

**Speech Notes for Commissioner Rob Robinson, New Zealand Police
'Regain the Momentum'
2001: Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference
The Hilton on the Park
Monday 19 November 2001
Melbourne, Victoria
AUSTRALIA**

BEYOND STRATEGIC ENFORCEMENT?

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e rau rangatira mā

[Chiefs, leaders, spokespersons and conference attendees that are assembled]

Tēnā koutou katoa

[I bid you all – Greetings]

There is a proverb we often use in New Zealand that fits the theme of this conference:

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka oti pai ngā mahi.

[With your contribution and ours, the work will be well accomplished.]

Introductory Remarks

Victorian Minister of Transport, Hon Peter Batchelor; Director of the Monash University Accident Research Centre, Dr Ian Johnston; Dr John Eberhard from the USA National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration; General Manager of Road Safety in VicRoads Eric Howard; and members of Parliamentary Road Safety Committees.

It's a very great pleasure to address the plenary session of the 2001 Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference, and to offer some thoughts on the theme "Regaining the Momentum".

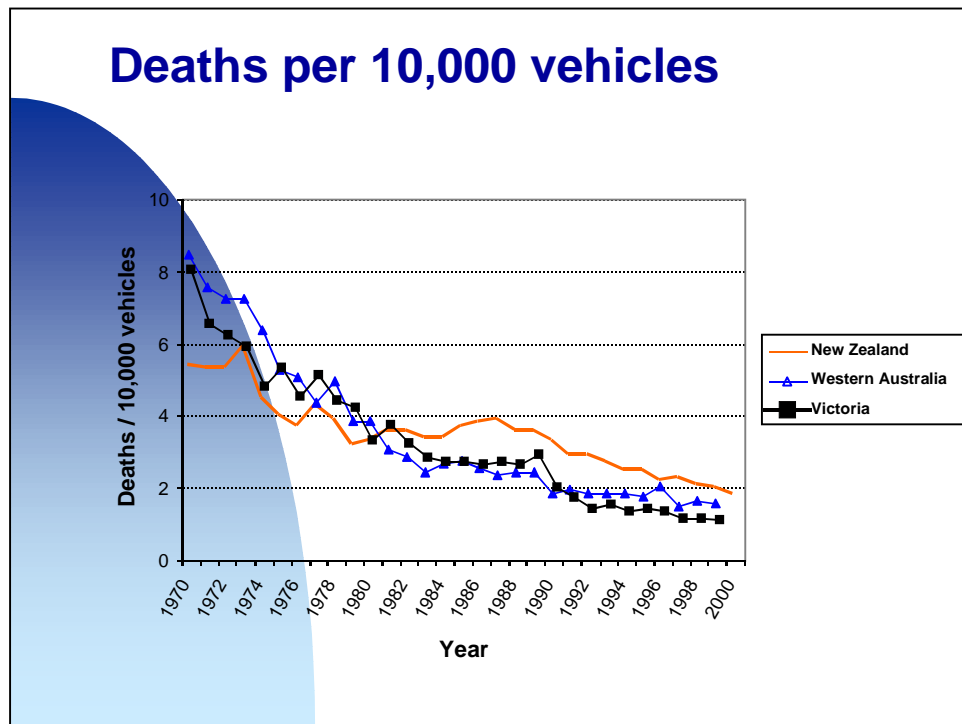
While we have been looking across the Tasman for many years and learning, a lot can also be learned from the New Zealand road safety experience. This morning I'll be drawing on that experience to explore two main ideas in the context of building, sustaining or regaining momentum.

The first is the need to invest in results; and the second is that perhaps it's time to start looking beyond enforcement for new road safety gains.

New Zealand is in a slightly different position to Australia. Our roading network is tougher and more unforgiving, so we've had to start from behind in our attempts to reach the levels you've already attained.

However over the past 10 years we've experienced some solid improvements in road safety, and right now we don't have a problem with momentum.

However as we all know, it's only a matter of time.



And if you look at the number of deaths per 10,000 vehicles and per 100,000 population, we are still not doing as well as any of the Australian states with the exception of the Northern Territory.

You have plateaued at a level we have yet to reach.

Despite these differences, I believe the lessons we've learned along the way perhaps have application in other jurisdictions also.

1992

The New Zealand Police road safety experience begins nearly 10 years ago in 1992.

1992 was a signal year for my agency. On 1 July of that year, the then Traffic Safety Service, which had been a separate enforcement entity for more than 50 years, merged with New Zealand Police.

Traffic Safety Service staff (about 1100-strong), who the day before had been wearing black uniforms and driving black and white cars, found themselves kitted out in Police blue; and driving blue, white and orange patrol cars – and with the full range of powers of a Constable.

Traffic safety had become a part of our business.

There were good reasons for the merger.

The Government saw there were savings to be had from administering one entity rather than two.

Senior traffic and police staff believed there were synergies between crime and traffic; and a combined effort would result in less crime and fewer road deaths.

And the two agencies had a common set of traffic and criminal recidivist offenders.

It made sense in theory, and in practice the gains did start to flow through. However organisationally, the years from 1992 to 1995 were not a happy time.

As the 'oil and water' approaches of our different agencies tried to mix, we found ourselves in cultural turmoil.

Staff who had come from a traffic enforcement background had, if you'll pardon the pun, a "black and white", absolute way of thinking. Police officers, on the other hand, were used to applying discretion to offending and only using coercion when they couldn't resolve the incident in any other way.

We didn't reach the brink of outright war, but there was no shortage of conflict!

Road Safety Programme

Although we'd picked up the task cold and there were internal issues to sort out, we did start to make some headway thanks to the funding model that had been set up in 1990 – two years before the merger.

The New Zealand Road Safety Programme is the mechanism we use to secure funding for road safety. This includes education, community and enforcement investments.

