



FIVE APPROACHES: TRANSFORMING TRANSPORT

An address given to the South Africa Parliament's

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

Good day honourable chairman, honourable members of the committee, and observers. My name is Rob Handfield – Jones and I am the Automobile Association of South Africa's Head of Public Affairs. Firstly, allow me to express, on behalf of the AA and motorists and road users of South Africa, my gratitude to the committee for giving the AA time to present what I hope you will find an enlightening overview of the state of motoring and road safety in South Africa.

1.1 ABOUT THE AA AND THIS PRESENTATION

The Automobile Association was formed in the 1930s and currently serves over a quarter of a million personal members, and nearly a million more motorists through our corporate membership schemes. The AA's contribution to motoring by way of research, advocacy and lobbying in South Africa is as long as its history, and today's presentation represents the current state of the AA's thinking on motoring matters. It reflects the issues which members tell us are of the most importance to them, namely their physical and financial well-being as motorists. I will discuss five main areas, each followed by a recommendation. These are the basis of our 'Five Approaches' strategy, which we consider as being the minimum starting point for the rectification of road safety in South Africa.

1.2 THE PROBLEM OF STANDARDS

May I begin, honourable members, by enquiring quickly of some of you, who taught you to drive? (*Brief interactive discussion.*) If you are feeling any embarrassment at your revelation, console yourself with the knowledge that I taught myself to drive! We have here today a roomful of people who are different and varied, and whose initial training in driving a motor-vehicle was, as you have now discovered, equally varied.

This is a source of grave concern for the AA. Those of us who are passionate about motoring – and I speak as an ex-motoring journalist and editor – would strongly oppose the reduction of an object of such beauty, power and comfort as a modern motor-car to the status of a mere machine.

But that's what it is. When the emotion is removed from motoring, any vehicle is just a collection of parts, painstakingly designed by engineers to do a certain job.

Of course, every machine has a purpose, and every machine must be operated in a certain way to obtain the best results at the lowest cost and with the least danger. Thus we find a warning label on a DVD player telling us that laser radiation can harm our sight. The booklet that comes with a computer mouse warns us of the dangers of repetitive strain injuries.

And the instructions for a microwave oven educate us on preventing accidental exposure to microwave radiation.

1.3 THE PROBLEM OF FAMILIARITY

The problem with vehicles is that we have, through their familiarity and emotional appeal, forgotten that they are merely machines. The warning label on the dangers of driving which ought to accompany every vehicle would run to many thousands of pages and add considerably to the vehicle's price. Thus, society has bypassed many of the minimum safety standards to which these machines called vehicles ought to be operated.

This bypassing of standards shows up at every level. Indeed, by my initial enquiry into how you learned to drive, I sought not to embarrass you, but to illustrate how terrifyingly deficient our current road safety framework allows us to be in acquiring the skills we need to use the most dangerous machines most of us will ever come into contact with.

1.4 THE PROBLEM OF SKILLS

It is possible to attend a course separate from the licensing system to acquire greater skill in everyday driving. Some people call them 'advanced driving' courses. This is a misnomer.

There is nothing advanced about learning the basic operating principles of a machine which is otherwise highly likely to cause your death.

Only when everyone can answer the question "who taught you to drive" by responding "a qualified driving instructor", can we be confident that South Africa has at least laid the groundwork for road safety into the future.

The policy deficiencies which have led to the current collapse of road safety have also cost the country massive sums, the Department of Transport's own estimate being around R43bn per annum. My remarks today will thus focus largely on the problem of road safety, although the AA is active in many other spheres of motoring.

2. FIVE APPROACHES

2.1 MEASURING ROAD SAFETY

It was the reknowned scientist Lord Kelvin who said:

"Once you can measure something and express it in numbers, you know something about it." These words were uttered more than a century ago, yet our government has spent vast sums on road safety campaigns without first securing the ability to adequately measure the results.

