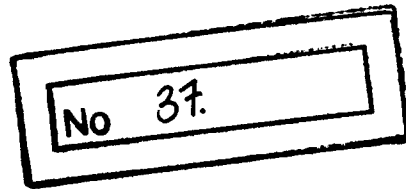


JT: JP

13 February 2006

Mr Jim Pearce
Travelsafe Committee
Parliament House
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Dear Mr Pearce

Re: Inquiry into vehicle impoundment for drink drivers

I write to you with regard to your request for comments regarding the *Inquiry into vehicle impoundment for drink drivers* as issued by the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee on 11 November 2005.

An inquiry into the possibilities of vehicle impoundment with reference to a reduction in drink driving is necessary, particularly in relation to minimising repeat offenders. However AMA Queensland also believes that while an inquiry into vehicle impoundment is necessary, it is in fact far more valuable to also extend the proposed inquiry to include a variety of coordinated public health approaches to be used in conjunction with vehicle impoundment.

This is of particular concern considering that although vehicle impoundment does prove to be successful to a degree, there are a number of implications that can arise from this course of action, such as extensive effects on families that are prohibited from access to a car or are faced with an excessive financial burden incurred from an impoundment penalty.

Two studies conducted by Mr Barry Watson¹ of Queensland's University of Technology in August 2005 found that an estimated 37.5 per cent of people who had had their licence disqualified for a driving offence continued to drive their own car or someone else's regardless of whether they felt they were over the alcohol limit.

These findings indicate that there is significant evidence that issuing penalties only does not tend to have any lasting effects on drivers long-term, particularly as the study also found that 71.2 per cent of people who had their licence disqualified at the time of the study had had it disqualified on a previous occasion.

It is with these findings in mind that AMA Queensland recommends that the following approaches also be investigated as part of the proposed *Inquiry into vehicle impoundment for drink drivers*.

Random Breath Testing (RBT)

¹ Watson, B. (2005) "ACRS Recidivist Drink and Unlicensed Driver Seminar." Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.

A study conducted in Canada by Anindya Sen² (2001) suggests that random breath testing has proven in the past to be successful in reducing the number of drink driving offences that have occurred on a long-term basis. AMA Queensland recommends that continued further use of random breath testing be conducted throughout Queensland, particularly as this method is an effective form of drink driving detection.

Monetary Fines

AMA Queensland also suggests that monetary fines continue to be implemented into the proposed vehicle impoundment approach. This recommendation is again supported by Sen's (2001) Canadian study, which found a direct correlation between monetary fines and a decline in impaired driver deaths and demonstrates that monetary fines do in fact tend to have a more lasting, long-term effect on offenders.

Alcohol Ignition Interlocks

AMA Queensland recommends that use of alcohol ignition interlocks, be investigated as a preliminary step prior to vehicle impoundment. Watson³ (2005) supports this view, stating that alcohol ignition interlocks need to be further advanced and used more fully to aid in minimising re-offending parties.

Vehicle Rehabilitation Programs

Watson (2005) also highlights the use of vehicle rehabilitation programs in conjunction with licence sanctions and this is supported by Sen (2001), who found that rehabilitation reduced the risk of re-offending by 30 per cent when combined with some form of licence action. AMA Queensland supports these findings and recommends therefore that specific rehabilitation also be investigated as part of the proposed vehicle impoundment inquiry.

I hope that the information provided in this submission can be of some assistance in the scoping of the proposed inquiry and remind you also that AMA Queensland welcome the opportunity to view the draft inquiry when it becomes available and to make further comment on it at that time if necessary.

Thank you for inviting AMA Queensland's comments on this matter, I will be happy to discuss this further if necessary, I can be contacted via the AMA Queensland secretariat on (07) 3872 2222.

Yours sincerely



Dr Steve Hambleton
President

² Sen, A. (2001) "Do stricter penalties deter drinking and driving? An empirical investigation of Canadian impaired driving laws." Canada: *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 34(1).

³ Watson, B. (2005) "ACRS Recidivist Drink and Unlicensed Driver Seminar: Review of potential countermeasures to recidivist drink driving and unlicensed driving." Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.