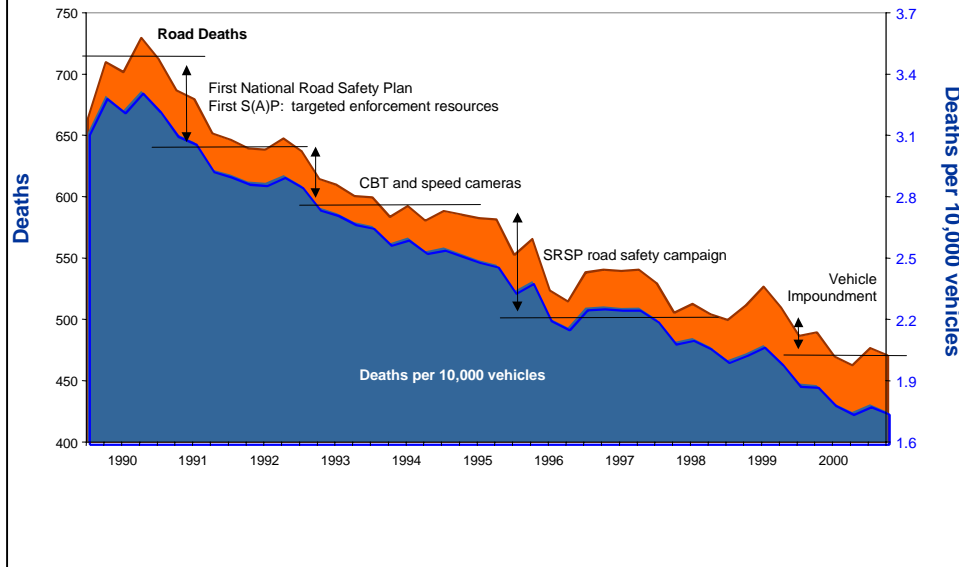
Each year, Police – working closely with our primary road safety partner, the Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) – consult with local authorities and put up a business case for resources.

The money allocated for safety interventions is held in a dedicated national roads fund, so we don't have to compete against demands from other social sector agencies.

The model determines the outputs we produce each year. It's a research-based approach, so we identify what we can deliver, then do it. It really is a case of "you get what you pay for".

Back in 1993, we got additional Road Safety Programme money to introduce some heavy-duty interventions aimed at bringing down the road toll.

Road Deaths, 1990-2000



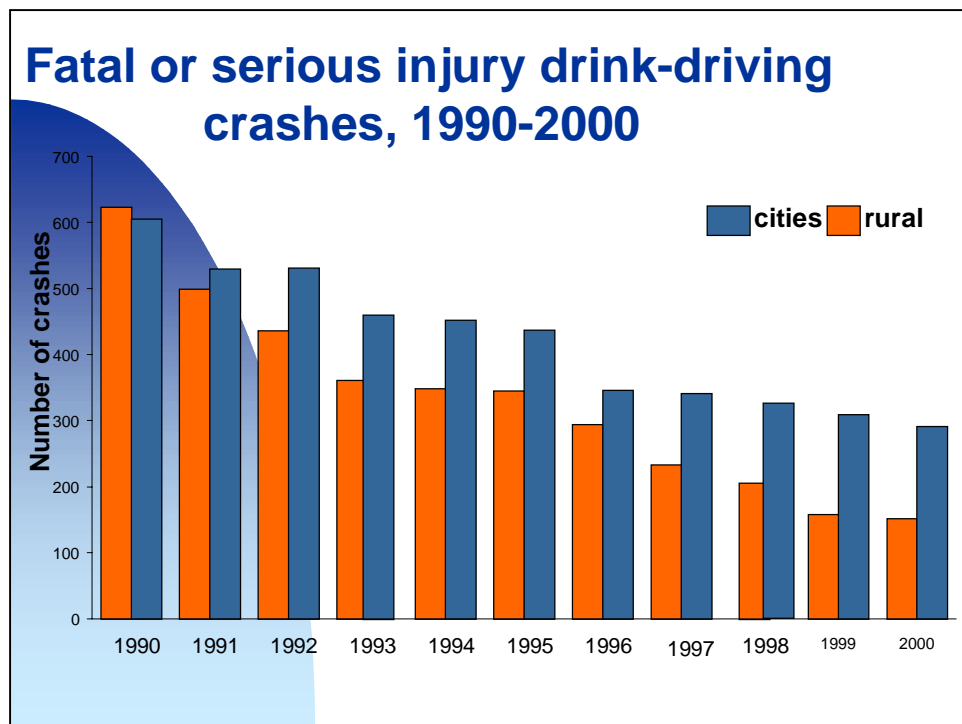
In April of that year, drivers got a rude shock. Large-scale compulsory breath testing had arrived. Motorists in the main centres were suddenly confronted with big checkpoints, and transgressors were processed in booze buses fitted out for the purpose.

To up the ante even more, we brought in speed cameras in October of 1993. However these offences didn't attract demerit points.

Suddenly drivers became more aware of the need to behave themselves. You can see the effects on this graph. Nearly 50 fewer people were killed in 1993 than in the previous year.

For the next couple of years, the number of deaths sat at around the 580 level. We were doing okay, but we weren't getting the most out of compulsory breath testing and the cameras.

This was partly to do with our lack of understanding of general deterrence.



The number of drunk drivers being intercepted was falling and fewer intoxicated drivers were involved in serious and fatal crashes. This was interpreted as a sign that the programme was successful, and we could now move on to something more important.

But visible, consistent drink-drive enforcement needs to be sustained if good results are to continue. We learned this from the Victoria Police.

The highly visible enforcement presence that existed in the early 1990s under the TSS began to erode, especially in rural areas. Speeds began to creep.

The lack of demerit points didn't help. The public saw speed cameras simply as a way for the Government to collect revenue.

Supplementary Road Safety Package

Then in the middle of 1995, the Supplementary Road Safety Package was introduced. Based largely on the world's best practice Transport Accident Commission programme developed in Victoria, it was one of the first business cases we put up that said: "if you give us this amount of funding, we will deliver these specific results".

Supplementary Road Safety Package, 1995

- \$50m over 4 years;
- 420 road deaths by 2001;
 - ◆ \$5m a year into extra police enforcement;
 - ◆ hard-hitting ad campaign;
 - ◆ more speed camera hours, laser speed detectors, extra breath testing devices;
 - ◆ sustained publicity supporting camera and CBT programmes.

