

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users

Melbourne—Tuesday 22 August 2023

(via videoconference)

MEMBERS

Alison Marchant—Chair

Kim O’Keeffe—Deputy Chair

Anthony Cianflone

Wayne Farnham

John Mullahy

Dylan Wight

Jess Wilson

WITNESS

Sandy Lukjanowski, Chief Executive Officer, Injury Matters.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearings for the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the Parliament website. While all evidence taken by the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege, comments repeated outside of this hearing, including on social media, may not be protected by this privilege.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check. Verified transcripts and other documents provided to the Committee during the hearing will be published on the Committee's website. I remind witnesses and Members to mute their microphones when not speaking, just to minimise interference.

Sandy, thank you for your time today. I will just quickly go around and introduce the Committee members. I am Alison, the Member for Bellarine; Deputy Chair Kim O'Keeffe, the Member for Shepparton; Dylan Wight, the Member for Tarneit; Anthony Cianflone, the Member for Pascoe Vale; John Mullahy, the Member for Glen Waverley; Wayne Farnham, the Member for Narracan; and Jess Wilson, the Member for Kew.

Thanks again for your time. I thought we might start by letting you maybe do an opening statement or talking to your submission or adding any extra information, and then we will go around and we will just ask some questions of you if that is okay.

Sandy LUKJANOWSKI: Sure, no problem. Thank you so much for having me today. My name is Sandy Lukjanowski, and I am the Chief Executive of Injury Matters. I thought it might help to give a brief overview of who Injury Matters is and the work that we do, in Western Australia predominantly. Injury Matters is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works to prevent and reduce the impact of injury and to support communities that are impacted. Injury Matters has a robust and extremely well-respected reputation based on over 30 years of experience in developing and delivering high-quality, evidence-based interventions that support our vision for safer people and places. As Western Australia's injury prevention and recovery specialist, Injury Matters delivers programs and services that enable Western Australians to live long and healthy lives, and our programs and services cut across current and emerging injury priority areas for the community.

I think the biggest and most important one for me to touch on for you all this morning is one of our flagship programs for Injury Matters which is the most relevant for the session today, which is our Road Trauma Support service in Western Australia. The service aims to reduce the psychosocial impacts of road trauma for anybody impacted in WA. We are able to provide our service in the WA community with funding that we receive through the Road Trauma Trust Account and with project management from the WA Road Safety Commission, and we are proud to have delivered our service for over 10 years now. The Road Trauma Support service provides information, support and specialised counselling for anybody involved in a crash in WA. We support all that have been involved, injured or affected by a road crash. This can include family, carers, friends, those that have lost a loved one or a colleague right through to anybody who has witnessed a road crash and may have been first on the scene, our professional first responders and our volunteer first responders, right through to those who might have even potentially caused a road crash. As you can tell, our remit is pretty broad.

At the Road Trauma Support service we see people without a doctor's referral. That is not required; people can self-refer. We do not have a maximum number of counselling sessions. Anybody can seek support from us for as long as they need, specifically for their road trauma. The reason why we find that to be so incredibly important is it means that people are able to re-engage with us later on in their journey, so times such as birthdays, anniversaries or potentially around festive seasons and times of celebration—we see that as a time when people often need to re-engage with us. I guess that gives you a little bit of a quick snapshot of us, who we are and the service we provide, but I would be more than happy to answer any other questions.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you, Sandy, for that. It is good to get a different perspective, particularly I suppose being a Western Australian organisation and maybe what you might be doing differently. I think we will have some really good questions today. John, I might go to you first if that is okay.

John MULLAHY: Thanks, Chair, and thanks, Sandy, for being here today. Your submission suggests that that there are anywhere between 8 and 29% of road crash survivors experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. So my question is: in what ways are vulnerable road users forgotten in post-crash support services, and how can this be addressed?

Sandy LUKJANOWSKI: Thank you. That is an extremely important point that you raise. I think that how vulnerable road users are potentially being missed within post-crash care services is in the absence of specialised post-crash care services, so trauma-informed services that are supported by having funding provision to enable us to provide a wide range of services and interventions to be offered. Supporting services like Injury Matters or Amber Community services, which is our local one over in Victoria, enables our organisations to build really inclusive and diverse options for our communities. While more generalised services might have a range of services, they do not often provide specialised trauma-informed support. With an agency working very closely with the topic, such as Injury Matters, we work within positive safety change as well. Working within this area we are able to translate the latest data and community interventions at a practical level, whereas more generalised services are generally not working in that preventative space. It is extremely valuable to have items such as post-crash care even considered as a pillar within a full road and safety strategy as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you. John, do you have something?

John MULLAHY: Yes. Just with regard to your work, how would you get that with regard to a vulnerable road user, say, with a cyclist crashing into a pedestrian or something of that nature? Is that something that your organisation picks up on?

Sandy LUKJANOWSKI: Yes, it certainly is. So ‘anything that occurs on a gazetted roadway’ is the technical way that our contract views it. However, for the vast majority of things we are able to see people within various different elements of what we are able to do, or use for-purpose funding toward supporting people that might fall slightly outside of that road trauma remit. One area that I think is probably important to consider, and an area that we have started a conversation with the government in Western Australia about, is supporting children, and especially parents of children. We are seeing more and more unfortunate driveway runovers, and because that is technically not within the roadway, that is an area where it can sometimes be a little bit tricky to support. Up until this point we have been able to, but I think it is definitely something for consideration.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Sandy. Kim, I might go to you next.

Kim O’KEEFFE: Thank you. Hi, Sandy. Thank you so much for joining us today and for your submission. It is great work that you are doing, so thank you for that. I am sure you have some challenging days, so well done. My question really is: how can media reporting on off-road trauma be used to change cultural perceptions of vulnerable road users to improve their safety? How do we get this word out to hopefully make a difference?