The AA is concerned that it has been ten years since full, unequivocal statistics were released by the South African government which told us not only how many fatalities there had been – currently more than 40 per day - but which also allowed one to determine how likely a certain type of collision was to result in a fatality – and thus determine the risk posed by certain collision types and the traffic offences that cause them.

Since 1999, only details of fatal accidents have been made available and in some cases there are different figures for the same item. For instance, in the Department's interim report on road safety in 2006, the fatalities per 100m vehicle km figure is given as both 12.02 and 11.75 for the year 2006, and as both 11.26 and 10.97 for 2005. One must ask, which is it? How has such a critical measure of road safety been allowed to be mis-stated twice in an official report? This further calls into question the accuracy of our statistics.

Indeed, the measure in question, fatalities per 100m vehicle km, is a key method of comparing the safety of various countries' roads.

Fatalities per 100m vehicle km is an expression of overall risk of death during road use. It tells one how many fatalities occur for every 100 million km travelled by vehicles. Or, put another way, it tells you how far all the vehicles combined in a country would have to travel before a fatality resulted.

I wish to now express that risk for you, by comparing the safety of South African roads to those of the safest country in the world in which to be a road user, the United States of America.

In South Africa you are about 13 and a half times more likely to be killed in a traffic crash. In the USA, 110 million kilometres is travelled between each fatality. In South Africa, the figure is just 8.46 million kilometres.

Worse, from an all-time low of 6.9 fatalities per 100m vehicle km, attained in 1998, the figure shot up to 12.02 in the short eight years to 2006.

Your risk of dying on our roads has virtually doubled since the start of the Arrive Alive campaign.

Indeed, South African road users are now at the same risk of being killed as they were in 1986.

The Automobile Association believes that the citizens of South Africa deserve better from the Department of Transport than the wanton squandering of hundreds of millions of Rands, which has achieved nothing more than to take road safety back to the era of PW Botha.

I thus submit the AA's first recommendation, in two parts:

- 2.1.1 **That government urgently sets a target of 10% reduction in South Africa's fatalities / 100m vehicle km figure per annum, and creates a performance-based remuneration system under which the bonuses of our key transport officials, and senior managers in the nDOT and RTMC are linked to the achievement of these targets.**
- 2.1.2 **No performance bonus should be awarded unless Statistics South Africa is able to produce credible road safety figures.**

2.2 VEHICLE STANDARDS

The purpose of leaders is to lead. And when it comes to motoring in South Africa, leadership has historically not come from the Department of Transport.

During my time as a motoring journalist, there were few motor companies in South Africa with which I did not cross swords over various issues at one stage or another. But in the defence of the motor companies, allow me to present a brief list of ways in which they have, without outside prompting, and sometimes even against the wishes of their own consumers, promoted road safety through items such as:

Manufacturer-backed driving skills courses;
Airbags;
ABS brakes;
Electronic Stability Control systems;
and modern suspension and steering systems;

There are many other such examples. But not one of these items is mandated in the body of South African traffic law. Legislators should be working hand-in-glove with vehicle researchers to encourage life-saving and more efficient technologies, as was the case in Europe recently when the European Union modified its laws to allow Audi to introduce new LED headlights on the Audi R8. I would be pleased if I could tell the committee that the Department of Transport is at least playing catch-up in this regard, but this is not the case.

For instance, South Africa has a crash test standard so pitiful in its inadequacy that almost any vehicle can pass it. The collision to which the vehicle is subjected is unrepresentative of real-world collisions, and is conducted at just 50km/h.

The vehicle is not required to be fitted with an instrumented crash test dummy to establish what forces occupants experience in a collision. Indeed, the only standard of any significance is that the steering wheel may not move more than 127mm towards the driver.

Is it moral or ethical for a country like South Africa, with one of the highest road death rates in the world, to fail to demand higher standards of occupant protection for our vehicles? And is it acceptable to allow our roads to be flooded with models having little, if any, occupant protection? Is our country forever going to live in the shadow of developed nations in this regard? We have the technology and skills to set world standards in transport, rather than follow them. But what we lack is the leadership.

