



Risky Driving in Regional Victoria 2012/13: Report of Qualitative Longitudinal Research

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Executive summary

The Transport Accident Commission (The TAC) commissioned the Social Research Centre to conduct a program of qualitative research into road safety in regional Victoria. Specifically the research was designed to provide an understanding of attitudes to and perceptions of road safety by drivers in selected rural locations in the shires of Cardinia, Mitchell, and Ballarat/Golden Plains, and how these attitudes and perceptions may change over time. The research was longitudinal, with two waves of focus groups with a cohort of young drivers.

Research aim and objectives

The overall aim of the first stage of the project was to conduct focus groups in three regional locations to explore key road safety issues such as speeding and drink and drug driving with residents from these areas, in order to gain an understanding of the driving behaviours of the participants and those who reside in the local area generally. Additionally, this project aimed to assess awareness and effectiveness of the “Talk the Toll Down” campaign and explore opportunities to improve future campaign activities.

The second phase of the research aimed to explore what changes there had been in people’s knowledge, attitudes and behaviour around driving and to what extent these changes had been influenced by participation in the study.

Research Approach

The research adopted a qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) approach, comprising 12 focus group discussions at Wave 1 (September 2012) and six focus groups at Wave 2 (March 2013). Participants in the second wave of fieldwork were drawn from those who participated in the first wave. The research also included a small quantitative element (self-completion questionnaires) and online bulletin board discussions held between the two waves of focus groups.

Focus group discussions were conducted in three towns: Gembrook (Cardinia Shire), Broadford (Mitchell Shire) and Buninyong (Ballarat/Golden Plains Shire). The reconvened groups were segmented according to sex (with ages merged). A total of 92 people took part in the Wave 1 discussions and 39 participants took part in Wave 2.

Summary of Key Findings from Wave 1

Participants’ preparedness to engage in risky driving behaviour was influenced by a range of factors, including age, gender, life stage, education, misinformation, low levels of personal responsibility, driving skills and a lack of serious consideration or acknowledgement of the potential negative impacts of risky driving (over and above financial penalties and loss of licence).

There was an evident lack of responsibility, or disconnect, between risk-taking behaviour and personal responsibility, with low value placed on their own safety relative to others’ safety.

In general, participants distinguished between 'risky' and 'dangerous' driving. They commonly attributed their risky driving to a 'lack of choice'. They often externalised risks, blaming hazards rather than adjusting their behaviour. Participants normalised aggressive and risky driving as something 'everybody' does.

Participants consistently demonstrated an enhanced self-perception of their own driving ability and skills. They also displayed paradoxical attitudes; they were quick to judge what they perceived as risky driving by others, but later disclosed having engaged in similar driving behaviours.

Respondent Recall of Topics Discussed at Wave 1

Participants were asked to identify the issues that had stayed with them, what they had thought about after attending the groups six months earlier. The most commonly recalled issues were: other respondents' driving, road conditions, speeding and enforcement, drink-driving, Talk the Toll Down and other TAC campaigns, causes of risk-taking behaviour, using mobile phones, and the police presence.

Attitudinal and behavioural changes since Wave 1

The research assessed whether there had been any shifts or changes among participants, and if there had been, whether there was any causal link with participation in the groups. Some participants reported increased thinking about road safety and risky driving since taking part in the research. Many participants stated they felt less safe on the roads since participating in the Wave 1 focus groups, largely due to their observations about how others drive rather than any subsequent self-reflection on their own driving ability. These concerns about feeling unsafe on the roads had led to some adjustment in risky behaviours, including less use of a mobile phone whilst driving, reduced speed whilst driving, and reduced drink-driving.

There was evidence of sustained changes in attitudes or behaviours over time among some participants, mainly females. Male participants were particularly more likely to report that their thinking about these issues had faded over time. Some participants, however, stated that attending the groups had made no difference to how they drove.

Other factors moderating thought and behaviour over time

The research identified other factors which appear to have influenced participants' behaviour over the six month study period that may not be directly attributable to or caused by the experience of participating in the groups. Fear of loss of licence was generally viewed as a greater deterrent than the issuing of fines. Alcohol interlocks had a greater salience by the time of the second wave, and were regarded as expensive to install and service and 'annoying' to use. By Wave 2, participants also reported having a greater awareness of TAC campaigns. Accidents involving themselves or others also appeared to have had an impact on participants since Wave 1. Life stage or lifestyle changes continued to impact on how participants drove and the risks they took.

Feedback from respondents on wave 1 findings

Some qualitative and quantitative findings from Wave 1 were presented back to Wave 2 participants to provide them with feedback and to seek their responses to some of these findings.

A typology of different risky driving behaviours was developed based on data gathered during Wave 1. These behaviours were: unavoidable/reactive behaviour; thoughtless/unintentional behaviour; measured/calculated behaviour; and continuous behaviour. Few participants recognised themselves as taking 'unavoidable' or 'thoughtless' risks (despite many of them providing evidence to the contrary during earlier Wave 1 group discussions). Most participants could relate to the 'measured' risk taking category in terms of their own behaviour. Some participants recognised themselves as 'continuous' risk takers, with a few male drivers reporting they still took these kinds of 'risks'.

Participants were also presented with data from Wave 1 about drink-driving, which indicated that whilst respondents accepted the dangers of drink-driving, many of them also acknowledged that drove whilst being over the BAC limit. Participants generally attributed this apparent to a belief that 'it won't happen to me'. Similarly, participants rationalised inconsistent beliefs and behaviours around speeding by separating their own risk from that of others.

While most participants continued to rate their driving ability relative to other drivers as 'above average', there was a slight downward shift of those who thought that they were a 'much' better driver at Wave 2.

Bulletin board findings

Three online 'bulletin board' discussions were held in the intervening period between Wave 1 and Wave 2. This innovative approach was seen as both exploratory in its purpose and experimental in its design and use for this type of study (qualitative longitudinal social research) and with this type of client group (young 'risky' drivers).

Participants from two of the three areas (Cardinia and Mitchell) were invited to participate in these online discussions while participants in the third area – Ballarat – were not invited to take part to retain a 'quasi-control' element in the research. The rationale behind this approach was to explore whether on-going dialogue, prompts or other forms of engagement in the research would (further) sustain the salience of the issues discussed at Wave 1 around risky driving. Each bulletin board had a theme: speeding, general road safety and the Safe System, and drink and drug driving.

Most bulletin board participants recognised that loss of licence was perhaps the biggest disincentive to speeding and that a greater police presence (as opposed to fixed cameras) was the most effective in reducing speeding. Whilst participants had mixed views on the impact of TAC campaigns on their driving behaviour, they generally considered them effective. Whilst bulletin board participants deemed zero deaths as an acceptable road toll for the future, they also felt that such a target was unrealistic and unachievable. They also had positive attitudes towards enhanced police presence on the roads over the holiday period.

Overview – what changed and why?

This research has focused on attitudes and behaviours towards risky driving, whether they changed over time, and whether such change is influenced by the research discussions. Across all groups, by Wave 2 increased thinking and awareness about road safety and risky driving (and as a result, feeling less safe on the roads) was evident.

Concerns about feeling less safe on the roads because of others' behaviour had led some participants to adjust their own 'risky' driving behaviours such as less use of a mobile phone whilst driving, or less speeding. Furthermore, it was apparent that merely participating in group discussions around their risky behaviour had made participants realise that they (or others similar to them) were taking risks that were perhaps unnecessary.

Some participants who reported that their attitudes and behaviours had not changed since the first discussions in 2012 felt that there would need to be an incident or accident for them to really modify their behaviour. It was evident in this research that – at least among this cohort – there is still much progress to be made in relation to individual responsibility for safer roads.

Methodology discussions/reflections

The approach used for this qualitative longitudinal study was both innovative and exploratory. As part of the research findings, these methodological elements were reflected on.

