to be a single agreed definition for driver fatigue and recommends that other factors such as task monotony, which leads to lower levels of driver vigilance, be considered when defining fatigue. (CARRS-Q 2004, p24)

To define fatigue related crashes, the road safety authorities in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and ACT use police assessed crash measures only (QT 2004 p9). New South Wales and Western Australia use police assessments together with surrogate measures that include:

- a vehicle that runs off a carriageway but was not travelling at excessive speed and there was no other cause of the crash, and
- all head-on crashes where the vehicle was not overtaking. (Dobbie 2002, cited in QT 2004, p11)

The RACQ is also aware of the operational definition of fatigue used by QT and the proposed definition of ATSB.

In Queensland, Queensland Police Service (QPS) and QT have different approaches to defining fatigue related crashes in Queensland.

QT (2004, p4) uses both an:

- assessed crash measure - *“crashes assessed by an officer of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) as fatigue-related”* (QT 2004, p4)

as well as a

- surrogate crash measure - *“all single vehicle crashes in 100km/h or higher speed zones during 2pm-4pm and 10pm-6am”* (QT 2004, p4)

in order to define fatigue related crashes.

QPS (2004, p6) relies on an investigating officer’s assessment to determine whether the crash was fatigue related by taking into account:

- the nature and circumstances of the crash,
- the information provided by the driver/s,

- the time of day,
- the distance the driver/s had travelled, and
- any other matter pertaining to the crash that the officer deems relevant.

QPS (2004, p3) states that: *“Queensland Transport uses their operational definition as a measure of the absolute number of fatigue-related crashes, therefore giving a misrepresentation of the incidence of fatigue related crashes”*.

QPS (2004, p5) also states that: *“In instances where a road crash has fallen into the category of Queensland Transport’s operational definition of fatigue, the crash is automatically designated as fatigue. However from the police perspective, the crash may not have involved fatigue.”*

QPS (2004, p6) recommends that: *“Queensland Transport use their operational definition of fatigue as merely an index of fatigue, and not as a measure of the absolute number of fatigue-related crashes”*.

QT (2004, p13), on the other hand, states that *“using only assessed crash measures to identify fatigue-related crashes will result in an underestimation of the actual number of fatigue-related crashes due to lack of evidence and therefore conservative judgements by police/coroners as to the actual cause of a crash (Dobbie 2002)”*.

QPS (2004, p7) identified that currently there is a distinction drawn on the WebCrash 2 statistical database between the numbers of fatigue related crashes as identified by the QPS assessment and those identified by QT’s surrogate.

RACQ subscribes to Webcrash 2, and using a basic set of criteria, verified that the number of fatigue related crashes according to QT’s surrogate ‘definition’ can be up to double the number assessed by QPS as ‘fatigue/fell asleep’.

In Queensland, RACQ understands that QT makes the final decision as to which definition to use in:

- determining the official number of fatigue-related crashes in Queensland, and
- statistical information released for public documents/statements, e.g., *Road Traffic Crashes in Queensland*

Comparing the results of RACQ’s initial check to statistics in *Road Traffic Crashes in Queensland 2001* (QT 2002, p40) it was noted that the proportion of fatigue crashes listed was even higher than the sum of QT’s surrogate and QPS assessed crashes.

Regardless of arguments about under or over reporting, RACQ notes that QT’s surrogate significantly inflates the magnitude of fatigue results.

RACQ also understands that fatigue is the only crash causal factor where QT has introduced additional criteria to those applied by QPS.

As a road safety advocate, RACQ believes that it is important to have as accurate a measure of fatigue related crashes as possible so appropriate attention can be directed towards this road safety problem by government and public audiences.

RACQ would be interested to learn whether the most accurate statistic for fatigue-related crashes in Queensland is that identified by either the QPS or QT definition, a combination of both, or in fact some measure more commonly applied and accepted in other states.