Sandy LUKJANOWSKI: Yes, that is an extremely important question, Kim. Reporting of road crashes within the media has a significant influence on the audience or the viewer’s perception of an incident. It can also impact and change societal attitudes towards road safety. The media has got significant power to educate the public around the social issues and drive change which can have positive and negative consequences for road safety. When we are using evidence-based media reporting, we can generate a more accurate awareness of how frequent and serious road crashes are and we can increase knowledge amongst the general community as to key road safety behaviours, in addition to growing awareness of how to seek support when needed. Communicating this more sensitively and ensuring that it is possible that the media can leverage that understanding to be able to help the audience to see that there is a bigger problem in focus and to evoke some positive change behaviour change and remove those barriers for things like help-seeking behaviour and people needing to access services such as post-crash care type services to enable them to be more confident and safer behind the wheel, should they choose to get back into driving post a crash. But ultimately it helps to reframe road traffic incidents as a preventable public health issue—that is really the crux of what we are looking to do, and what we really need to achieve with that behaviour change.

Kim O’KEEFFE: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dylan, I might go to you next.

Dylan WIGHT: I just want to speak about media reporting, if that is okay. Your submission, the component of it around the way that media report road incidents and on the flip side, I think we have all seen serious road incidents reported on the news at some point in our lives and the way that a change in that reporting could really promote better road behaviours, particularly to vulnerable road users, so the question is: how can media reporting of road trauma be used to change cultural perceptions of vulnerable road users and improve their safety?

The CHAIR: Sorry, I am just going to jump in there, Dylan, to maybe add to that. Sandy, is that maybe something that you do, because you have talked a little bit about that, but just generating that awareness maybe as well. Media is part of that, but what other awareness campaigns might you have run?

Sandy LUKJANOWSKI: Yes, sure. That is not a problem. I think one particular resource that I would definitely draw your attention to and that I know was discussed within the submission is the work that we have done around responsible reporting of road crashes and particularly in utilising eight specific steps when reporting on road crashes or providing any road safety information. We think using these steps to frame any type of campaign or resourcing that is going to be delivered to community is incredibly important.

To briefly run through the steps, the first is around normalising help-seeking information. Essentially, when as MPs you have been asked to comment on something that has happened within your local area, it is around asking that these particular things be adhered to as part of the conditions for you being comfortable to give comment or anything along those lines, but also, when making decisions around types of campaigns that are going to be delivered more broadly to community, that they are compliant with these types of evidence-based strategies to ensure that overall safety messaging as well as ensuring that behaviour-change element. So the first one is around that help-seeking information, and that is ensuring that at least two crisis support services in any news article are available. But obviously that is based on the mode of communication and the topic at hand. You would gauge what would be appropriate to aim that at.

The description of the road crash incident: it is vital that road crash reporting sticks to the information at hand. You will see often with road crash reporting there is lots of surmising as to what potentially could have happened or what might have stopped it or what could have caused it, and it is really important to provide that accurate, balanced portrayal of what has actually happened as opposed to going into the what-ifs and maybes and assumptions.

The language: it is extremely important to consider the language and how that could be interpreted by the audience. We know that a lot of road crashes currently are caused by that one moment of inattention and potentially the vast majority of those people are not at heart bad people. They did not go out with the intent that something horrible would happen. So often with the type of language that we utilise within some of this reporting, it can potentially harm the perception of that person amongst their local community and also how they view themselves.

The use of imagery is particularly important. The use of more generic and sort of less overt crash types of imagery as part of those particular stories is really important. It is especially important to ensure that the particular vehicle or particular crash site that is behind that particular reporter is not something that can be easily recognised. The last thing you would ever want is to be recognising that your loved one has been involved in a road crash before you have been formally notified and you are finding out by sitting down and watching the news that night.

The next part is around interviewing consent. It is especially important to ensure that there is informed consent obtained from individuals that might have had involvement within that road crash. People are going to be at some of the most vulnerable points of their lives after things like a road crash, and it is extremely important to ensure that people are able to feel that they have choice and can exercise that ability to be able to opt out of something that they are not comfortable with.

Comments from experts, people like yourselves: it is extremely important that you are included as part of the conversation to be able to add relevant information that helps to interpret the data and helps to interpret what is happening in a far more accurate sense as opposed to, as I mentioned before, the sort of what-ifs and 'I think this happened' or 'It appears that something has happened'. You are actually able to give a little bit more clarity to what is potentially happening within your local area.

Story prominence is extremely important. It is around ensuring that the duration and inferior placement does not occur so that people are aware as to the scale of this issue and how important it is, because it can undermine the issue or sensationalise the issue. You can have those sort of vice versa areas.

Then, most importantly, it is also around looking after yourselves. We acknowledge that working in this space there is only so much that an individual can take for their own wellbeing, being often asked to provide comment in particular areas such as this or even for reporting—for people working within this area, for young journalists. We have heard all sorts of really quite sad stories about journalists being out there in their first couple of years and providing road crash stories on Christmas Eve or things of that nature and feeling like they need to pursue families for comment or things of that nature. I think it is really important that we also encourage the media and people providing comment in the media especially around this space to consider their wellbeing.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Sandy. I am just mindful of time; we have gone over. We will probably have to wrap it up there. But I want to say thank you for providing a different perspective on this. The hearings have not really heard much in this space, so it has been really insightful to have that perspective today from you. If there is something further you think we should hear about or you think there is something we have missed today, you are more than welcome to make a contribution and write to the Committee as well. So thank you so much for your time, and I really appreciate you taking the questions today.

Witness withdrew.