Recruitment: Participants were recruited on the basis of their answers to a number of 'risk' questions. In the case of females, this risk 'score' had to be lowered, as far fewer females reached the original risk threshold. During the recruitment phase, some concerns with regard to confidentiality, and the implications of their participation were expressed by potential participants. There is a concern that people who demonstrate the most extreme risk-taking behaviours may chose not to participate in this kind of research.

Research design: This study involved a qualitative longitudinal research design using a focus group methodology. Reconvened focus groups have a particular strength in understanding change over time. They also provide participants with a valuable and often enjoyable experience - feedback from participants at Wave 2 indicated that they found it interesting to hear what the researchers had learnt, and what others had said in other focus groups.. Due to the research design and associated parameters, it was not possible to run the same number of groups in the second wave (12 at Wave 1 and 6 at Wave 2). An optimal design would have involved reconvening the same groups over a longer time period (such as 12 months rather than 6).

Online bulletin board discussions: Invited participants were provided with a secure unique identifier by email which enabled them to log in (anonymously) to an online discussion board at any time whilst the discussion was 'live'. Participation in the discussions declined over time, from over a third of invited participants in the first discussion to just over one in ten by the final stage. Those who did participate provided detailed and considered responses on the topics of discussion; reasons given (in the focus groups) by respondents who did not participate included only having smartphones, having no computer access, being too busy with work/family life or having no real recollection of being invited by email.

Use of self-completion questionnaires in the focus groups: This approach provided useful additional individual-level evidence alongside other qualitative data collected. It provided a further measure of attitudinal and behavioural change, clearly identifying some shifts in some elements which were not clearly evident from the focus group data.

1. Introduction

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) commissioned the Social Research Centre to conduct a program of qualitative research into road safety in regional Victoria. Specifically the research was designed to provide an understanding of attitudes to and perceptions of road safety by drivers in selected rural locations in the shires of Cardinia, Mitchell, and Ballarat/Golden Plains, and how these attitudes and perceptions may change over time. The research was longitudinal, with two waves of focus groups with a cohort of young drivers.

1.1. Background

Since 2008 the TAC has conducted focus groups in various locations across regional Victoria, with the aim of exploring attitudes and perspectives in relation to road safety held by residents of regional or rural locations. These focus groups have been conducted in Mildura, Shepparton, Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo, Traralgon, Warrnambool, Warragul, Leongatha, Cockatoo, Mornington, Euroa, Drouin and Castlemaine. Insights gained from the research have been used to inform marketing and road safety strategies. This latest round of regional research is the first time that the research design has been longitudinal in nature.

1.2. Aim and objectives

The overall aim of the first stage of the current project was to conduct focus groups in three regional locations to explore key road safety issues such as speeding and drink and drug driving with residents from these areas, in order to gain an understanding of the driving behaviours of the participants and those who reside in the local area generally. Additionally, this project aimed to assess awareness and effectiveness of the “Talk the Toll Down” campaign and explore opportunities to improve future campaign activities. The second phase of the research aimed to explore what changes there had been in people’s knowledge, attitudes and behaviour around driving and to what extent these changes had been influenced by participation in the study. In two of the three areas, respondents were also asked to participate in online bulletin board discussions (held between the two waves of focus groups) on a range of topics related to risky driving; the research also aimed to understand respondents’ experience of participating in these discussion boards, and what effect that participation had.

Specific objectives that were pursued in the research included:

- understanding the driving behaviour of participants and others in the local area generally
- exploring key areas of road safety and risk-taking such as speeding, drink and drug driving, driving whilst tired, driving whilst distracted
- understanding in more detail why drivers may take risks – moving on from the observational to the analytical, by exploring during the second wave some different behavioural types

- gaining a greater insight into perceptions of risk and consequences and how and why these vary within and between groups, and over time
- exploring and identifying acceptability and norms relating to risks among young drivers – and whether this changes over time, or through discussing and reflecting on the issues in a focus group setting
- exploration of the notion of personal responsibility and how these influence attitudes and behaviour, and
- gaining insights that can be used to inform marketing and road safety strategies.

The study was also of methodological interest – notably because of the inclusion of two waves of focus groups with the same cohort, and the use of online qualitative approaches with this client group. Specific attention is made to the methodology, through a dedicated chapter of the report.

1.3. Report structure

The findings of this research are presented using the following structure:

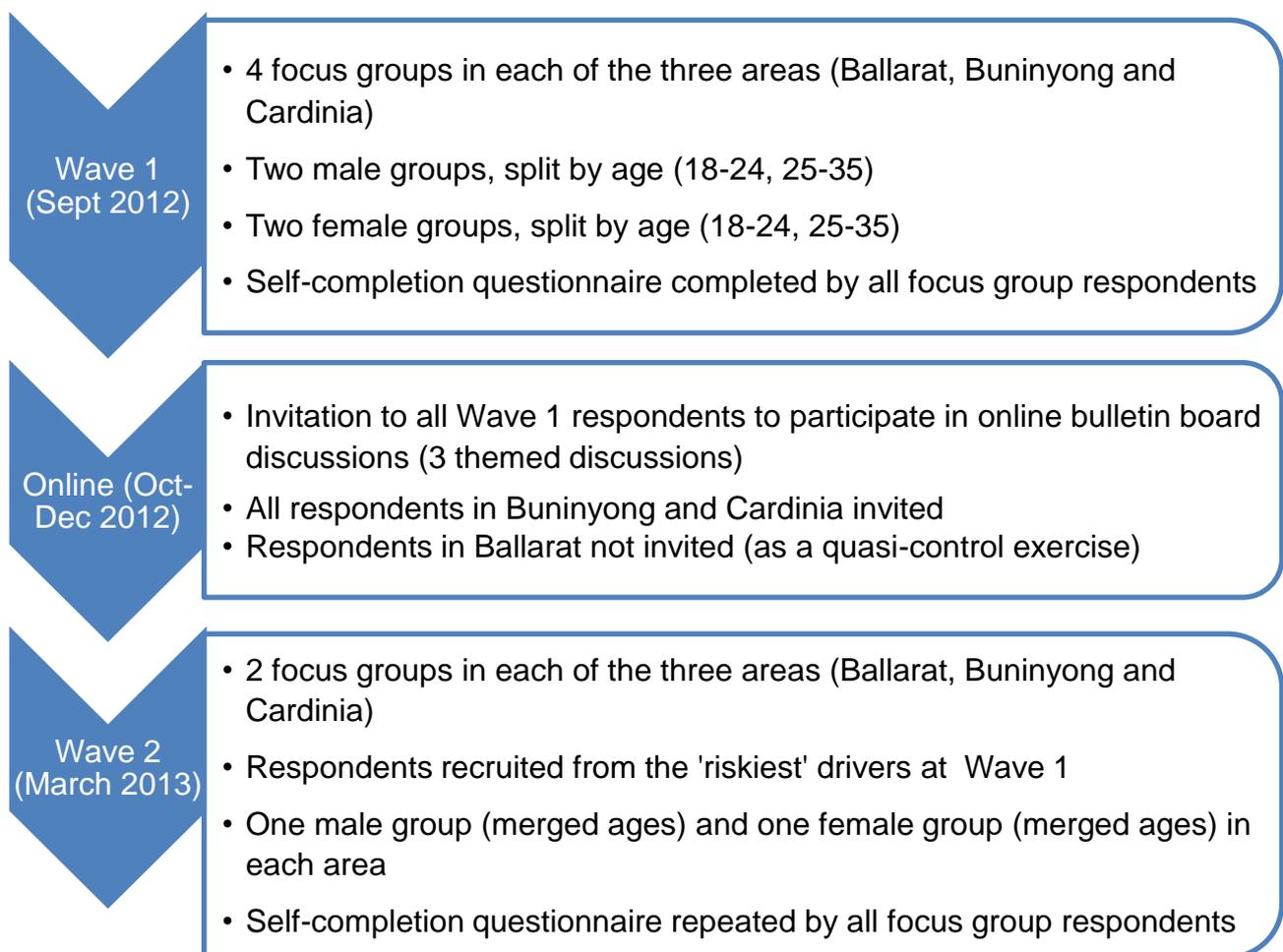
- Methodology (Section 2)
- Summary of Key Findings from Wave 1 (Section 3)
- Revisiting Road Safety and Risky Driving at Wave 2 (Section 4)
- Attitudinal and Behavioural Changes since Wave 1 (Section 5)
- Other Factors Moderating Thought and Behaviour Over Time (Section 6)
- Feedback from Respondents on Wave 1 findings (Section 7)
- Bulletin Board findings (Section 8)
- Overview – what changed, what didn't, and why? (Section 9), and
- Methodological discussion – longitudinal mixed-method approaches with risky drivers (Section 10).