RACQ questions QT about the accuracy of fatigue related crash statistics and how they can justify:

- the existence of a surrogate crash measure, and
- that the surrogate is used in addition to QPS assessed crash data, especially when no other state or territory applies a time or speed dependent criteria to their fatigue related crashes.

It is difficult for the RACQ to comment further or make recommendations on the matter of how fatigue related crashes should be defined in Queensland without proper understanding:

- how other states determine fatigue related crashes,
- why other states do not use a surrogate crash measure, and
- whether other states believe they are capturing an accurate result or statistic of fatigue crashes without surrogate measures such as the one used by QT.

Recommendations:

- QT justify the need for their surrogate crash measure in determining the number of fatigue related crashes in Queensland.
- QT justify the case for using the surrogate measure's crash data in addition to QPS assessed fatigue crashes.
- Better understand:
 - other states' measures used to define fatigue related crashes;
 - whether other states' measures believe they are accurate in gauging the number of fatigue crashes; and
 - why other states have not adopted surrogate crash measures such as QT's.

2.0 Should Queensland adhere to the ATSB's definition of fatigue?

In its initial submission, RACQ reserved its right to comment on this question until the first round of submissions to the Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (QPTC) inquiry were completed.

After reading those submissions RACQ understands that the ATSB fatality crash database is generated through crash information based on coroner and police reports, provided by each of the States' and Territories' transport authorities.

According to Dobbie (2002, as cited in QT 2004, p8) the operational definition of fatigue used by the ATSB includes:

- single vehicle crashes in 80km/h or higher speed zones during 2-4pm and midnight to 6am, and
 - head-on collisions where neither vehicle was overtaking,
- and excludes crashes involving:
- pedestrians,
 - unlicensed drivers, and
 - drivers with a BAC over 0.05.

RACQ notes that this definition is similar to QT's surrogate, but neither QT nor QPS appear to support the adoption of the ATSB operational definition of fatigue in Queensland.

QPS (2004, p4) identifies that there are significant limitations with the ATSB operational definition because it:

- *“overestimates the incidence of fatigue related crashes by attributing fatigue as a cause of a crash when the cause of the crash is unknown”* and it
- *“risks missing some crashes in which fatigue was a factor and of counting others where it wasn't.”* (Australian Academy of Science 2002, as cited in QPS 2004, p4).

QT (2004, p9) said that: *“As all Australian jurisdictions currently use slightly different definitions, there is limited benefit for QT in adopting the ATSB definition as it currently stands”*. Further to this, QT (2004, p13) argues that in order for the ATSB definition to be a truly valuable and effective method of defining the number of fatigue related crashes, all Australian States and Territories would need to adopt the definition, and the training and operational skills of all police officers and coroners would need to be uniform across the jurisdictions also.

QPS (2004, p5) prefers to refer to the ATSB operational definition of fatigue as *“an index of the relative incidence of fatigue-related crashes”*.

In a similar way, QPS recommends that QT's surrogate definition represent an index of fatigue-related crashes in Queensland, not an official statistic (QPS 2004, p6).

QPS (2004, p7) also recommended that the ATSB definition would be more useful if used uniformly around Australia, and that there should be further consultation among jurisdictions in order to promote the common collection of data.

It is clear that at present, the adoption of the ATSB definition of fatigue in Queensland is generally not supported by QT and the QPS, and that there would only be support for the adoption of the ATSB operational definition of fatigue if it was adhered to uniformly across jurisdictions in Australia.

RACQ believes there is value in ATSB's attempt to provide a uniform measure of fatigue related crashes across Australia regardless of whether it is viewed as a statistic or an index because it allows a comparison between states. However as the ATSB definition is not dissimilar to QT's, and as the Club is already questioning the validity of QT's surrogate definition [refer to Section 1.0], it is not suggested that ATSB's approach replace the current measures.

Recommendations:

- Determine whether other jurisdictions see any value in the ATSB definition. If so, then QT should ensure that data they provide to ATSB is constructed upon guidelines consistent with those used by other jurisdictions to allow an accurate comparison.

