



Minister for Finance

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Mr Richard Prowse
4 Everton Road
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24 MAY 2007

Dear Mr Prowse

Thank you for your letter of 22 March 2007 regarding the tragic fatal crash at Cardross on 18 February 2006.

I appreciate you bringing these concerns to my attention, at a time when the tragic consequences of the crash are no doubt still being worked through by your family, the families and friends of others involved with the tragedy, and the broader Mildura community.

Your letter draws attention to the 'flow on' effects of this tragedy. While the TAC has accepted 28 claims and paid in excess of \$500,000 in benefits, I am aware that there is still work to be done.

The TAC has informed me that during their most recent visit on the 13 March 2007 they expressed concern to you that many who were at the scene have still to contact the TAC for assistance. To address this, the TAC has offered to return to Mildura to further assist those in need and will continue through the local media to call for people who may not currently be receiving assistance to contact the TAC.

In addition, a team has been put together to manage claims relating to the Cardross tragedy to ensure that appropriate communication and support continues. This team is continuing to liaise with families and legal representatives to ensure any entitlements to impairment benefits are resolved in a timely manner. The TAC has offered to arrange for medical examiners to visit Mildura to conduct the appropriate assessments.

In regards to defensive driving courses and their relation to road safety, there currently exists no verifiable evidence that can clearly demonstrate a link between such courses and reductions in road trauma.

The Victorian Government is, however, committed to improving young driver safety and is currently working with the NSW and Federal governments, the RACV and NRMA and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries to develop the Novice Driver Trial.

This trial will involve recently licensed young drivers undertaking a program designed to improve their driving behaviour and increase their awareness of the factors that contribute to high crash rates amongst young drivers. The trial will involve approximately 14,000 young Victorian drivers and take over three years to complete.

The aim of this program is to develop a best-practice training course for post-licence drivers and to then assess whether relative crash numbers have reduced.

It is anticipated that this will provide a much clearer view of what outcomes training of this nature can provide.

For information about the trial, I would encourage you to contact Samantha Cockfield, the TAC Manager Road Safety on 03 9664 6596.

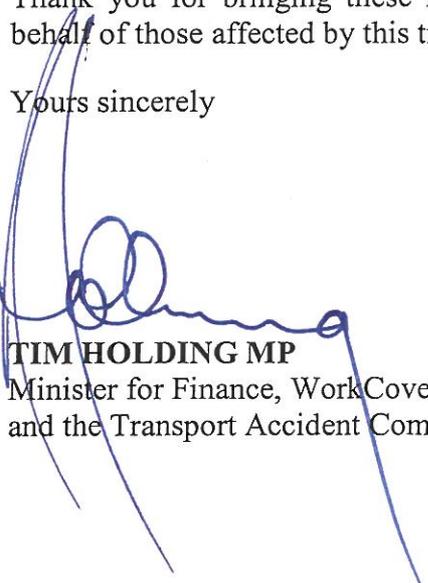
I would also draw your attention to a range of existing programs that can assist young drivers to improve their driving skills/experience and assist in mitigating risk taking.

An example is the Keys Please Program run by VicRoads. This program is a free, 90 minute session for learner drivers and their parents/supervising drivers. The program shows how to get the maximum benefit from the learner period and become a responsible and safe driver. International research has found that learner drivers who gain at least 120 hours practice in all driving conditions reduce their risk of crashing by a third when compared with those who gain around 40 hours of practice.

For information on Keys Please or other available programs, please contact David Lavithis at VicRoads Horsham on 5381 9441.

Thank you for bringing these matters to my attention and for your continuing efforts on behalf of those affected by this tragedy.

Yours sincerely



TIM HOLDING MP
Minister for Finance, WorkCover
and the Transport Accident Commission