We nailed our colours to the mast.

The Government gave us \$50 million over four years. We had earlier set specific road safety targets aimed at achieving 420 road deaths by 2001, based around speed, drink-driving and safety belts.

The Supplementary Road Safety Package promised to regain the momentum to achieve these targets; and said we would save 80 fatalities, 450 serious and 1600 minor injuries.

Five million a year went into extra police enforcement; and seven million was spent on publicity. The LTSA started a hard-hitting TV advertising campaign that targeted risk groups. Many of the ads were criticised for being insensitive, but they had the desired effect.

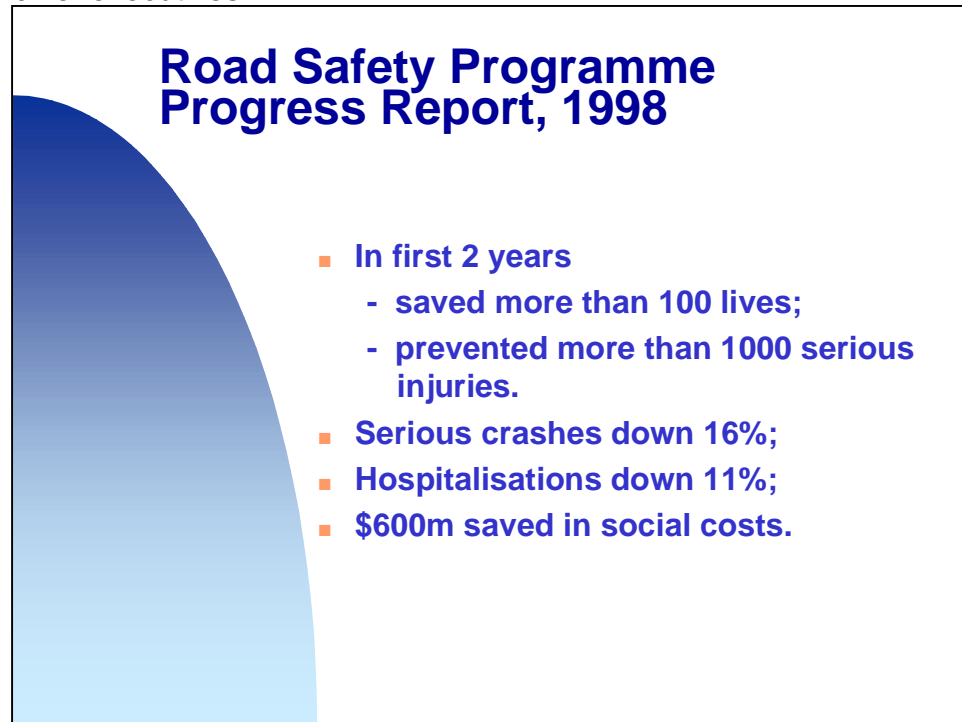
Safety belt publicity got a specific boost; and we improved our targeting of speed camera and Compulsory Breath Testing (CBT) enforcement programmes.

Linked to this was increased speed camera hours, advanced laser speed detectors, extra breath testing devices and sustained publicity supporting the speed camera and CBT programmes.

Annual independent evaluation of the safety outcomes being achieved, and adjustment where necessary, was central to the package.

New Zealand Police was itself subjected to its first peer review of traffic activity in 1996; conducted by Superintendent Harry Hayes and Chief Inspector Mike Moloney from Victoria Police and Inspector Terry Lester from New South Wales.

Solid results soon emerged and the road toll for 1998 came in at 504 – nearly 15 percent lower than when the Supplementary Road Safety Package first came in. Even at that stage, however, a funding gap was identified by the National Road Safety Committee – a group made up of road safety agency chief executives.



In August 1998, Max Cameron and Peter Vulcan from Monash University prepared a progress report on the Road Safety Programme. They found that after the first two years, it had saved more than 100 lives and prevented more than 1000 serious injuries – delivering in two years what had been promised in four.

Serious crashes were down 16 percent and hospitalisations had dropped 11 percent.

The country had saved more than NZ\$600 million in the social costs associated with road trauma.

We were making real progress. However any complacency was removed as the toll for 1999 came in at 508 – four more than the previous year – and a long way from the 420 required by the 2001 targets.

In other words, the road safety gains from the extra investment had reached a plateau. So how were we going to regain the momentum?

Land Transport Act 1998

Land Transport Act 1998

- Instant loss of licence for serious alcohol and speed offending;
- Photo licences introduced;
- Power to impound vehicles.

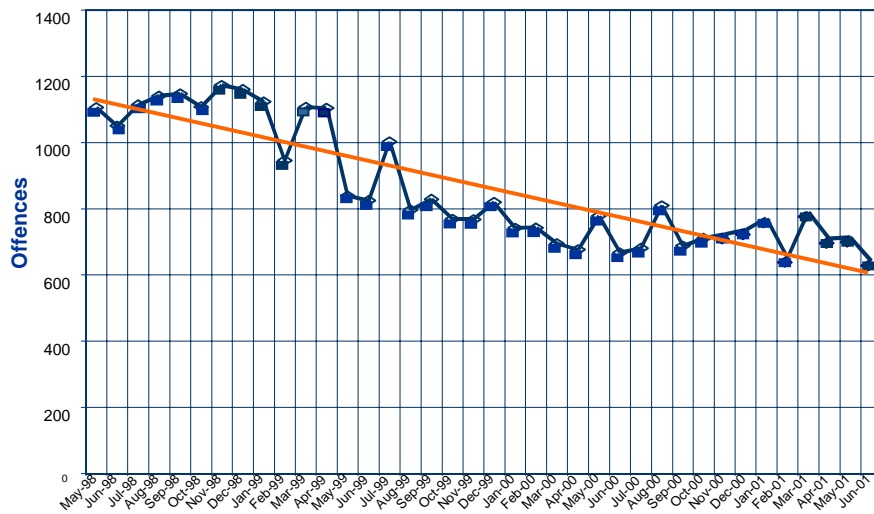
In May 1999, the provisions of the Land Transport Act 1998 kicked in. The new laws gave Police more tools to tackle hard-core, recidivist road offenders – the people who represented the biggest risk to other road users.