The discussion guides, self-completion questionnaire and screenshots from the Bulletin Board are provided in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

2. Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) approach, comprising 12 focus group discussions at Wave 1 (September 2012) and six focus groups at Wave 2 (see Figure 2.1), with participants in the second wave of fieldwork drawn from those who participated in the first wave. The research also included a small quantitative element (self-completion questionnaires) and online bulletin board discussions. All participants were drawn from the initial Wave 1 sample.

Figure 2.1 Summary of Research Methodology



2.1. The Focus groups

The first wave of focus groups were conducted at local facilities in each of the regions between the 27 August and 12 September 2012. The second wave was conducted approximately six months later at the same locations. Each group lasted for approximately 1.5 hours and was held on a weekday evening.

2.1.1. Sampling and recruitment

In each of the three locations, the groups were separated by age (18-24 and 25-35) and gender. Participants were recruited from a combination of the VicRoads database of registered drivers in each of the three regions, research recruitment databases and snowballing techniques. The selection of participants involved a screening questionnaire; selection was based on questions measuring risk-taking behaviour on the roads (for example, whether they drove regularly at excessive speeds, whether they had lost their licence on previous occasions, attitudes and behaviour around drink-driving) and attitudes to risk more generally, to ensure that the final sample comprised young people who scored highly on such risk questions.

At Wave 1 the groups ranged in size from four to nine participants, with a total of 92 participants across the 12 groups.

The research design allowed for a reduced number of groups at Wave 2 (halved, from 12 at Wave 1). It was agreed with the TAC that for Wave 2 a priority should be placed on recruiting those who might be deemed as having attitudes that were more risky than others (and who therefore, one could speculate, would have a greater potential for changing attitudes or behaviour). Hence for Wave 2 recruitment, an analysis of responses to the self-completion questionnaire from Wave 1 (see Appendix 2) was undertaken to identify those who gave responses which placed them at the higher end of risk-taking (in terms of either attitudes or reported behaviour) rather than the lower end (who arguably may be less likely to have changed their attitudes or behaviour over time). Recruitment for Wave 2 was undertaken by the researchers. For this stage, 39 respondents took part in the six focus groups (two focus groups – both in Ballarat/Golden Plains – had a lower turnout than expected which was partly due to unanticipated inclement weather that evening).

For both waves, respondents were offered an incentive for participation, which was paid at the current market rates. A slightly higher amount was offered at Wave 2 to avoid drop-out at that stage.

2.1.2. The conduct of the focus groups

Each focus group was conducted by an experienced qualitative researcher from the Social Research Centre – the same researchers conducted both waves of focus group to provide continuity and to allow rapport to be re-established relatively quickly at the second wave. Discussion guides were used by the researchers to ensure coverage of the key topics and themes (see Appendix 1). The guides were developed in consultation with the TAC project team, based on the research objectives and after a detailed briefing on the background and purpose of the study.

The format of the second focus groups was slightly different, insofar as it drew heavily on what had already been discussed in the first wave. Following initial open-ended discussions about what they recalled from the previous rounds, respondents were prompted on some of the main discussions and some of the

findings from that first wave. Similarly, respondents were presented with some actual data from the first self-completion questionnaire, and asked what they thought – whether they were surprised by some of the findings or not, and so forth. Section 10 on methodology reflects on the value of these retrospective and ‘checking-back’ elements of the longitudinal design.

With the permission of participants focus groups were audio-recorded, and these recordings were transcribed for the purposes of analysis.

2.1.3. Self-completion questionnaires

The quantitative component of the research comprised the administering of a self-completion questionnaire to each participant (at the end of each focus group in Wave 1, and at the beginning of each focus group at Wave 2 – see Appendix 1). The questionnaire was designed by the Social Research Centre in conjunction with the TAC and included a range of questions from the TAC Road Safety Monitor survey, with the aim of providing some quantification on attitudes, behaviours and views around risky driving, and to provide an additional option for respondents to provide open and honest perspectives which they may not have felt fully comfortable in doing so in the group setting. It took around ten minutes for respondents to complete this.

2.2. Analysis and reporting

All discussions were digitally audio-recorded (with consent) and the recordings were used for analysis purposes. The analysis was conducted using an analysis framework for the classification and interpretation of qualitative data. The key themes and topics were identified through the discussion guide and through an initial review of the qualitative data to develop an analysis coding structure. Sections of the recordings were then coded (using NVivo software for the management of qualitative data) to enable a thematic retrieval of data under each theme, or by group attributes (to allow, for example, comparison of responses to themes or questions by gender or age group). The use of this thematic data coding technique ensures that findings are directly traceable back to the raw data, thus providing a fully transparent analytical method. Using NVivo also ensures that all data sources (both waves of qualitative data, plus data from the online bulletin board discussions) are stored centrally and are coded within the same overall coding framework, enabling ease of comparison and reference.

Verbatim quotations from across the research have been included in this report to illustrate these findings. Where words are shown in square brackets [as such] this denotes the author’s additional words, included to make a sentence clearer. Where ellipses are used (...) this means that superfluous speech (such as um, err, and incomplete words) has been ‘smoothed’ to make the reading of speech easier (in such cases, the meaning or sense has not been changed and the words used remain those of the respondent).

Data from the self-completion questionnaires was analysed using SPSS. The full responses for the Wave 1 stage (92 people) were included in the Wave 1 report.

For the analysis in this report, only data from participants who took part in both Wave 1 and Wave 2 have been used (representing 39 respondents) to ensure that comparisons of change are based only on the cohort who participated in both waves. In doing this, it should therefore be noted that the sample is small, and hence findings and changes are not representative in any statistical sense (particularly given that the sample is not a randomly generated one but one of convenience).

2.3. Respondent profile

A total of 92 respondents participated at Wave 1 (in 12 focus groups). The participant count across the three locations was somewhat equal, however due to last minute cancelations and no-shows (primarily due to weather), there were slightly fewer participants in the Ballarat/Golden Plains groups in both waves (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Sample profile

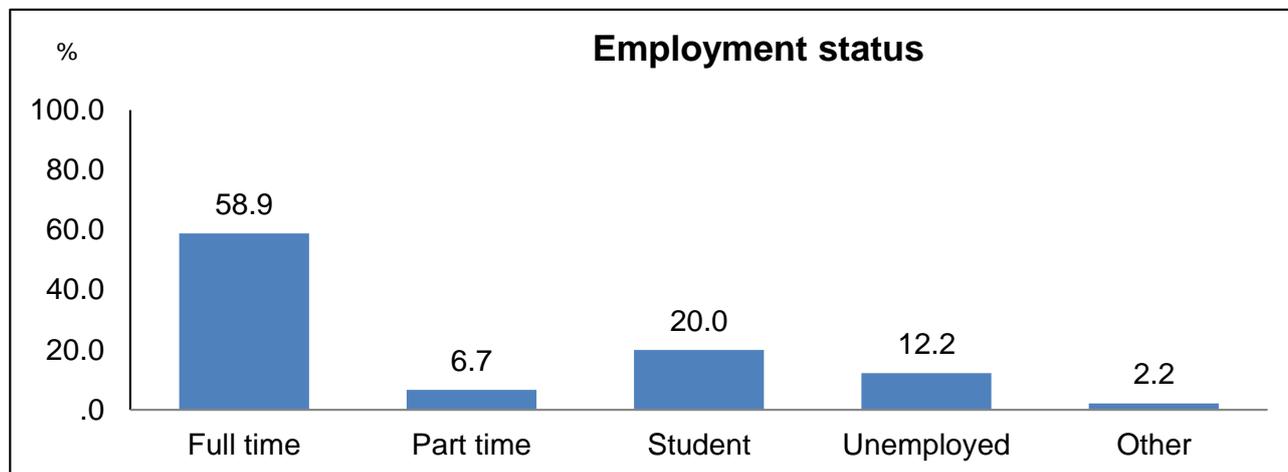
	Wave 1	Wave 2
Gender	44 males	18 males
	48 females	21 females
Age	43 18-24 year olds	18 18-24 year olds
	49 25-35 year olds	21 25-35 year olds

Around two fifths of respondents were working full-time at Wave 1 (this question was not repeated at Wave 2) – see Figure 2.2.