The AA is deeply concerned about this issue, particularly with the upcoming 2010 Soccer World Cup which will see overseas tourists transported *en masse* on our deadly road network, in vehicles homologated to standards far below those to which visitors from Europe, Japan or the USA are accustomed.

Passenger buses and minibus taxis have an annual crash rate of over 30%. Put another way, this means that one in three of these vehicles crashes every year! The taxi recapitalisation programme has addressed the passive safety considerations of minibus taxis to an extent, but there remains little-to-no legislation which protects bus passengers.

Barely a week goes by without another horrific bus crash in which dozens are killed or injured. If our citizens are to be mobile, they must be safely mobile, not sent to their doom in vehicles which are not fitted with seatbelts and not equipped with adequate rollover protection, as is the case of buses. The AA is firmly of the opinion that, with the fatalities / 100m km figure for buses having spiked by nearly one-third in a single year - from 27.36 in 2005 to 35.55 in 2006 - bus passenger safety is now a catastrophe. It is known that certain vehicle types are susceptible to rollover, and these are generally fitted with protection.

For instance, most construction machines are fitted with a Roll-Over Protective Structure to protect the operator.

Every racing car in South Africa is required by motorsport regulations to be fitted with a safety roll cage or roll bar to protect the occupants.

It is worth noting that Australia has had a standard for rollover protection of buses by means of an integrated roll cage since 1992, known as ADR 59.

An Australian research team investigating ways to improve bus rollover protection said that "...rollovers represent one of the most dangerous types of crashes with respect to fatalities or incapacitating injuries per occupant involved. Rollovers are second only to frontal collisions in their level of injury severity."

The number of bus crashes in which the vehicle rolls over, leads the AA to be of the firm opinion that buses in South Africa should be classified as 'susceptible to rollover' and thus also fitted, at the operator's cost, with a protective cage, constructed and padded to at least the Australian ADR 59 standard, to improve survivability in these kinds of accidents.

Therefore, the AA's second recommendation, in three parts, is:

- 2.2.1 That government must urgently upgrade the minimum standards with which a vehicle must comply to be legally homologated in South Africa. These must include minimum active and passive safety features far in excess of those currently required.
- 2.2.2 Government must furthermore form a working group to shorten the time between beneficial technology appearing and such technology being made mandatory fitment in vehicles under law.
- 2.2.3 Urgent interventions must be made to secure the safety of bus passengers, including seatbelts in every seating position, and improved rollover protection.

2.3 LEARNING TO DRIVE

Honourable members, I opened my remarks by discussing the deeply unacceptable standards of *ab initio* training in driving skills in South Africa, and I now return to that subject. Licensing in South Africa is extensively flawed.

Beginning with the licence test itself, the syllabus of K53 is based on the Hendon System. This system was designed around 1930, in a country 12 000km away which experiences regular rain and poor visibility, and the system was designed for vehicles which often had brakes only on the rear wheels.

It is a regimented and inflexible system which bears the hallmarks of the militaristic social consciousness prevalent in that period between two wars which came close to tearing Europe apart. And, in fairness, one can understand the sense of such a system under those conditions. It was

revolutionary at the time, in terms of approach and effectiveness. But honourable members, that was 78 years ago.

South Africans, with modern ways of thinking, driving modern cars on modern roads with some of the best weather in the world, learn to drive using techniques and attitudes dating from when the grandparents of today's 18 year-olds were themselves still toddlers. This does not seem like the best solution. According to SAIDI (the Southern African Institute of Driving Instructors), many driving licence applicants are opting to do a C1 licence (the old Code 10) instead of a B licence (the old code 08), because the C1 licence test is less demanding in terms of parking and other manoeuvres. The AA believes a standardised test should be applied.

The situation is aggravated by the unacceptably low standards required of learner driver instructors. The test for a driving instructor's permit is little more demanding than passing the driving test itself. Indeed, an 18 year-old can pass the driving test one day, and the instructor's permit the next.