The provisions included instant loss of licence for being twice the legal blood alcohol limit, or driving at 50km above the posted speed limit.

Photo licences were introduced. For the first time my officers were able to identify drivers at the roadside, making life more difficult for disqualified or unlicensed drivers and those who used to give false details.

One of the hardest hitting measures gave us the power to impound vehicles where the driver is unlicensed or disqualified; their licence is suspended or revoked; or their licence has expired and they've already been warned.

Disqualified Drivers May 1998 - June 2001



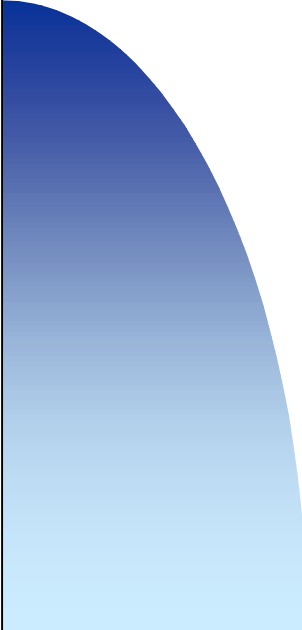
Currently we are impounding 1100 vehicles a month from these offenders. One of the results has been a more than 30 percent reduction in disqualified drivers. That's a lot of dangerous people off the road.

What's more, the cost of impoundments are met by the offender before the vehicle is returned by the private storage provider.

Baseline Review

While these measures gave us a boost, it was becoming clear we still weren't going to meet our 2001 targets. We needed an independent evaluation of where the next push should come from if we were to pick up some pace.

Baseline Review, 2000

- 
- Funding gap confirmed;
 - LTSA and Police receive \$150m over 4 years;
 - \$25m for extra Police enforcement hours;
 - \$3m for rural CBT operations;
 - Tickets for 10km/h faster than posted limit.

Once again Peter Vulcan came to our aid. He and Superintendent Mike Hannigan from Queensland Police and another expert completed a Baseline Review of the New Zealand Road Safety Programme.

They asked and answered the question: “if the Government wanted to get the best return in road safety, where should it put its money?”

The result confirmed the funding gap identified earlier, but more importantly, it identified the areas that would bring the best return on investment. We were able to say to Government: “if you wish to invest, these are the road safety gains and the savings we will provide”.

The arguments proved compelling, and the LTSA and Police received \$150 million to spend over four years.

One of the main recommendations didn’t pull any punches. It said if we wanted to meet the 2001 target of 420 road deaths, then \$25 million would be needed for an extra 337,000 Police enforcement hours. If we did this, we could expect 37 fewer deaths and 800 less injuries per annum.

The enforcement would need to be directed at sections of the road system with fatality rates or social costs well above the national average.

Those of you who have been to New Zealand will know most of our state highways fall into this category. They are usually two-lane 100km/h roads that don’t have median barriers separating opposing traffic, and they carry large volumes of vehicles. Speeding is unfortunately too common.

Forty percent of the social costs of road death and injury is generated on the state highways, just 10 percent of the total network, and 75 percent of all road fatalities occur in rural areas.

Highway Patrol

Out of this recommendation came the Highway Patrol, with open road speed reductions its main thrust.

This initiative cost the Government \$25 million per annum, GST exclusive.

In December last year we launched the first vehicles in a 183-strong fleet of dedicated traffic patrol vehicles, staffed by 225 specialist Highway Patrol staff.

[Video Clip – Highway Patrol Roll-out - speed]

The new Holdens have gone down very well with our troops and the general public. A great deal of work and research went into the new livery. The blue and yellow battenburg design is distinctive and highly visible. At night, it stands out like snails' eyes.

Visibility and a perception that Police are out on the roads are central to our overall approach to deterring bad driver behaviour.

Highway Patrol staff are required to make three contacts an hour. This caused some controversy, with critics accusing Police and the Government of revenue raising.

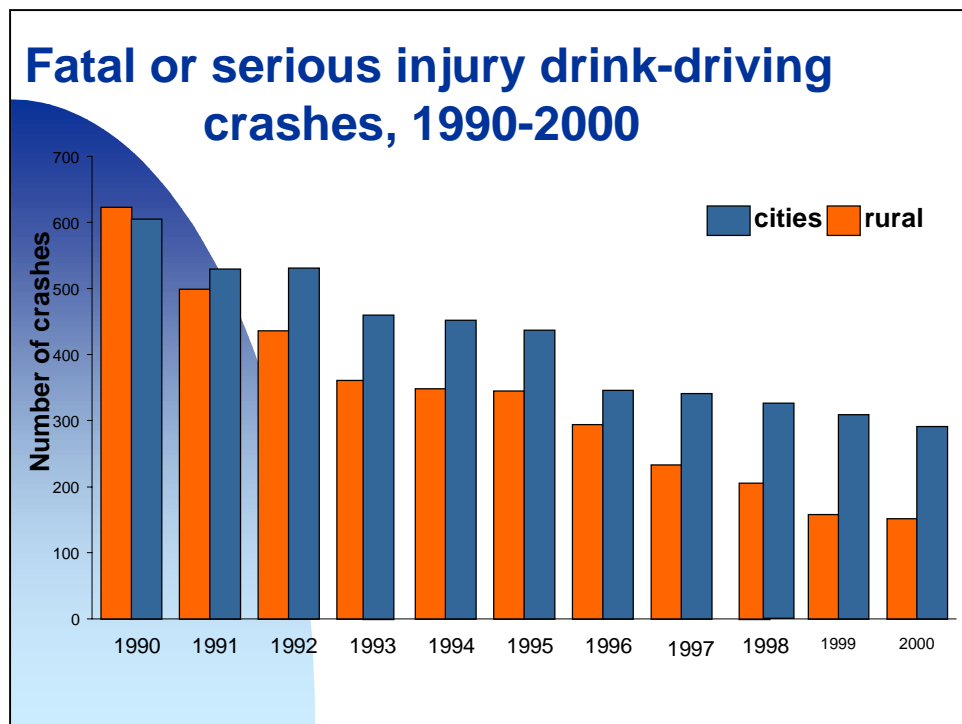
However three contacts an hour ensures that staff are interacting with the public and not just cruising. Not every contact will generate a ticket, but you can bet that the experience of being pulled over by a blue and yellow car will make many drivers think twice about breaking the road rules and putting themselves and others at risk.