Respondents came from a range of family types, including single adult household, partnered adult households, those living with other family members (typically parents or siblings) and those with and without children.

A third of respondents had previously had a licence suspension (and 1 in 10 had a current licence suspension at Wave 1). At the time of Wave 1 recruitment, a fifth had a green probationary licence (P-plates), with most of the remainder having a full car licence. Almost all participants were car owners.

Figure 2.2 Respondent employment status (at Wave 1)



n=92

3. Summary of Key Findings from Wave 1

The findings of the first wave of the qualitative research were reported in full in a separate report. This section of the longitudinal report highlights some of the key findings from the first wave. This section should be thus seen as a brief 'scene-setting' of respondents' attitudes, views and behaviours that emerged in Wave 1 of the research.

At the beginning of each Wave 1 group, participants were asked to discuss, in general terms, what it was like driving in their local areas, and what issues came to mind when thinking about road safety. Overwhelmingly, across all three regions, the most frequently mentioned (unprompted) topics were the poor conditions of the roads (for example, terrain, surface upkeep), wildlife, and the behaviours of other drivers. In regards to the latter, participants commented on the driving behaviour of non-locals, women (mentioned by males), older people, P-plates, and motorcyclists and truck drivers (mentioned by females). The effects of weather were also mentioned as having influenced driving safely.

3.1. Perceptions of main causes of accidents

The main issues mentioned across all groups as the main causes of accidents included: general poor driving, often caused by inexperience; hooning and recklessness on the roads; not paying proper attention and becoming distracted while driving; and according to some, driving too slowly which was perceived as having the potential to cause accidents on the roads. Respondents also raised issues of speeding, drink driving, and external conditions such as wildlife and poor road conditions as likely causes of accidents. Across all groups, participants' understanding of who and what causes accidents (or near accidents) on the roads was externalized; that is, it was generally felt that the actions of other drivers, or environmental conditions beyond their control created most danger on the roads, rather than their own personal behaviour.

3.2. Local police enforcement and effectiveness

It was common across groups for people to express that the police's attempts at road safety enforcement were often token or misplaced. Males were noticeably more critical of police law enforcement on the roads; many saw speeding penalties as revenue-raising or roadside stops as biased or unnecessary, rather than having safety as their ultimate aim. Similarly, in a few groups (males and females) the idea that speed cameras were ineffective at motivating people to drive slower in general was shared. Again, these were seen as revenue-raising features that were either easily avoided (due to knowing where they were) or positioned at points on the road where it was easy to unknowingly go above the speed limit briefly.

Avoiding the police in general was something that numerous participants spoke about; across all three regions it was common for males and females (females to a lesser extent, as they reportedly engaged in illegal or risky driving less frequently than males) to minimize their risk of being apprehended by the police by either

taking back roads, driving particular types of cars, or driving at particular times of the day/night.

3.3. Responsibilities keeping the road safe

Participants in all groups were asked whose responsibility it was to keep the roads safe. This question was interpreted in different ways, resulting in a range of responses, from drivers themselves to VicRoads and the council. When thinking about what could be done to make the roads safer, participants commonly mentioned better education and driving instruction, making it more difficult to obtain and retain one's license, having the road conditions improved, and having more responsible drivers on the roads in general.

Several male and female participants across all regions mentioned that it was the responsibility of individual drivers to keep the roads safe, by driving sensibly and respectfully. The idea that road safety was in the hands of each individual driver was more openly acknowledged by female rather than male participants. It must be noted, however, that this notion was generally expressed by the idea that it was others on the road that created dangerous situations and caused accidents rather than themselves (e.g. other less skilled drivers, the council or VicRoads, etc.) - 'driver responsibility' meant the responsibility of other drivers rather than themselves. Only until the conversation prompted them to directly discuss the role their own behaviour played was the issue of personal responsibility directed towards themselves.

3.4. Defining risky driving

Respondents were asked in the groups whether they felt there was a difference between risky driving and dangerous driving. Many respondents made a distinction with risk relating more to activities that carried a 'risk' of getting caught but danger being potentially causing harm to one-self or others.

Others felt that risky driving was less '*deliberate*' than dangerous driving; risky driving could happen without realising it, for example, someone's speed creeping up or '*taking a corner a bit too fast*'.

Speeding was often given as an example of risky driving, whereas dangerous driving examples were more commonly related to other activities such as doing burn-outs or drink-driving as well as activities that it was perceived would put others at risk of harm. In the focus groups whilst many admitted they took risks whilst driving, none said that they drove dangerously.

3.5. Risk-taking behaviour

Participants were asked to describe what they considered to be risky driving. It was generally expressed that what made a particular behaviour risky (or not risky) was contextual, whereby a number of factors needed to be taken into consideration when assessing the potential risk. Further, the determination that a particular behaviour was 'risky' depended on the participant's interpretation of what the risk was and what the consequences may be, for example, being seen by

the police, or having an accident. It was left to the participants to bring up the behaviours they considered risky, and why. The most commonly mentioned behaviours included speeding, using a mobile phone whilst driving, drink driving, and general reckless behaviour.

3.5.1. Driving fast/speeding

Speeding was consistently the first response mentioned by participants when asked about risky driving behaviours, yet across all groups, almost all participants admitted to speeding to some degree. Generally, driving 5-15km above the speed limit was considered normal and minimally risky, particularly when on an open road or highway. However, generally participants expressed that driving above the speed limit in built up or school zones was unacceptable behaviour that was rarely engaged in. There were very few participants who did not speed at times, and generally this was because they were at a greater risk of losing their license, due to already missing demerit points, for instance.

3.5.2. Using mobile phones and other electronic devices

Mobile phone use while driving – both texting and talking, but more commonly the latter – was frequently engaged in by participants across all groups. It was, in many cases, considered to be a norm amongst participants and their peers. Talking on the phone was considered risky in that your attention was divided, and more so with texting which was considered to divert even more concentration away from the road and driving.

3.5.3. Drink driving

Drink driving was commonly mentioned as a risky behaviour by participants across all groups before the issue was prompted for. Generally, males were far more likely to admit to drink driving than females across all groups, however it was uniformly acknowledged that driving above the 0.05 Blood Alcohol Limit (BAC) limit was not uncommon in the regional areas. As with many risky driving behaviours, most participants explained that they were more likely to have driven under the influence of alcohol when they were younger, and less likely to do so as they got older. Conversely, a small number of participants, both male and female, explained that they were more cautious when they had first gotten their license and then gradually engaged in more risky or illegal behaviours as they became more experienced on the roads and learned that they could generally get away with doing it.

As with most other behaviours discussed, the extent to which drink driving was considered risky depended heavily on context and the type of risks involved. It was far more common for females to think of drink driving as uniformly unacceptable, whereas for many males, factors such as who the driver was, the amount of alcohol consumed, the distance to travel, and the roads to be driven all played a part in the assessment of the situation.

3.5.4. Hooning and general recklessness

General recklessness that was considered risky included examples of driving beyond one's perceived control or ability, or driving without taking into consideration the road and/or weather conditions. Furthermore, some mentioned actions such as tailgating, failing to indicate, changing lanes too quickly, and having too many passengers in the car as risky behaviours they had engaged in, or had witnessed others engaging in. Other behaviours considered risky included engaging in other activities that led to distraction such as rolling cigarettes, putting music on whilst driving and driving an unroadworthy car.