Compare this to the United Kingdom, where an Approved Driving Instructor must have held a full driving licence for at least four years before being able to apply to become an instructor. Not to mention the strict test which must be passed before one can qualify as an instructor in the UK.

The lack of acceptable standards for driving instructors and the general inflexibility of the K53 system are further compromised by the nature of the testing process.

The Gauteng Provincial Government, for example, replaced the perfectly adequate and effective system of walk-in bookings for learners' and drivers' licences at testing centres, with a telephonic call centre which has considerably increased the time taken to obtain a booking for a licence test.

When I was a motoring editor, not a week would go by without a frustrated parent or learner driver sending me a letter, e-mail or fax in sheer desperation at this system. The Gauteng problem appears to be one of poor planning and implementing an inappropriate system, but in the Western Cape, where walk-in bookings are used, the backlog is caused by insufficient capacity to meet demand. According to SAIDI, licence booking dates are being made for 2009 already! These widespread deficiencies mean the country is failing to meet the legitimate expectations of a population that wishes to become mobile, and the fault rests squarely with the Department of Transport's failure to provide leadership and impetus to the licensing system.

One need only look at the fatality rates for young drivers to see how urgent the matter of licensing has become. The AA has long believed that, upon a new driver passing the test, a provisional licence should be issued, which only becomes a full licence after a certain number of years have passed without the driver being found guilty of any traffic violations. The AA supports SAIDI's recent call for this system to be implemented without delay, in order to increase safety and reduce fatality rates among young drivers.

In another vein, the AA wishes to express its deepest dissatisfaction at the Department of Transport's manner of implementation of e-NATIS. The R30 e-NATIS 'transaction fee', in particular, is of concern to the AA. Honourable members, based on nine million vehicles currently on our roads, this means that the Department of Transport has procured, as a minimum, a windfall of R270 million per annum on vehicle licensing fees alone. If one assumes that a system such as e-NATIS would need to be substantially upgraded every four years, the question the AA wishes to pose is this: is it conceivable that a computer system providing the kind of transactional and database capability of e-NATIS can possibly cost more than R1 billion to run, and upgrade every four years?

Or could this be a case of yet another indirect tax being foisted on that most productive and vulnerable of cash cows, the motorist? Honourable members, the AA believes this is a case of milking motorists too far. Unless there are aspects relating to the capabilities and effectiveness of e-Natis of which we are not aware, and which can justify such fees, the AA strongly opposes the e-NATIS transaction fee, which is neither in the spirit nor the interests of good governance.

The Minister of Transport stated in Parliament in 2003 that half of all driving licences issued since 1998 were acquired in an irregular manner.

In plain English, honourable members, that probably means that one in two drivers coming towards you on the roads has a licence that is bought, forged or illegal. Furthermore, no-one knows how many are driving without any licence at all.

The AA is of the firm opinion that a considerable proportion of the increase in road risk seen since 1998 is as a result of the Department of Transport's failure to keep control of licensing.

For drivers who operate a vehicle for hire or reward, the picture is no less dire. These drivers cannot legally go about their business and earn their living without a Professional Driving Permit. The AA fully supports the concept of professionalising the driving industry. However, the PrDP, as it is known, is not the mark of a professional, but a bureaucratic formality with no real-world value at all.

The period of validity of a PrDP is only two years, as opposed to the driver's licence which is valid for five years. It takes approximately three months to obtain a PrDP, meaning that one has to go through the entire process at least twice every five years – and then renew one's licence, which means re-applying for the PrDP again, since the PrDP is on the reverse side of the driver's licence card instead of being a separate document.

This absurd system requires applicants to take at least one full day off work, more realistically two. The testing station must be visited three times, with an additional visit to a medical practitioner and a police station. The direct costs are around R500, excluding travel costs. These costs are unsustainable for, say, a delivery driver on a low wage.

The process itself is cumbersome – it takes up to six weeks alone for the fingerprints to be processed.