Rural Drink Driving

Another high priority recommendation was rural drink driving. We received nearly \$3 million for an extra 40,000 Police hours to run CBT operations in areas where drink driving was above the national average.

A strong partnership with the Accident Compensation Corporation (the equivalent of the TAC) has seen them provide six booze buses and advertising support targeting drink drivers.

In provincial New Zealand we find much higher failure rates at CBT stops than we do in urban areas.



The perceived risk of getting caught for drink-driving is lower in the country. This is directly linked to lower levels of Police activity.

However we are starting to increase our activities in these areas and word is getting out – if the tale of one hapless rural drinker is anything to go by.

A gent in rural Southland left his local tavern thinking he was over the limit. He saw car lights and thinking it was a police car, ducked into a farm driveway and ran off. The farmer came home and called Police, and our drinker was tracked and apprehended by a dog handler. And he was right – he was over the limit.

A recent CBT exercise in the Far North of the country showed the depth of the problem. My staff set up an operation not far from the country's northern-most pub. They stopped 57 cars and nine of the drivers failed – almost a 16 percent failure rate and far higher than in the major metro areas.

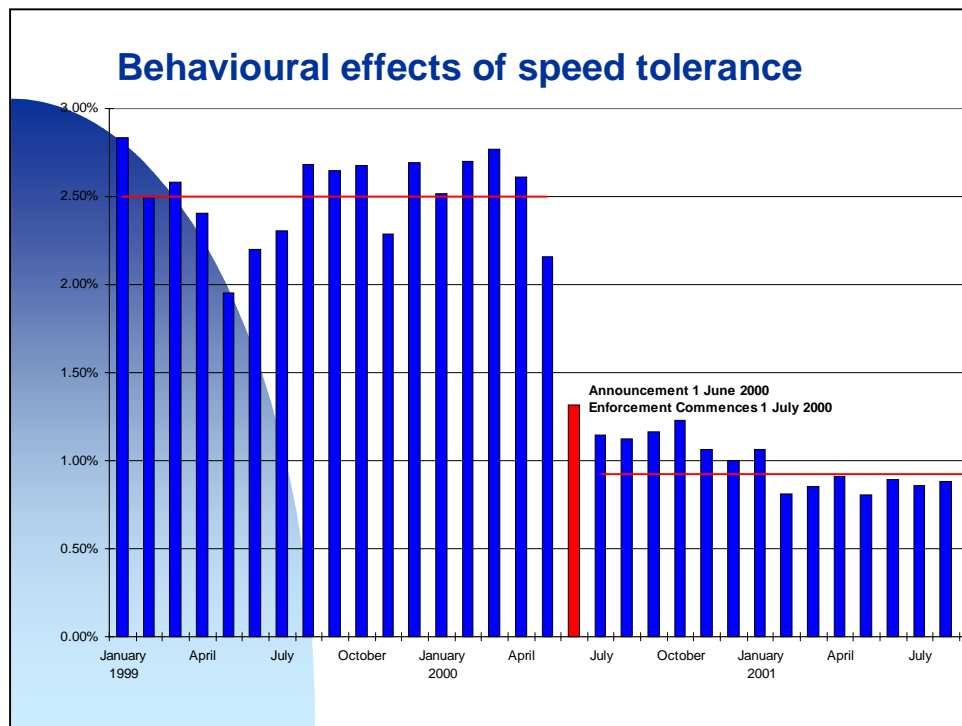
With the increased CBT activity now going into more remote areas, I expect an improvement in rural drink driving statistics in the coming years.

Speed

Peter Vulcan and Mike Hannigan also recommended that we start issuing tickets for driving more than 10km/h faster than the posted limit.

Before 1 July last year, only the top 15 percent of speedsters at traffic camera sites received tickets. Then we announced that speed tolerances for traffic cameras would come down. On 1 July 2000 an absolute measure was introduced. The message went out that if you drive past a speed camera

faster than 10km/h above the speed limit, then guess what, the ticket is in the mail.