3.5.5. Drug driving

Drug driving was brought up as a risky behaviour in a few groups. Males were far more likely to admit to drug driving than females, although almost all participants knew others who had engaged in the behaviour. Despite this, driving under the influence of drugs was considered to be less of a problem compared to drink driving in these areas, as it was reportedly less common than drink driving. Drugs mentioned as having been used were commonly marijuana and speed. It was not uncommon for participants (male and female) to consider driving under the influence of drugs, such as amphetamines and marijuana, as safer than driving drunk.

3.5.6. Driving whilst tired

Driving fatigued was brought up unprompted by a small number of participants, but was commonly thought to be highly risky across all groups. A number of participants, male and female, mentioned occasions when they had fallen asleep in their car when parked or pulled over, and some explained that they had done so while stopped at traffic lights, or, on a few occasions, whilst driving. Driving whilst tired was believed to happen frequently due to the long distances driven in regional areas, and the desire to get home as quickly as possible.

3.5.7. No seatbelts

Driving or riding as a passenger in a car without a seatbelt was not a behaviour freely mentioned when prompted on risk taking. This is most likely due to the fact that very few participants admitted to not wearing a seatbelt; for almost all, putting a seatbelt on was an ingrained habit that they performed without thinking each time they got in a car. Nevertheless, there existed across both male and female groups, a small number of participants who did not generally wear them. A small number of females explained that they wore their seatbelt beneath their arm instead of have it across their chest.

3.6. Environmental/external factors contributing to risky driving

There were also external or environmental factors that respondents felt contributed to risky driving.

3.6.1. Road type/conditions

The condition of the local roads was the most commonly mentioned external factor affecting road safety whilst driving, particularly relating to poor road surfacing and a large amount of pot-holes (mentioned over 100 times across the 12 Wave 1 focus groups).

3.6.2. Adverse weather

Adverse weather conditions – notably heavy rain – were felt to affect road safety. Where roads were windy, narrow and wooded (notably in the Cardinia area) this was thought to be a particular hazard. Fog was commonly mentioned in Cardinia, and ice was mentioned in a Mitchell group.

3.6.3. Rurality and infrastructure

All were agreed that driving in regional or rural areas brought additional specific risks that were less prevalent in metropolitan areas. The main two factors discussed here relating to road safety were darkness (poor street lighting) and wildlife. Several mentioned poor infrastructure, including a serious lack of public transport, and for some, not enough signage to indicate the legal driving limits.

Animals on the roads were noted as common and unpredictable across all three regions and in almost all groups. Wildlife was considered to be one of the major issues related to road safety and was something that participants claimed they remained mindful of when driving on their local roads.

3.6.4. Other drivers

In all groups, respondents felt that certain drivers took more risks or caused more potential danger than other drivers. In some cases it was felt that this was unintentional. Drivers were generalized into fairly consistent groupings; most commonly reported as displaying poor driving were females (by males), non-locals, P-platers, and older drivers. In three of the four male groups it was felt that women in general did not have the same driving skills or confidence as their male counterparts and as a result were more 'risky' in their driving. Interestingly, it was brought up in both a male and female groups the idea that women were likely to have a different type of accident compared to men, i.e. men were thought of as more likely to take calculated and intentional risks, whereas women were more likely to take more thoughtless, unskilled or distracted risks.

It was also common across all regions for participants to exclaim that non-locals were generally worse drivers than locals when in the area. Similarly, some respondents felt that '*old people*' and, on the other end of the spectrum, inexperienced P-platers could be risky drivers. It was also felt that some other road users took deliberate risks, including truck drivers and motorcyclists.

3.7. Perceptions of risk and consequence

All drivers recruited to this study were included because of their reported risk-taking behaviours (identified at the point of recruitment). Nevertheless, it was evident that with the groups there was some variation in risk taking attitudes and behaviours, both by type of person (differentiated here by age group and gender) as well as by the nature of the risky driving.

Previous regional research undertaken for the TAC in 2011 noted that levels of risk are not measured objectively by individuals, but are subjective and influenced by a wide range of environmental, circumstantial and personal factors. In the earlier research the main factors that appeared to moderate risk taking behaviours were a combination of perceptions around the likelihood of getting caught and the severity of the consequences of taking the risk, coupled with perceptions of their own driving skills and sense of responsibility to oneself and others. This was the same among the respondents in this study – it was evident that risky driving behaviour was informed by considerations as to how risky something is (what are the chances of something ‘happening’ by taking this risk) and what will be the likely consequences of that ‘happening’. Nonetheless, this is not to say that risky driving was always an active and considered decision; often it was not. More often than not, respondents had not fully considered the consequences of their risky driving other than the likelihood of getting caught.

Interestingly, although during the discussions the primary concern related to risky driving was related to being caught and the associated implications of that (fines, points, loss of licence), the survey data (from the self-completion questionnaires from respondents) revealed a slightly different concern – that of hurting or killing someone.

Respondents’ articulation of the risks they took (or used to take), how these were rationalized or justified and the steps or actions that were involved to minimise the potential consequences of those risks, were often muddled and contradictory. Respondents were often quick to judge what they perceived as risky driving behaviour of others, but were able to rationalise their own driving behaviour so that it seemed more acceptable (both to them and to others). when they did consider possible consequences related to accidents or crashing, these tended to be triggered by an event such a ‘near-miss’ or hearing about someone else who had had an accident.

A summary of this rationalization and minimisation process is outlined in

Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Risk – rationalising behaviour and minimising consequences

Risky driving behaviour	Rationale	Minimising likelihood and consequences
Speeding (< 30k above limit)	Know the roads well Running late Everyone does it To see if get caught! Subconscious – speed creeps up Safe to drive faster	Stick to no more than 25-30 over Thinking about potential damage to car (and repair costs) Payment plan Drive old slow car Skilled driver
Speed (30k+ above limit)	For fun High performance car	Only where no-one else around/in the middle of nowhere Stick to known roads Drive alone
Drink-driving	No other way home Subconscious/unplanned A good driver/in control	Only every now and then Drive alone
Drug-driving	Nominated driver Stay awake after late night/work	Don't drink Stick to 'uppers'
Using mobile	Only time to make phone calls when busy	On roads where no police presence
Driving while licence suspended	Need to get to and from work/school etc Public transport not available at the times/locations needed Almost time to get licence back	Stay on familiar roads Don't drink, speed etc. – be fully compliant Stick to short familiar routes Drive someone else's car
No seatbelt	Not habitual Uncomfortable (women)	Prompted by passengers Wear it under arm

3.8. Personal responsibility

Personal responsibility relates to the willingness and ability to accept the responsibility for one's own actions, and the potential consequences of those actions. In this research (as in previous research) a sense of personal responsibility for risky driving was relatively low for most respondents. Whilst there was sometimes *discussion* of personal responsibility, this did not often appear to be borne out in people's *behaviour*. So for example whilst there was discussion about how speeding could put oneself and others in danger, most respondents still admitted they drove above the speed limit on regular occasions (and often felt that it was relatively unlikely that they would get caught). Life stage appeared to have some influence here; certainly those with children and related responsibilities perhaps took greater responsibility for their actions than others. Furthermore, where people had passengers in the car, this did affect their sense of responsibility towards them and their risk taking would be tempered. For many, driving alone appeared to provide an authority to take risks, with an assumption that one was only putting oneself at risk (and hence only had oneself to blame if something went wrong).

3.9. Respondents' views at Wave 1 on moderating risky behaviour

More often than not in the groups, respondents spoke about certain driving behaviours that they used to do but no longer did, or that they only do in certain situations (mostly, excessive speeding and drink driving). A range of factors or circumstances influenced this change in behaviour; as such, these can be viewed as factors that have moderated (or have the potential to moderate) risky driving behaviour.