But the AA's biggest objection is that, apart from the Hazardous Materials test which one now has to pass to obtain that category of permit, the PrDP does not establish or require competence or professionalism in driving.

One would expect a professional driver to exhibit a far higher standard than the average motorist, but the permit does not include a practical driving test, and there is no examination of subjects which might be appropriate for a professional driver, like customer relations and financial control, in the case of a bus or taxi driver. Honourable members, most people consider motorsport to be extremely dangerous. The opposite is true: the poor regulation of the PrDP plays a considerable role in the fact that more people die on public roads in eight hours than have been killed in local motorsport since 1995.

Our third recommendation, in four parts, is thus that:

- 2.3.1 **Government must urgently revise the content of the licence test, and return to the previous standard laid down for the driving instructor's permit. A provisional licence system must be introduced and the bookings process must be streamlined.**
- 2.3.2 **Government must immediately rescind the R30 e-NATIS transaction fee.**
- 2.3.3 **Government must synchronise the renewal periods of the driving licence card and Professional Driving Permit and extend the latter's validity period to five years.**
- 2.3.4 **For Professional Driving Permits, government must streamline the application process and implement a competence test, which should include a practical test of driving skill and minimum training requirements, to ensure that the Permit is more than merely a bureaucratic formality.**

2.4 SIGNS, SIGNALS AND VEHICLE CRIME

By now, honourable members, it should be apparent that the quality of drivers using South Africa's roads is far below the standard required to give meaningful improvements in safety.

Road signage, signalling and marking, and the design of road networks to take account of the manner in which drivers interact with the road, are other key areas which can either contribute to traffic collisions, or prevent them.

I wish to draw to the committee's attention to the numerous deficiencies which exist in this regard in South Africa. These have the effect of further increasing the risk of collision, death and financial hardship among road users, and go hand-in-hand with the issue of hijacking.

The first of these is the reliance on stop streets for traffic control. Stop streets are known to disrupt traffic flow and increase fuel consumption.

Those of you who have driven overseas, for example, in Germany, will know that it is possible to drive for great distances without seeing a stop sign. Most extra-urban junctions are controlled by yield signs and markings, but many rural intersections in Germany have neither, and all decisions concerning safe passage are left to the motorist.

This transfer of responsibility from the authorities to the driver means that no collision can be conveniently blamed on poor road markings or inadequate signage. The only reason for a collision, save for mechanical failure at an inopportune time, is failure of the driver to exercise due care and judgement when negotiating an intersection.

The AA takes the view that we should encourage this philosophy in South Africa. Law enforcement in this country has generally been just that: enforcement. Insufficient attention has been given to coaxing road users into compliance by sharing with them the responsibility of traffic management. The AA is further of the opinion that the success of traffic calming measures which include mini-circles and yield signs requiring extreme care and good judgement, show that, despite the inadequate licensing standards, South African drivers are not incapable of exercising caution and common sense if conditions demand they do so. The United Kingdom's Traffic Research Laboratory has also found that traffic circles reduce the incidence of dangerous high-impact collisions like side impacts.

In a similar vein, I refer the committee to research commissioned by the AA as long ago as 1994 into the concept of Left Turn On Red After Stop at traffic lights. This research showed that there was no increase in collisions in the areas in South Africa in which it was implemented and that it furthermore led to improvements in both fuel consumption and traffic flow. The AA presents these facts to further support its view that drivers should be encouraged to share the responsibility of safety.

A related topic concerns South Africa's crime figures. The gains which have been made of late are not sufficient for a reasonable observer to conclude that crime is a problem which has ceased to be of concern.