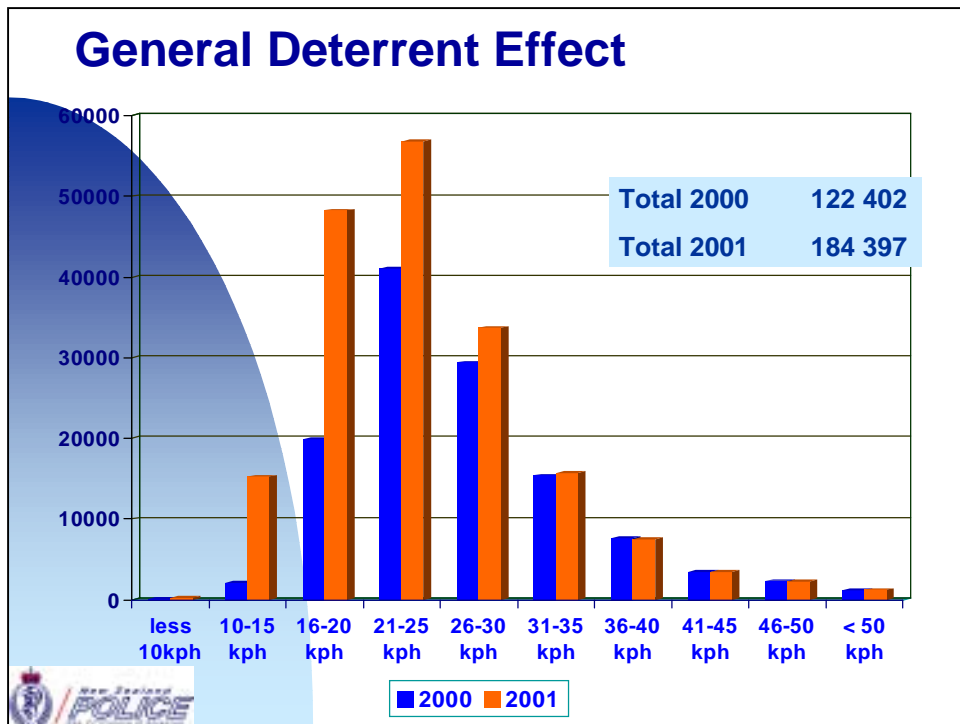


Within six weeks the number of people exceeding the 10km/h limit at camera sites had halved and this has been sustained.

Within a few weeks of the 10km/h tolerance going on speed cameras, we migrated that to all frontline staff to apply in all speed areas.

While it was easy to switch the cameras over to the 10km/h tolerance, it proved more difficult with our staff.

It wasn't that long ago we believed that targeting the serious open road speedster – those doing 120 to 135km/h in a 100km zone – was the answer. It wasn't. World best practice shows that by lowering speed tolerance levels on the open road, the overall mean open road speeds for all drivers will come down. This has happened.

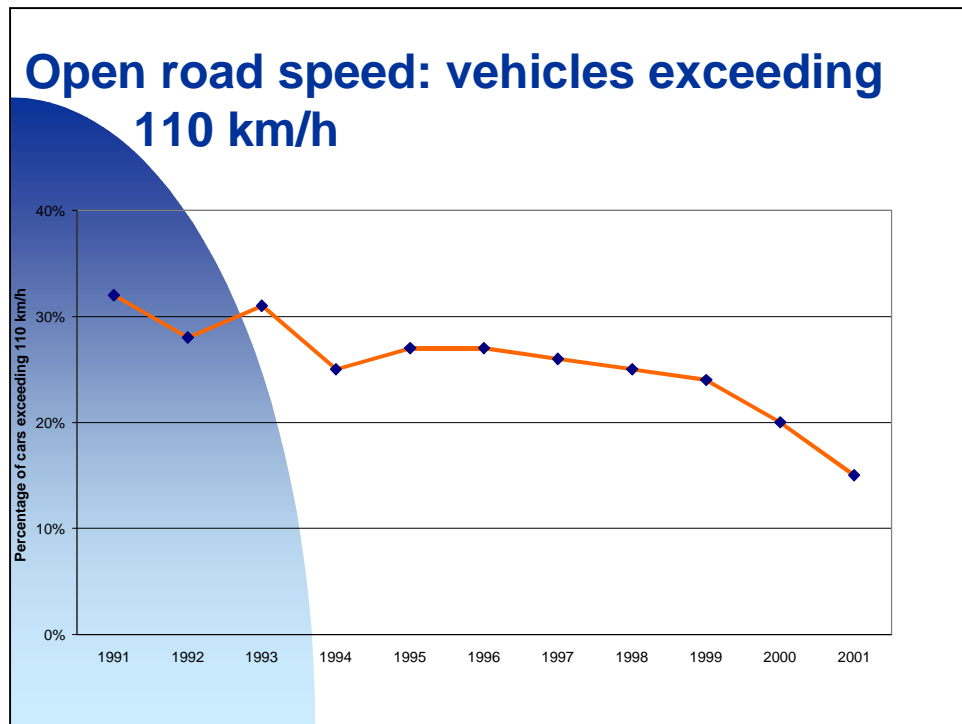


We started to monitor overall organisational performance using the number of infringements issued within certain speed bands.

This slide shows that 12 months down the track, considerable enforcement activity is now directed within 20km of the posted speed limit.

You'll also see that the number and proportion of high speedsters has reduced. This is consistent with general deterrent theory.

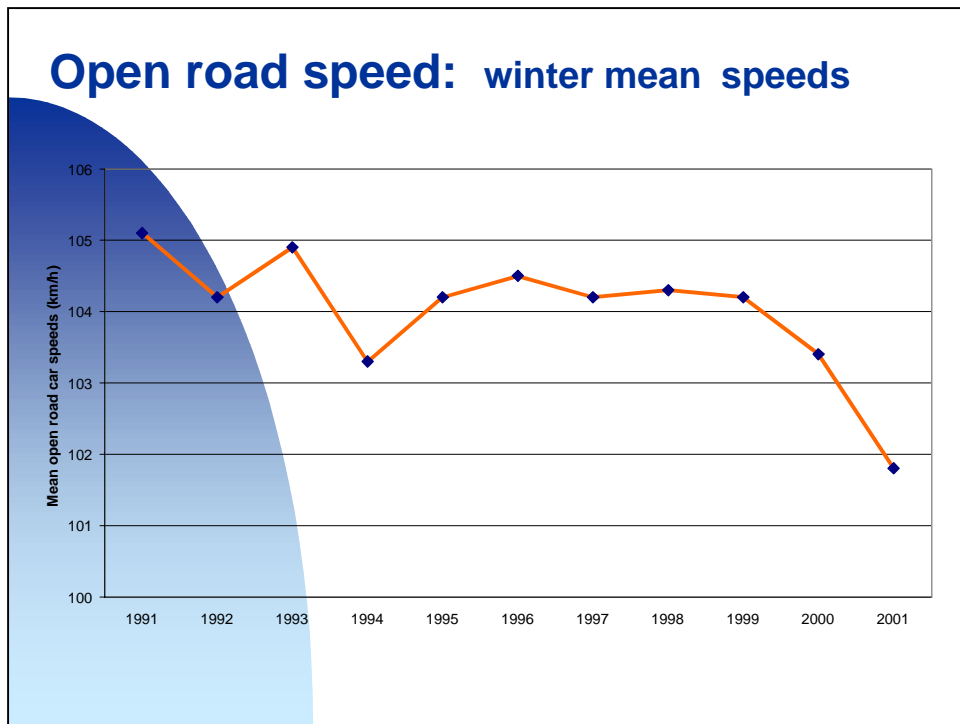
In the past 12 months we've seen a 1.2km/h reduction in mean open road speeds, and we are also seeing a marked drop in road trauma levels.