3.9.1. Changes in life stage or circumstances

As has been found in previous research, life stage appeared to be a major determinant of risky driving behaviours. Unsurprisingly, many of the older age group (25-34 year olds) had secure jobs, families and their own homes. For most, these circumstances were said to have tempered their driving behaviour. There were several reasons for this, including: having more family responsibilities; having more financial responsibilities; and a general maturity.

3.9.2. Driving alone or with others

In both female and male groups, it was evident that as drivers they took more risks when they drove alone than when they had passengers in the car; in these cases they were more *'cautious'*. There were examples given of risk-taking that respondents still did alone (notably speeding or hazardous over-taking) but would not do with others in the car.

For almost all respondents, this moderation of behaviour was explained through feeling a level of responsibility for their passengers and not wanting to feel the guilt or shame should their passengers be harmed in any way because of their own actions. Interestingly, concerns over fellow passengers rarely extended to

occupants of other vehicles on the roads, despite also potentially at risk from their own risky driving behaviour (which most admitted to when driving alone).

3.9.3. Previous accidents

There was much discussion during the groups about people's previous experience of accidents or near misses – almost all could recount examples of where they had been involved in crashes, some of them serious. In the main, these experiences had impacted on their driving behaviour, making them more cautious or careful – without such events many said they would have carried on as they had been. For the females, most personal examples related to accidents they had been involved in which they perceived were not their fault. The males were more likely to talk about the accidents they had been involved in which were their fault or where they had made mistakes.

3.9.4. Accumulation of points, loss of licence and fines

In all of the groups, mention was made of the accumulation of points and the resultant loss of licence. Many respondents had lost their licence at some point and often this was as a result of the accumulation of points for numerous offences, although for some it was a direct result of an offence such as excessive speeding, drink-driving or driving whilst already suspended. There was a significant 'fear' about losing their driving licence, although this was concentrated among those who had been through this experience and realised the significant inconvenience this brought.

Respondents were also deterred by fines – although perhaps a lesser degree than points and loss of licence. However, the fines were seen as high enough to make a significant impact on subsequent behaviour – again this appeared to be more of a deterrent to those who had already had to pay fines.

3.9.5. Awareness of others' accidents

As well as having personally been in an accident, many had family or friends who had also been in accidents, some of them severe or involving fatalities. Where it was related to an accident involving someone such as a peer or other known local, particularly if there had been a fatality, there was some discussion (occurring in both a young female and young male group) of the diminishing impact over time. Whilst there was initial shock in the community, several commented that after a while people returned to their 'normal' driving behaviour. This appeared to be particularly so among the younger groups.

3.9.6. Type of vehicle driven

The number of respondents within the groups who had high performance cars or cars with modifications was notable and as noted earlier in this report many respondents had a clear interest in cars and driving. However, some respondents, notably females with children, had upgraded their cars to newer larger vehicles with more safety features, with the view that this would offer them (and their families) maximum protection. However, it was noted by others that driving newer

safer cars could in fact lead respondents to taking more risks, with the assumption that they had greater protection than if they were in an older car, where they may be more reliant on their driving skills rather than assistance such as traction control.

3.10. Perceived need to moderate behaviour

In the main, respondents indicated that they had moderated their behaviour from when they first started driving, but most did not discuss the need to moderate their behaviour currently or in the future. Whilst they were able to talk at length about how they had taken perhaps unacceptable or '*foolish*' risks in the past, their risk-taking in driving nowadays was often prefixed with a justification or perceived legitimate reason. As a result, whilst all respondents disclosed different degrees of risky driving, strategies to reduce risky driving were commonly directed at others – there was an evident disconnect between risk-taking behaviour and personal responsibility.

3.11. Road safety as a topic of conversation

Generally, according to respondents road safety was not a frequent topic of conversation amongst them, their families and friends. It was reported that they would generally only speak with others about driving related issues if there had been a local incident on the roads, or if they or someone they knew had been in an accident.

3.12. Wave 1 Conclusions

The Wave 1 research explored of attitudes, behaviour and perceptions around road safety among 'risky' drivers in the selected regional locations around the shires of Cardinia, Mitchell, and Ballarat/Golden Plains. The evidence from Wave 1 showed that whilst age and gender and perhaps personality go some way to explaining risky driving behaviours there are other factors at play including education, misinformation, low levels of personal responsibility, driving skills and a lack of serious consideration or acknowledgement of the potential negative impacts of risky driving (over and above financial penalties and loss of licence).

Assessment of risk – where consciously made – was generally associated with the likelihood of being 'caught' rather than any objective measure related to likelihood of harm, particularly in relation to oneself. Whilst few respondents, if any, said they would put *others* at risk of harm through risky driving, in the main most did not place the same value on *their own* safety. In part, this was related to their own assessment of their (apparently good) driving ability but this was also related to a more general attitude to driving alone (particularly in quiet times of the day or in quiet rural areas), which was often seen as an opportunity to take more risks – particularly if there was a perception that they were unlikely to be caught.

The research also found that people were sometimes paradoxical in their discussions – they were seemingly contradictory, quick to condone or judge behaviours of others that were seen as risky but later on in the discussions they often disclosed similar behaviours, actions or attitudes.

There was also an underlying assumption (overtly articulated by some) that ‘*everyone takes risks*’ in driving, and that certain risky or illegal driving behaviour is the norm for the vast majority. Whether this is a reflection of the context or environment of the research, or the fact that they were recruited as ‘risky drivers’ is not clear. However, the sample was not homogenous and reflected a wide range of population groups within the regions covered (different household or family types, different education levels, different economic activities etc), but the view that everyone takes risks was evident across all of the sample. ,

With these issues in mind, the following were identified in addressing risky driving among these groups:

- **Failure to recognise the role of penalties in deterring risky driving.** Penalties (points) were said to be strong deterrents to speeding, especially when the accumulation of these was close to the point of licence suspension. However, if respondents thought that they might be able to ‘*get away with it*’ (which they commonly did) they would do it. There was never an acknowledgement among respondents that the purpose of penalties (particularly for speeding) was to encourage people to drive at a safe speed, in order to minimise the risk of harm to themselves or others. Penalties often tended to be seen more as an annoyance or an inconvenience rather than a safety issue.
- **Responsibility for self.** Respondents clearly did not feel the same level of responsibility for themselves when driving than when they had others in the car, taking more risks when driving alone and assuming that if something happened it would in all likelihood be someone else’s fault (i.e., another road user) and that the only person affected would be themselves.
- **Perceived lack of choice in taking some risks.** Respondents often discussed not having a choice with certain risky driving. A typical example here relates to road quality. Respondents talked about the danger in having to swerve to avoid potholes or the need to overtake slower moving vehicles. However other examples included having to talk on the mobile phone (said by some to be necessary as there was nowhere to pull over, the only free time to make work calls and so forth).
- **Hazard perception.** Related to the above, among some there appeared to be a limited understanding of hazard perception with a tendency to place blame on the hazards (animals, weather, other drivers, poor lighting etc) rather than adjusting driving behaviour in potentially hazardous situations.
- **Aggressive driving.** Some respondents – both males and females – described a frustration with some drivers which could result in risky behaviours such as tailgating. However, this was not necessarily seen as risky, and (as with other risky driving behaviours) was often perceived by respondents as excusable or understandable.
- **Driving skills.** The overwhelming majority of respondents felt that they were better drivers than the average (only one respondent felt that they were a slightly worse driver than the average). This perception, coupled with a

relatively low level of personal responsibility for oneself (when driving alone) is a potentially dangerous combination.

- **Normalising risky driving.** For many in this group of 'risky drivers', receiving points, fines and – in some cases loss of licence – was seen as fairly typical or normal.

The findings from this first wave of research identified different risk-taking 'rationales' (these models were explored further during Wave 2 – see Section 7).