3.0 Is there a more effective method of identifying fatigue-related crashes in Queensland?

In its initial submission, RACQ reserved its right to make recommendations in relation to this question until the first round of submissions to the Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (QPTC) inquiry were completed. After reading those submissions RACQ is now in a better position to comment.

QT stated that: *“The issue of reliability and validly identifying fatigue-related crashes plagues road safety stakeholders universally”* (2004, p14). QT (2004, p14) believes that attempts to identify fatigue and its effects on drivers are hindered through an inability to quantify fatigue among drivers. CARRS-Q, like QT, suggested that there was a need to quantify an individual’s level of fatigue through a physiological indicator of fatigue and that this *“would need to be both easy to measure and demonstrably related to crash risk”* (CARRS-Q 2004, p24).

QT (2004) indicated that it may be able to adapt its surrogate crash criteria in order for it to be comparable to Western Australia’s and New South Wales’ measures, however QT stated that: *“Without a more comprehensive evaluation of the current QT method of identifying fatigue-related crashes compared with another method of identifying fatigue-related crashes (eg. the ATSB method), statements about the probable or the actual effectiveness of alternative identification methods cannot be confidently made”* (QT 2004, p14).

Since becoming aware of alternative methods used in other jurisdictions RACQ encourages QT to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of its methods of identifying fatigue-related crashes.

QPS stated (2004, p7) that if they could add extra information into their Traffic Incident Recording System (TIRS) when reporting crashes in which fatigue was believed to be a contributing factor, e.g., reason for the journey, then over time, trends relating to these crashes could be identified.

QPS (2004, p7) believes that if more information gets provided to, and by investigating officers, fatigue and its involvement in traffic crashes would become more easily identifiable. RACQ believes that additional information about recent sleeping habits of crash victims could help e.g., the number of hours of sleep obtained the previous night.

CARRS-Q (2004, p25) suggested that police officers could be specifically trained *“in the analysis of crash scenes for evidence of fatigue involvement”*.

Other government departments such as Queensland Health (QH) could play an active role in providing health professionals to assist with:

- police training; and
- suggestions on how to enhance the information gathered at a crash scene.

This would involve a ‘whole of government’ approach to the issue of fatigue, similar to the interagency cooperation suggested by the Roads and Traffic Authority NSW (RTA 2001, p12).

RACQ has stated in its previous submission (2004, p9) that it is supportive of recent efforts by QT *“to improve the way in which data for fatigue-related crashes is being analysed and publicly reported to road authorities and relevant stakeholders”*.

If there are no better methods for defining fatigue that can be employed by QPS or QT at present, upgrading the standard of information supplied about fatigue related crashes is perhaps the next best option for assisting in identifying fatigue related crashes in Queensland.

Ideally RACQ believes that improving methods to quantify fatigue and its effect on driving ability will assist in developing a more accurate definition of fatigue in the future.

Recommendations:

- QPS, in conjunction with other relevant departments, improve training for police officers in determining whether fatigue is a factor in crashes investigated.
- QPS should collect and provide additional information in their TIRS, e.g., crash victim sleep and travel history.
- Encourage QT, QPS and other departments such as QH to work cooperatively and undertake further research into improving methods for quantifying driver fatigue levels.

4.0 Successes of Various Countermeasures in Reducing Fatigue Crashes.

In its initial submission, RACQ reserved its right to make recommendations in relation to this question until the first round of submissions to the Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (QPTC) inquiry were completed. After reading those submissions the Club is now in a better position to be able to provide comment on this issue.

4.1 Occupational/commercial drivers

RACQ recognises that there are various countermeasures for driver fatigue in the heavy vehicle industry.

QT stated that, with regard to heavy vehicle drivers, *“It has been acknowledged by ATC members (including Queensland), that the fatigue management practices currently in existence are less than ideal in terms of focussing on the hours of work issue rather than addressing all aspects of the fatigue problem”* (QT 2004, p39).