Two of our police districts are good examples. Northland and Waikato have been our traditional killing fields. High speeds combined with a hazardous roading network have resulted in fatalities and injuries above the national average. Northland's results were similar to the Northern Territory.

Since Police in both districts started to enforce the 10km/h tolerance, the number of tickets has risen and compliance levels have markedly improved. There have been fewer crashes and fatalities, and average open road speeds have come down.

Over the past year both districts have seen the average open road speed drop in some areas by up to 4km/h among all speeding drivers. Much of the enforcement work is being done by the Highway Patrol.



These results really underline the link between enforcement activities and speed. We told the public we were putting them on notice, and we're out there doing it.

What's more, we're constantly reminding them of their responsibilities and, except for a very small vocal minority, people are very supportive. The Highway Patrol programme has generated unprecedented public approval.

People no longer complain that we're never out on the roads. We're now perceived to be a visible, credible, professional road safety enforcement agency, although we've still got a lot to learn.

And look at the results. The drop in mean open road speeds has had an impact on the road toll. There have been 153 deaths in the past five months – the lowest since records began. We've also had the single lowest month's total, ever, of 23.

Strategic Advertising and Enforcement Review

Road safety is distinctly different from most other Police business, as it is subject to scientific scrutiny and evaluation.

Again this year, we sought an independent evaluation of how we could deliver best practice enforcement programmes in our police districts. We also wanted some advice on where we'd get most return for the LTSA's advertising spend to support our alcohol, speed and safety belt programmes.

This is the sort of ad we've been running, aimed at a specific target audience:

[Video Clip – Good Afterball Consternoon]

Once again, we called on the expertise of Peter Vulcan and Harry Hayes – two Victorian gems, with their blend of academic circumspection and robust operational advice.

Police and LTSA are now working through their findings and building a work programme that incorporates many of their recommendations.

Critical Success Factors

And so ladies and gentlemen, we've arrived at November 2001.

Road safety performance has shown continuous improvement over the past decade, and we have a lot of "go forward" as they say in sporting circles. We probably won't reach this year's target of 420, but we won't be far off it.

Critical Success Factors

- **Ambitious vision and targets.**
- **Funding model and policy mix -**
 - ◆ investment into specific, measurable areas;
 - ◆ tools, resources, legal powers;
 - ◆ performance monitoring of outputs/outcomes;
 - ◆ intensive social marketing.
- **National policing agency.**
- **Strong partnerships.**

So what have been the critical success factors?

First up, we created ambitious vision and targets.

And then we got the funding model and the policy mix pretty much right.

We've found that to get some momentum happening, we've needed investment into very specific, measurable areas. And we've been given the tools to do the job in the form of speed cameras, CBT resources, Highway Patrol and tougher legal powers.

It's closely linked with robust performance monitoring of safety outputs and outcomes. Nothing we do escapes measurement and scrutiny, and nor should it.

Intensive social marketing targeted at supporting the key safety initiatives surrounding alcohol, speed and safety belts backs this up.

Our funding model reflects the community's desire for road safety. That desire was most graphically demonstrated through the National Crime and Victimization Survey, where people's main concern was the fear of being killed or injured on the road.

That message, combined with the compelling 'willingness to pay' model developed by the LTSA, translate into a strong mandate for the Government to invest heavily in road safety.

It's also helped that we have a national policing agency. This ensures consistency of approach and synergies across our business and the transport sector.

We've reached this point through hard work and combined effort. We have a very strong and professional partnership with the LTSA, and together we develop measurable targets based on good science.

Where To From Here?

Our results show we are on a roll that's likely to continue for the next 18 months to two years. Then if the Australian experience is an indicator, I expect we will reach that plateau I mentioned earlier.

Once we've reached that point, our challenge is to develop strategies to keep the road toll coming down.

This leads me to the final part of my address, and hopefully a few suggested answers to the question: "well, how do we regain momentum?"

Broadly speaking Australia and New Zealand are in similar positions. We've both got reasonable levels of investment in road safety – although we would say we could always use more money. And strategic policing using a range of tools is bringing results.

It goes without saying that we must maintain and, in some cases, increase this level of investment and activity.

However I contend that these strategies may be reaching the limit of their potential to deliver fewer road deaths.

I know this might seem like an odd thing for a Police Commissioner to say, but I believe enforcement can take us only so far. We're entering the territory of diminishing returns if we try and squeeze yet more gains out of driver behaviour.

I think this is the reason for the plateau we've talked about.

So where do we look for new gains? What do we invest in next? And what are our tools?

2010 Road Safety Strategy

The National Road Safety Committee developed a package of strategic options within a proposed "Road Safety Strategy 2010".

This document is going through a consultation process with Government.

Based on an analysis of what we can achieve, the aim is to bring New Zealand's road safety performance up to the same level as the safest countries in the world in 1999/2000. That means our vision is to bring our annual fatalities down to just 295 deaths in 2010.

The three options put forward will require a large financial investment.