4. Respondent Recall of Topics Discussed at Wave 1

In the second round of focus groups (March 2013) it was explained to participants that one of the primary objectives was to explore how, and to what extent, people's attitudes and behaviours on the roads had changed – if at all – since the initial groups were held six months previously (September 2012), and to understand what had caused these changes. Participants were informed that the issues raised in Wave 1, together with the findings gathered from the analysis of that data, would be used as discussion prompts in order to explore these changes with them. Of particular interest was causality – what caused any shifts in attitudes or behaviour in driving (and if there was change, whether this could be linked to participating in the research and discussing the topics in more depth than they would hitherto have done).

However, the first priority was to establish what, if anything, respondents recalled about their discussions six months previously. At the beginning of all Wave 2 groups, participants were asked to think back to their initial groups and recall the issues that had stayed with them, what they had thought about after attending the groups – including whether or not attending the discussion groups had made them feel more or less safe on the roads, and what, if anything, they had discussed with family or friends. The main issues that were recalled were:

- Other respondents' driving
- Road conditions
- Speeding and enforcement
- Drink-driving
- Talk the Toll Down and TAC campaigns
- Causes of risk-taking behaviour
- Scenario testing
- Using mobile phones, and
- Police presence.

4.1. Other respondents' driving

When asked what they could recall from Wave 1, and what aspects of their discussions had made the biggest impression on them, participants commonly mentioned the driving habits of others. Some participants expressed surprise at how others tended to drive (e.g. drink-driving, aggressive driving, driving without a licence or a seatbelt), while some explained that it had been interesting to learn that other individuals shared some of the same (risky) driving habits as them. For several participants (generally females), this realisation had made them more cautious of other drivers' behaviour on the roads, and more aware of the potential risks (these attitudinal and behavioural changes to driving habits that occurred as a consequence of taking part in the Wave 1 focus groups are discussed in more depth in Sections 5 and 6 of this report). Conversely, some participants explained

that they were not surprised to learn how others drove and that risks were often taken on the roads.

The topic of other (non-participant) drivers' behaviour on the roads was also recalled, with particular reference to truck drivers, by females, and female or older drivers, by males. Discussion about people who drive too slowly was also recalled.

I suppose I was kind of shocked at the extremes of some people. I sort of, after that, started being, I became very aware of other drivers and what they were doing (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

You're just a bit more aware... some of the stuff that was coming out of peoples' mouths I was quite surprised at how, sort of aggressive they are... and the way they go about it... that's all, just made me sort of think (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

You asked us to explain why the younger age group didn't wear seat belts... I just can't stop thinking about it. I talked about that with lots of people as well, because I found it – yeah, I was flabbergasted (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

4.2. Road conditions

In groups across all three locations, participants recalled discussing the condition of their local roads (i.e. potholes, design), as well as the common presence of wildlife in their areas.

Oh I do remember talking about the road conditions up here quite a lot (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

The main thing I can remember is potholes (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Yes, and this one lady had an accident. Obviously too narrow the road – it was 100 km an hour but it shouldn't be... she recommended it shouldn't be that speed, it should be less than that because obviously there's wildlife around, which is a hazard I suppose (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

4.3. Speeding and enforcement

Several participants recalled discussion from Wave 1 regarding speeding, and that it was common amongst group participants as well as the general public. In the focus groups with males at Mitchell, participants recalled that their initial discussions involved the issue of speed cameras, and that they were considered by some to be for revenue-raising purposes rather than to keep the roads safer. One participant in this group recalled discussing how it was common for people to slow down when approaching a known speed camera, and then speeding up above the speed limit once they had passed it. He also mentioned that a police officer monitored speeds outside his home once a week and that the locals had expressed negative reactions to its presence.

Moderator: What else struck you? What can you remember?

Respondent: That we all sped. (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

I think it was upsetting a lot of people that people were slowing down for the cameras but then speeding up back past them... I have a speed camera sit out the front of my place once a week... and he cops a fair bit of abuse off the locals (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

4.4. Drink-driving

Several participants recalled discussing drink-driving in the Wave 1 groups, recalling specifically that fellow participants had discussed their own drink-driving behaviour in the group, or had admitted to losing their licence due to having been caught. It was expressed by some participants (females) that they had been surprised to hear how common the act of drink-driving had been amongst other group participants.

The attitude towards drink driving... it happens. Because I've lost a friend to drink driving, that just doesn't sit well with me, but some people wouldn't agree with this... I've just gone, what, no! It's not just an 'oh yeah' attitude... Just the acceptance that people do it; that it's perfectly fine. (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

4.5. Talk the Toll Down and TAC campaigns

Without being prompted, only one group (males, Cardinia) across all locations recalled being shown examples of the Talk The Toll Down road safety campaign. However, the specific name of the campaign was not recalled without reminding, and it was remembered in the context of having been unfamiliar to group participants in Wave 1. In all other groups, participants were reminded of the campaign and asked if they recalled seeing or hearing anything about it since Wave 1, and across all three locations almost none had.

Respondent: Advertising was one for me. I remember the advertising, you showed us all an advertising clip that you'd spent a lot of money on and none of us knew what it was from

Moderator: Oh right, 'Talk The Toll Down'

Respondent: Yeah that's it, 'Talk The Toll' (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

Moderator: Since the group, have you noticed anything about Talk the Toll Down in any media?

Respondent 1: No.

Respondent 2: I can vaguely remember what you were talking about, so I'm not sure if I've seen it. (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

I've heard of that phrase but I don't think I've seen any advertising (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Conversation regarding the Talk The Toll Down campaign prompted some discussion on TAC media campaigns in general. A small number of participants explained that they had noticed TAC advertisements more since taking part in their initial research group; that TAC materials had become more salient since taking part in research for the TAC. Some mentioned specific advertisements they had noticed between groups, particularly the 'motorcycle' ad.

Every time I see the TAC I'm like oh, I did a group on that... they've been pretty much there since the group, so I'm assuming they were there before the group as well, and it's just I'm more aware of it now (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

Yeah, I'd say a little bit more notice, having been involved and all that (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

4.6. Causes of risk taking behaviour

Very few participants directly conceptualised or recalled the Wave 1 groups as an exploration of the motivations and rationalisations employed by drivers when taking risks or driving dangerously. Nevertheless, a few participants recalled that the Wave 1 discussions involved speaking about the factors that moderate people's behaviour behind the wheel, i.e. the potential consequences of risky driving, and the ways in which these are calculated to dictate behaviour. In one group (Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains), for example, it was recalled that there had been a participant who explained that he enjoyed excessively speeding at times, but did so in a way that he personally believed minimised risk.

We spoke about motivations why we, like, some motivations why we don't do things and what stops us doing things and what we kind of brush aside and go, stuff it I'll do it anyway... the lack of police, the, you know, risk factor of getting caught, whether or not you thought yourself or other people in danger" (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

There was that bloke who introduced himself through the conversation as a responsible person and talked about stories about getting keys off mates and stuff and then admitted that he was a bit of a rev head but a responsible rev head sort of thing, and the day that he did –'oh but it was a country road and I was doing 180, and if I go home I go on the back roads home where there's not going to be anyone else on the road and I won't take any passengers with me and I won't even be a little bit over my head' (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

4.7. Scenario testing

Only in one group (males, Cardinia) was it specifically mentioned that the Wave 1 groups involved a discussion on some hypothetical scenarios presented to participants by the moderators. That is, it was recalled by some participants in this group that they had talked about drink-driving and the likelihood of getting in a car when the driver had been drinking.

Respondent 1: We discussed about what you would do if you were at a party and the driver had been drinking, would you get a lift with them or not?

Respondent 2: That was a good topic, that brought up a lot of interesting input which was good (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

4.8. Mobile phones

Discussion recalling issues raised in Wave 1 mentioned the use of mobile phones in only one group (Females, Mitchell). These participants discussed how it had been common for participants in Wave 1 to admit to texting and speaking on the phone while behind the wheel, and how it was, in reality, a considerably dangerous thing to do. The issue of mobile phone use while driving did come up again in the Wave 2 discussions, and is referred to in other sections of this report.

Respondent 1: It could just be that second looking down. I do it, but it could be that second you look down that something happens...