While drivers of heavy vehicles may understand that there is legislation which sets the maximum number of driving hours and there are penalties for failing to comply, they may not be aware of:

- the warning signs and symptoms of fatigue,
- the need for frequent rest breaks, and

- the reasons why a maximum number of driving hours have been set.

Heavy vehicle drivers need to be educated about the problems associated with driving while suffering the effects of fatigue.

QT, in their previous submission, stated that: *“No formal evaluation of the impact of legislation on fatigue management strategies for taxi, limousine or bus drivers on fatigue related crashes has been undertaken”* (QT 2004, p39).

RACQ understands that it could be difficult to control a person who works a daily job as well as driving a taxi or limousine on the night shift. In this regard, an evaluation of the impact of legislation relating to fatigue management strategies in reducing crashes for taxi, limousine and bus drivers by Queensland Transport would be beneficial.

With regard to Workplace Health and Safety in Queensland, QT (2004, p40) advises that: *“As the guide for fatigue management workers and employers that is being developed by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is still to be approved and publicly released, no evaluation of the impact of the guide on fatigue related crashes is available”*.

Recommendations:

- Heavy vehicle drivers be educated about the problems associated with driving while suffering the effects of fatigue as well as the appropriate legislation that sets the maximum number of driving hours for them and the penalties for failing to comply with the legislation.
- QT evaluate the impact of legislation on fatigue management strategies in reducing crashes for taxi, limousine and bus drivers.

4.2 Driver Reviver/Rest stops

RACQ supports the Driver Reviver initiative in attempting to reduce the number of fatigue related crashes on Queensland roads.

At the time of writing their first-round submission, QT (2004, p40) stated that they were undertaking an analysis of the impact of Driver Reviver on fatigue related crashes. RACQ is very interested to learn about any findings of this analysis.

Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) research has shown that at Victoria's *Operation Coffee Break* sites, there was a distinct lack of young drivers and solo travellers stopping at the sites, with the majority of vehicles stopping at the sites containing couples and families. It would be interesting to determine whether any similar research shows that Queensland Driver Reviver attracts the same types of travellers.

RACQ supports the consideration of increasing the operating hours of relevant Driver Reviver sites to cover the high-risk fatigue period during 10pm to 6am, and in assisting local communities to deliver fatigue-awareness and prevention activities during non-holiday periods.

QPS believes that *“the ‘Driver Reviver’ program needs immediate intervention strategies to revitalise and enhance the profile of this program”* (Queensland Police Service 2004, p14). RACQ supports the QPS in their efforts to enhance the profile of the driver reviver program.

RACQ is, however also interested in how the success of the Driver Reviver sites in Queensland is measured. For example, the success of the sites could be gauged through the proportion of vehicles travelling past the site that stop there for a break compared to the number of vehicles that do not stop, or the likelihood of a person having a fatigue related crash on that section of road while the site is not operating, compared to when it is.

There is a need to instil in drivers the understanding that the rest area is still a valuable resource regardless of whether Driver Reviver is in operation or not. This kind of attitudinal change could be encouraged through the provision of a network of quality, adequately signed rest areas and roadside stopping places.

To reduce the number of fatigue related crashes, roadside rest areas should be appropriately located and equipped to encourage drivers to take adequate breaks. The minimum requirements for roadside rest areas should include toilets, tables, drinking water, shade, shelter and litter bins. All facilities should be accessible to people with disabilities (RACQ Position Statement – Roadside Rest Areas 2003, p4).

Recommendations:

- Continue to support the Driver Reviver program and disseminate the results of QT’s analysis of the impact of the program in reducing the number of fatigue related crashes in Queensland.
- Consider increasing the operating hours of relevant Driver Reviver sites to cover the high-risk fatigue period during 10pm to 6am.
- Assist local communities to deliver fatigue-awareness and prevention activities during non-holiday periods
- Allocate additional funding to provide and adequately sign a network of quality rest areas and roadside stopping places.