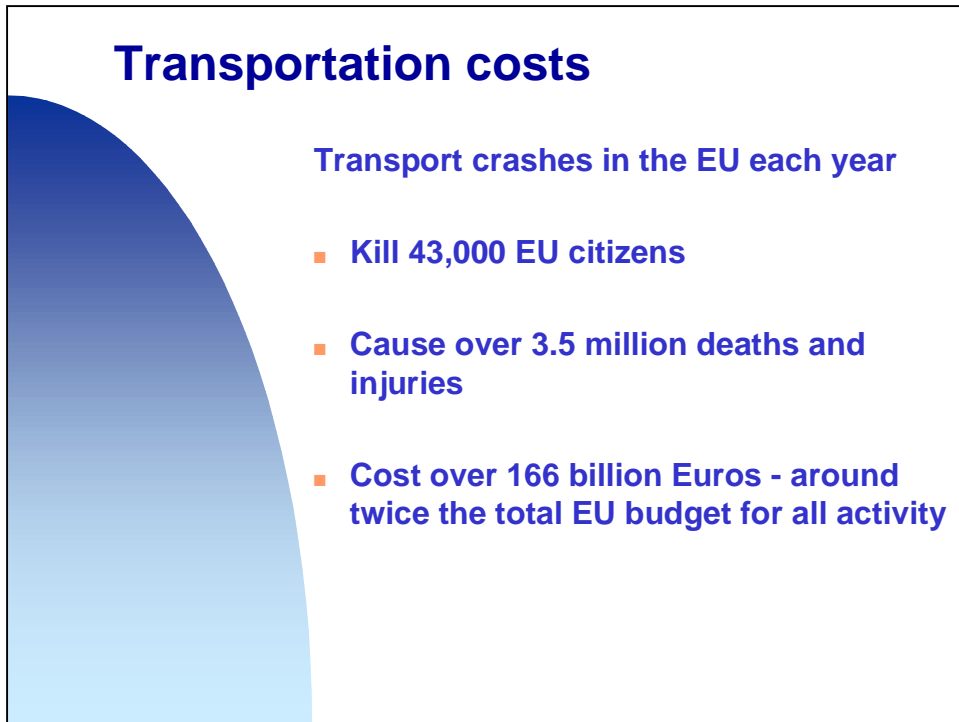
Europe Findings

I found some other possible answers to the momentum question during my recent trip to Europe.

One of the purposes of the trip was to look at best practice initiatives in road safety. LTSA Chief Executive David Wright, who is in the audience this morning, came with me.

We went to Brussels, Amsterdam, Sweden, Germany and the UK.

We visited a leading vehicle manufacturer, government officials, road safety commentators and experts, policy advisers, lobbyists, and police agencies.



You can see from this slide that crashes in the EU do an incredible amount of damage.

So what are they doing about it?

It quickly became obvious that the road network is becoming the focus of road safety policy and new safety strategies for the longer term.

From an 'ethical' perspective, the Europeans are asking questions about the social acceptability of the road network's inherent 'violence'. They're also looking at road agency goals and accountability for eliminating this.

They're increasingly factoring social responsibility into their decision-making, and road safety is a part of this. They're working to make dirty water and dirty air unacceptable, and they're also opening up the public debate on "dirty roads". Playing on people's emotions to make road safety a priority is increasingly common.

In Sweden, Vision Zero seeks to reach a point where eventually no-one will be killed or seriously injured within the road transport system. Its starting point is that road deaths are unacceptable.

Ethical rules have been proposed to guide the road designers. Two of these are:

- "Life and health can never be exchanged for other benefits within the society,"; and
- "Whenever someone is killed or seriously injured, necessary steps must be taken to avoid a similar event."

Vision Zero limits speed to a level that's linked with the safety of the road.

It states: “The speed limits within the road transport system should be determined by the technical standards of vehicles and roads so as not to exceed the level of violence that the human body can tolerate. The safer the roads and vehicles, the higher the speed that can be accepted.”

Quite a mind-shift for us!

From an environmental perspective, the Europeans are looking at how the road network can be designed and managed to make it intrinsically safe for everyone. The Netherlands, with its Sustainable Safety policy, is a leading light.

They’re working to change the perceived wisdom that people die on the roads because they make mistakes. The Europeans are saying: “It’s not about blame. If you wait long enough, everyone will make a mistake.”

They’re now looking at it from the point of view that accidents are going to happen. They’re saying: “Don’t blame the driver. Let’s design roads that minimise crash impact”.

Some of the roading solutions they’ve come up with are low tech, relatively cheap, simple and elegant. Signage, road furniture and low cost median barriers are some of the solutions.

They’re not too bothered about weeping tar or potholes, either. In fact in some places, they’re inclined to leave those surface imperfections just as they are, because people slow down.

From an ‘exposure’ perspective, they’re asking questions about the different risks faced by drivers, passengers, cyclists and pedestrians, and the influence this has on how they choose to get around. The UK Integrated Transport Policy is an example of this.

Future for Australia and New Zealand

So what can we take from the European experience?

The challenge for us is to change our mindset – or to put it into policy-speak – indulge in a bit of ‘strategic reorientation’.

Our starting point should also become the safety of the road network. This needs to be defined in terms of its safety limits or thresholds. We need to make it clear, in safety terms, what it has been designed to achieve. Identifying how this safe design will be sustained and improved, and specifying related performance targets, is part of the deal.

After that comes vehicle safety. Again this needs to be defined in terms of the designed safety limits or thresholds. Ways of sustaining and improving this, and setting related performance targets, must become the norm.

Finally comes the focus on the behaviour of road users themselves. Defining safe behaviour, identifying how to sustain and improve it, and specifying performance targets is the key to making a difference.

I think this is where our new gains will come from. You can see from the proposals in our 2010 Road Safety Strategy that we've already begun the debate on the need to design safer roads.

Our next task is to focus on the leadership role Police can play in promoting and widening the greater road safety debate.

"Mana" is a Maori word we use a lot in New Zealand. It means "reputation, esteem and respect"; and police agencies for the most part have it in spades despite our use of coercive powers. We are looked up to as the guardians of the roads.

We need to leverage off our strategic enforcement capability and expertise among the leaders in emerging road safety.

We need to work even more closely with roading authorities and vehicle manufacturers to design more safety into roads and vehicles.

I have about four years left in my term as Commissioner. In that time, I'm planning to put increasing emphasis on New Zealand Police's relationship with local authorities and engineers.

Together we'll accelerate the momentum of road safety.

We'll continue to tell it like it is to the public, including dire consequences for human bodies of crashes at even moderate speeds.

[Video Clip – Swedish crash test dummies]

And they need to know that if the speed limit is set at X kms/h, we can expect Y number of people to die.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, the messages I'm leaving you with this morning are pretty simple.