The Automobile Association is a motoring club, not a policing forum, and is thus not equipped to undertake detailed analysis of crime, but we remind the committee of our Car Crime Campaign, which was carried out in 1995 and included a survey of AA members on aspects of vehicle security and crime. The survey revealed that our members were extremely concerned about car crime. In the intervening 13 years since the publication of that study, car crime has gone from being a concern to a crisis. Motor-manufacturers, in an effort to cut down on car theft, have increasingly fitted cars with sophisticated immobilisers and alarms which are near-impossible to bypass. The AA recognised the danger that this could lead to the hijacking of vehicles as opposed to theft, and recommended in 1995 that alarms and immobilisers be done away with to protect drivers and their passengers from this category of crime. Unfortunately, this call went un-heeded and the explosion of vehicle hijacking as an easier alternative to attempting to by-pass sophisticated modern car security systems is a matter of record.

The AA stands by its original position on alarms and immobilisers. If vehicle theft cannot be eliminated in our country by policing and increased respect for the rule of law, then let it at least happen in a way which does not endanger lives and traumatise motorists and their families in the way that hijackings do.

It is well-established that most hijackings happen when the vehicle is at its most vulnerable, that is, when stopped, which provides an additional compelling reason to eliminate stop streets where possible. In the past, certain municipalities have experimented with switching traffic lights to flashing amber after a certain hour at night. This, in many cases, precluded the need for motorists to stop at these intersections, and allowed them to proceed as they would at a four-way yield. This successful policy was phased out after some areas switched to the concept of Metropolitan Policing which amalgamated numerous traffic departments.

The Automobile Association thus makes its fourth recommendation in this regard, in four parts:

- 2.4.1 That the Department of Transport undertakes to phase out stop streets by the year 2012, and replace them with traffic circles and yield signs, save at intersections for which this solution is not appropriate by virtue of road, environment, visibility and traffic factors.
- 2.4.2 That the country-wide implementation of Left Turn On Red After Stop be given effect at all suitable traffic-light controlled intersections at which it is not already used.
- 2.4.3 That Parliament consider legislation relating to the fitment of vehicle alarms and immobilisers.
- 2.4.4 That all traffic lights be set to flashing amber between ten o'clock at night (22h00) and five o'clock in the morning. (05h00)

2.5 ENFORCEMENT

The focus of road safety strategy in the last ten years bears a striking correlation to the number of notices issued for numerous categories of traffic offences in 1997, in which speeding takes pride of place, accounting for nearly two-thirds of notices issued. The Arrive Alive campaign was launched in the late 1990s with the message "Don't fool yourself, Speed Kills" and a heavy emphasis on speed prosecution. It is fair to say that the intervening years have seen the most concentrated blitz of speed prosecution that this country has ever experienced.

What has been the outcome of this strategy? Road deaths have skyrocketed, from 9468 in 1998 to 15393 in 2006, although unofficial estimates state that the toll might have been as high as 25 000. And one's risk of death on the roads has also virtually doubled.

Research into the 1998 statistics, (the last reliable and complete ones available), reveals that if one ignores collision types which caused fewer than 200 deaths per annum, a mere four collision types cause over 85% of all road deaths.

These collisions, in order of severity, are:

Pedestrian Collisions,

Head-On Collisions,

Rollover Collisions

and Following Distance Collisions, normally known as bumper bashings.

The driving techniques needed to counter these collision types are well-known and have been incorporated with great success in the Automobile Association's own defensive driving course, known as the Anti-Collision Course.

Collision reductions after training in excess of 50% have been noted by the presenters of this course and also by many other driving skills specialists presenting courses teaching similar techniques. Failure to apply these driving techniques invariably results in the commission of a traffic offence which any well-trained traffic official would be able to recognise.

However, since speed prosecution has been the dominant and most effortlessly lucrative pattern of enforcement, these other offences, all of them moving violations, have not been pursued with anything near the requisite level of doggedness.

Drinking and driving accounts for less than 10% of all notices issued, yet a Western Cape study some years ago revealed that just over 50% of drivers killed in crashes were under the influence of alcohol. Worrying as this may be, the AA is also concerned by the hidden significance of this finding, which is this: if half of all driver fatalities were drunk, the other half were sober! If a road safety strategy is to meet with success, it must be primarily motivated by preventing stone-cold sober drivers from crashing while in full command of their faculties.