4.3 Engineering Measures

QT (2004, p40) states that: *“no evaluation of the impact of engineering measures on fatigue-related crashes has been undertaken in Queensland. However an evaluation by Vicroads found that together with sealed shoulders, audible edge lines were 15% more effective in reducing fatigue-related crashes than painted edge-lines”* (G.Lee personal communication July 2001, as cited by QT 2004, p40).

While the Vicroads research referred to by QT (2004, p40) indicates that audible edge lines offer significant improvements in reducing fatigue-related crashes, RACQ believes that Department of Main Roads (DMR) should undertake research in order to evaluate the impact of these and other engineering measures on fatigue-related crashes in Queensland.

Recommendations:

- QT and DMR evaluate the impact of engineering measures on fatigue-related crashes in Queensland e.g., audible edge lines, rumble strips
- Allocate additional funding to provide, promote and enhance road-based fatigue countermeasures in Queensland.

5.0 Are Current Education Initiatives about Fatigue Driving Reaching Groups Most at Risk and Resulting in Behaviour Change? How can they be Improved?

RACQ views public education and related activity campaigns as important in:

- raising awareness among drivers and riders of the risks associated with driving while suffering from the effects of fatigue,
- providing drivers and riders with information for self-help when making decisions about managing and reducing driver fatigue.

Haworth (1998, p5), states that public education programs are useful for:

- educating or informing the public about fatigue and its effects on driving,
- convincing people that driver fatigue is a significant safety issue and thus changing their attitudes to driving while tired,
- encouraging people to display a change in behaviour through planning trips better, and
- convincing people to change their behaviour by no longer driving while tired.

RACQ member research has shown that driver fatigue is perceived to be one of the main causes of death and injuries on Queensland roads (Staddon Consulting 2001, p11 cited in RACQ 2004, p22). It is clear that public education programs such as the *Fatal 4* campaign and the Driver Reviver program, a community based initiative, have had an effect on the perceptions held by the public with regard to fatigue being a significant road safety issue.

QT (2004, p45) identified that the 2003-4 public education program relating to fatigue, 'Rest or R.I.P', resulted in:

- a decrease in the number of drivers who admitted to driving while tired from 34% to 29%,
- under 30 years of age the percentage was reduced from 46% to 31%, and
- there was an increase in awareness of the warning signs of fatigue from 59% to 85%.

These statistics appear to show that public education programs have increased awareness of driver and rider fatigue as a road safety issue.

Recommendations:

- QT continue its effective use of media based public education campaigns with regard to increasing awareness of driver and rider fatigue as a significant road safety issue.

5.1 Target Groups

RACQ acknowledges that QT has experienced some success with previous public education programs but these have tended to be blanket, state-wide campaigns directed towards a general audience.

It would be beneficial to also develop information and programs relating to driver and rider fatigue which are readily accessible, consistent, accurate, and appropriate to high-risk target groups. Recent Swedish research has suggested that: *“Young drivers and professional drivers seemed to be the drivers that are more at risk of fatigue-related accidents”* (Anund, Kecklund and Peters 2004, p15).

Young drivers are a good example of a high-risk group for driver fatigue with regard to the considerations that need to be taken into account when targeting information at a specific audience.

The RACV (2005) has identified that young drivers, a recurring high risk group for driver fatigue, may not relate well to the specific term ‘fatigue’, as it has been used in public education campaigns. Terms such as ‘tiredness’ are believed by the RACV (2005) to be more effective in educating young drivers about the dangers of driving while tired.

Young drivers should be aware of their busy lifestyles and of the fact that because of this, they are more susceptible to driving while tired. Also, public education campaigns regarding issues about driver and rider fatigue targeting young drivers should focus on the need for this group to avoid accumulating a ‘sleep debt’.

The Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute have stated that: *“Young drivers seem to have little knowledge concerning long lasting countermeasures. They turned on the radio or increased the volume of the radio or asked passengers to talk to them”* (Anund, Kecklund and Peters 2004, p15).

RACQ member research and anecdotal evidence also shows that high-risk groups for driver fatigue may also overly rely on short-term remedies. These groups may focus on remedies that have smallest impact on travel time, e.g., energy drinks, winding down the window, turning up the radio or music, rather than stopping.

Recommendations:

- Develop programs for identified target groups of drivers and riders to increase their awareness of the affects of fatigue.
- Ensure that information and advice relating to driver and rider fatigue is readily accessible, consistent, accurate, and appropriate to members of high-risk groups.
- Educate about how busy lifestyles can make people more susceptible to driving while tired and to avoid accumulating a ‘sleep debt’.

5.2 Power Naps

Traditional approaches of promoting a 15 minute break every two hours while driving long trips, and promotion of the warning signs and effects of fatigue should be continued in public education campaigns. However there is a need to further emphasise that sleep is the only true cure for fatigue. In Victoria there has recently been an emphasis on the 'power nap' – a short, road-side sleep that is intended to provide the driver with suitable refreshment so that they can get safely to their destination – or at least to suitable accommodation (RACV 2005).

RACQ notes that while 'power naps' address the need for sleep to assist in preventing the onset of fatigue, issues arise with regard to the security of the individual's vehicle, and the individual's safety while engaged in a road side 'power nap'. It is preferable therefore, that promotion of sleep as the only effective cure for fatigue be focussed on individuals obtaining enough regular, good quality sleep at home prior to the journey.

Recommendations:

- Continue promoting a 15 minute break every two hours while driving long trips, as well as the warning signs and effects of fatigue.
- Consider promoting 'power naps' as a means to provide some refreshment for drivers during the journey in conjunction with encouraging regular good quality sleep prior to travelling.

5.3 Improvements to Public Education on Fatigue

Unfortunately, at present drivers are not fully aware, or understanding of the warning signs and effects of fatigue. As such, many drivers rely on short-term fixes for the symptoms of fatigue. It is essential that future public education programs place emphasis on the fact that the only cure for fatigue is good quality sleep.

Future public education campaigns regarding driver and rider fatigue in Queensland could be improved through the promotion of driving while tired being viewed as a socially unacceptable behaviour. This could be done, as it has also been suggested by the QPS (2004), similarly to the drink driving 'bloody idiot' advertisements.

Fatigue affects lifestyle and vice versa, and driver fatigue may be only one symptom of a tired society. A Courier Mail article (Coren 2005) stated that: *"We now sleep for an average of just under seven hours a night – almost an hour less than people had 30 years ago and two hours less than 80 years ago"*.

It was stated in the Sleep Therapy Australia submission (Stone 2004, p2) that public education campaigns promoting awareness of the negative effects of fatigue in general *"could provide the public with a much stronger and more generally acceptable argument why they should not live tired"*.

In the Sleep Therapy Australia submission to QPTC it was also stated that: *"We are conscious that the negative effects of fatigue are far broader, impacting on*

performance at work and elsewhere, family and social relationships and enjoyment of life in general. There are also damaging effects on physical and mental health and arguably a higher mortality rate” (Stone 2004, p2).

Due to this, it is recommended that in future, public education programs consider a whole of government approach towards preventing people from driving while suffering the effects of fatigue through an understanding of the effects of fatigue in general.

RACQ believes there are advantages in reaching a wider audience of people – including high-risk target groups for driver fatigue, through:

- promoting awareness about how fatigue can negatively impact upon every activity performed by an individual, and also on their health, and,
- emphasising good quality sleep as the only cure for fatigue.

Recommendations.

- Future public education programs should emphasise the fact that the only cure for fatigue is good quality sleep.
- Improve the impact of future public education campaigns through the promotion of driving while tired being viewed as a socially unacceptable behaviour.
- Apply a ‘whole of government’ approach towards preventing people from driving while suffering the effects of fatigue by engaging government, agencies, industry, and community to address the issue of a ‘tired society’ and fatigue in general.

References:

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