A combination of revenue-motivated speed trapping and official disinterest in pursuing moving violations has seen drivers run riot, committing serious traffic offences which escape attention and cause untold deaths.

Through either indifference, inadequacy or incompetence, the Department of Transport has stood by as South African road users are killed and maimed at rates last seen 22 years ago, all the while allowing traffic authorities to mis-represent laser-guided money-making as enforcement.

Thus, honourable members, I present the Automobile Association's fifth recommendation, in three parts:

- 2.5.1 That government must immediately suspend all speed trapping operations in the Republic and divert the enforcement resources thus freed up to the policing of moving violations which are known to cause high-risk collisions in order to dramatically reduce road deaths. Critical offences include the failure by drivers to execute manoeuvres safely, inadequate following distances, disregard for barrier lines and safe overtaking procedures, and disregard for safety at intersections, including failure to stop at red traffic lights.
- 2.5.2 Government must formulate new policy to ensure that speed trapping is re-introduced only in locations where excessive speed presents grave danger, such as at areas of high pedestrian activity or vulnerability. The AA recommends the introduction of a new offence called "Driving at an inappropriate speed for conditions", which would allow prosecution of drivers, based on video evidence, where a traffic officer observed them travelling too fast or too slowly relative to the environment and traffic pattern.
- 2.5.3 It must become standard policy to fit, to as many patrol cars as is possible, a video surveillance and recording system, approved for evidentiary use, which allows traffic officers to record the commission of an offence on video as an aid to successful prosecution of moving violations.

3. CONCLUSION

I am hopeful that my remarks and the Five Approaches summarised by our recommendations, have impressed upon the committee the solutions which exist whereby which South Africa's road safety problems, and a great deal of financial hardship suffered by motorists, could be set on the road to recovery, given the necessary political will. It is this latter factor which is, above all others, a problem.

The Department of Transport has access to enviable resources. It has the benefit of road safety research conducted locally and internationally, not to mention the considerable financial backing of the fiscus. Any number of private sector experts possess skills which would be of assistance to the Department in solving the problems it faces and have offered this assistance in the past. But despite all this, there appears to exist a studied refusal to implement solutions which seem, to most road safety observers, obvious. The wearing of seatbelts by all traffic officers and SAPS members is a case in point.

It is arguable that the crisis on our roads has been caused, for at least the last three decades, by the appointing of Ministers of Transport on the basis of political stature, rather than proven ability in road safety. This has been a disservice to the citizens whose votes gave them political stature and whose taxes pay their salaries. The time has come for a professional to run road safety in our country.

The Automobile Association thus fully supports, and adopts as its own policy, a resolution taken by the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists' Committee for Active Road Safety, in which an urgent call was made for a dedicated Ministry of Traffic Safety to be formed and headed by someone of known ability in the field of road safety rather than a political appointee. If countries such as Botswana and Uganda could take such a step, it seems inappropriate that South Africa, the economic powerhouse of the continent and a world-standard player in the motor industry, does not follow suit.

History has shown that solutions to motoring problems usually mean finding a balance between a road user's requirements for safety, practicality, convenience and affordability on the one hand, and ease of implementation and minimal financial outlay for the government on the other.

Since the AA represents road users, and particularly motorists, we naturally present solutions in accordance with their desires as I have done today. The Department of Transport understandably wishes to position itself at the opposite end of the spectrum. The AA's opinion is that the Department

users on behalf of whom I today speak are also taxpayers and citizens to whom government owes a duty of responsibility for their wellbeing on our roads. That duty has not been fulfilled for many years now.

The Automobile Association therefore wishes to call upon the honourable members of the Portfolio Committee on Transport to recognise the one-sidedness of the Department of Transport's current approach, especially in the past ten years, and to look into ways in which the Department can be made to implement even-handed commonsense traffic safety policies to reduce the unacceptable levels of cost, injury and death on our roads.

Honourable members, thank-you.