Respondent 2: You could hit a pothole.

Respondent 1: Yeah, and the car in front of you could slam on their brakes and then...that's what I'm scared of. The times that I've tried to text while I'm driving, I just can't do it. I don't know...

Respondent 3: You get used to it.

Respondent 1: I'm not able to do it (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

4.9. Police presence

The topic of police presence on the roads was only discussed in one group – Females, Mitchell. As with the discussions with Females in Mitchell in Wave 1, participants in Wave 2 recalled having spoken about a lack of police presence on the roads, and a subsequent feeling that those who broke the road rules would not generally be caught. In Wave 2, a number of participants asserted that police were easily avoided and rarely there to apprehend very risky drivers.

5. Attitudinal and behavioural changes since Wave 1

Bringing the 'riskier' drivers back to take part in focus groups six months later gave the opportunity to explore with participants whether the Wave 1 discussions had changed the way they either thought about driving and road safety, or the way they behaved in relation to their driving and the risks that they took.

At Wave 1 a small group of participants explained that despite getting older, or having been penalised by the police a number of times, they were unlikely to modify their risky driving behaviour. It was, according to these people, just something they had always done, and would most likely continue to do.

Similarly, some participants explained that in their opinion, people would always continue to break the road rules and that very little could be done to change that. For example, some risky behaviours, such as speeding and using a mobile phone whilst driving, were admitted to by many participants, and considered to be the norm amongst others, particularly because of the long distances travelled, and also because the roads were often empty in these regional areas.

This section therefore focuses on whether in fact there had been any shifts or changes, and if there had been, whether there was any causal link with the research. The main changes identified, which had an inferred causal link with participation were:

- general increase in thinking more about road safety and risky driving
- changes to feeling safe on the roads and whilst driving (and subsequent adjustments to using a mobile phone, driving speed, drink-driving), and
- changes related to getting caught or losing their licence.

The extent to which changes were reported as sustained is also reviewed.

5.1. General increased thinking about road safety and risky driving

Some respondents – but by no means all – said that they had thought about road safety and driving generally since taking part in the research. Whilst some were able to give specific examples (as described in the sections that follow), others talked about just a general raised awareness and reflection, particularly if they had experienced an incident or 'near miss' on the roads but had not made any particular adjustments to their driving or behaviour.

I guess just sort of being... I've been reminded of it, certain incidents I nearly hit a wombat a few weeks ago, a big one was sitting in the middle of the road and I was coming home from work at about twelve o'clock at night... and just in general when I get into my car (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

I guess maybe for the next two weeks I might have thought a little bit extra about the roads and stuff when I was driving around but that's about it. Well the conditions and stuff like that (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Others who said they had thought about road safety and risky driving were able to give some very specific examples, as discussed below. However, a common response – most notably from males – was that that they had not really given much thought to the topics or issues since leaving the focus group.

5.2. Changes related to feeling safe

In many of the Wave 2 groups, respondents had said they had felt less safe on the roads after participating in the Wave 1 focus groups. The reasons for this appeared generally to relate to their observations about how others drive (particularly having heard anecdotes in the focus groups themselves), rather than any subsequent self-reflection on their own driving ability.

You are more aware of what everyone else is sort of doing on the roads, so....just like how many people speed and we talked about people who had been on drugs, and then driven, and a lot of people knew of people that were doing it (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

I suppose I was kind of shocked at the extremes of some people. I sort of, after that, started being, I became very aware of other drivers and what they were doing, and then I think over the Christmas period as well, drivers don't do very good things, so when I was thinking about the group and then, like even my own attitude toward driving and things, and I was just like, other people are scary... So I was kind of very conscious of what everyone else was doing on the road (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

Yeah I would agree, it was a bit of a, eye-opener in respects of some people in the group I think had no respect at all, it was about what they do... And how they go about it ... but it hasn't changed the way I go about my business (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

Others spoke about having a heightened awareness of other people's driving, having discussed the subject at Wave 1 and perhaps being consequently more observant of others on the roads.

It does kind of make you realise other drivers and what kind of things they do on the road, so I think I'm more cautious of other people on the road now (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

As time goes on I feel less and less safe... more and more people on the road... I can see less and less experience with people on the road (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

In one exceptional case, a female participant had been so concerned about other people's driving behaviours that had been raised in the group - and the realisation how it could potentially impact on her - that as a result she had undertaken a defensive driving course (this particular participant had herself previously repeatedly driven whilst over the BAC limit until she had lost her licence).

I agree, I got the realisation that everybody is human, like you see your family, the way they drive, but then I started looking at other people in cars next to me at the lights, and yeah they are human too, and they might be having a bad day or their car might not be the best, or they might not be wearing a seat belt...it [the realisation] definitely stuck around and I did a defensive driving course for that reason, you know, these people are scary (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

In light of the discussions, some respondents had also reflected on their own driving as well as other people's – again this was more common in the female focus groups than in the male ones. This reflection was sometimes a realisation that others may take the same risks as they themselves took.

And then just hearing a lot of people do it. It's, like, well, not only I do it, there could be someone that crashes into me and then I can potentially end up disabled (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

Yeah nah with a whole room full of people with the same age group... you sort of wonder who you're on the road with I guess (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

Like, when you're on the road you don't really think about what you're doing, but when you come into a place like this and kind of engaging in this, you're speaking about it and then kind of thinking about it more, and thinking, oh, maybe I shouldn't be doing that. And then we got on the road after that, I suppose, it played on our minds a bit more than prior (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

Because I heard so many people view the same thing I've viewed, do the same thing I do, and it made me think there is a lot of people exactly like me that are a hazard...really! And I was just, like, so I watch other people, so, like, if I see someone texting while they're driving I'm cautious, I'm watching them as well as the road, so then I know what they're going to do, or judge what they're going to do (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

I was probably more aware of speeding and the fact that I made a point to put my seat belt on before I started the car, whereas normally I start the car and then put my seatbelt... Which seems ridiculous, but yeah. I'm just more aware of it I think. And then not to answer, and I do pull over to make a call to my boyfriend. Normally I would have just dialled him ...yeah, because it was fresh in my mind and we'd talked about it and it makes you more aware of the risks that you take (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

These concerns about feeling unsafe on the roads had led to some adjustment in risky behaviours, including:

- less use of a mobile phone whilst driving
- reduced speed whilst driving, and
- reduced drink-driving.

5.2.1. Reduced mobile phone use whilst driving

In two of the focus groups there was mention of less use of a mobile phone whilst driving, as a result of the discussions at Wave 1. Again, this appeared to be related to having discussed the risks of driving whilst using the phone (both for texting and talking), and subsequent reflection of the inherent risks (and possible consequences) involved in that.

Respondent: ...oh the occasional text if I have to, I used to text and call all the time ...

Moderator: What does 'if I have to' mean?

Respondent: If I'm running late and that person, I'm not going to get a chance to text them before they need to know, but not just casual conversation...I don't want to be risking, just more conscious (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Respondent: I must admit, I haven't used my phone. Like, I've heard it but I haven't touched it...that's true. Even call...I always wait till I stop...

Moderator: Was this after the group?

Respondent: This is after the group. Yeah, no, I haven't.... I don't do it. I just pop it to the side, like, in the little console there and I just wait till I stop.

Moderator: Is that just talking about it?

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. Like, I don't know, it's really weird. I suppose I'm a bit paranoid. Yeah, like, do you know what I mean? What if something happened and then obviously it comes back on me, and then I'm liable if I have an accident and they find out that it's my phone. If I had an accident they could tell I was on my phone (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

In another example, a respondent said that having discussed phone use whilst driving at the group, she was now more insistent to her partner that he stopped using it whilst driving.

Because you know just taking your eyes off the road for a second and anything can happen (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

5.2.2. Driving slower

Respondents often talked about being more conscious or aware of their speed since discussing it at the Wave 1 focus groups. In the main, however, this appeared to be more related to ensuring compliance with the speed limits rather than reducing speed because it was a safer way to drive.

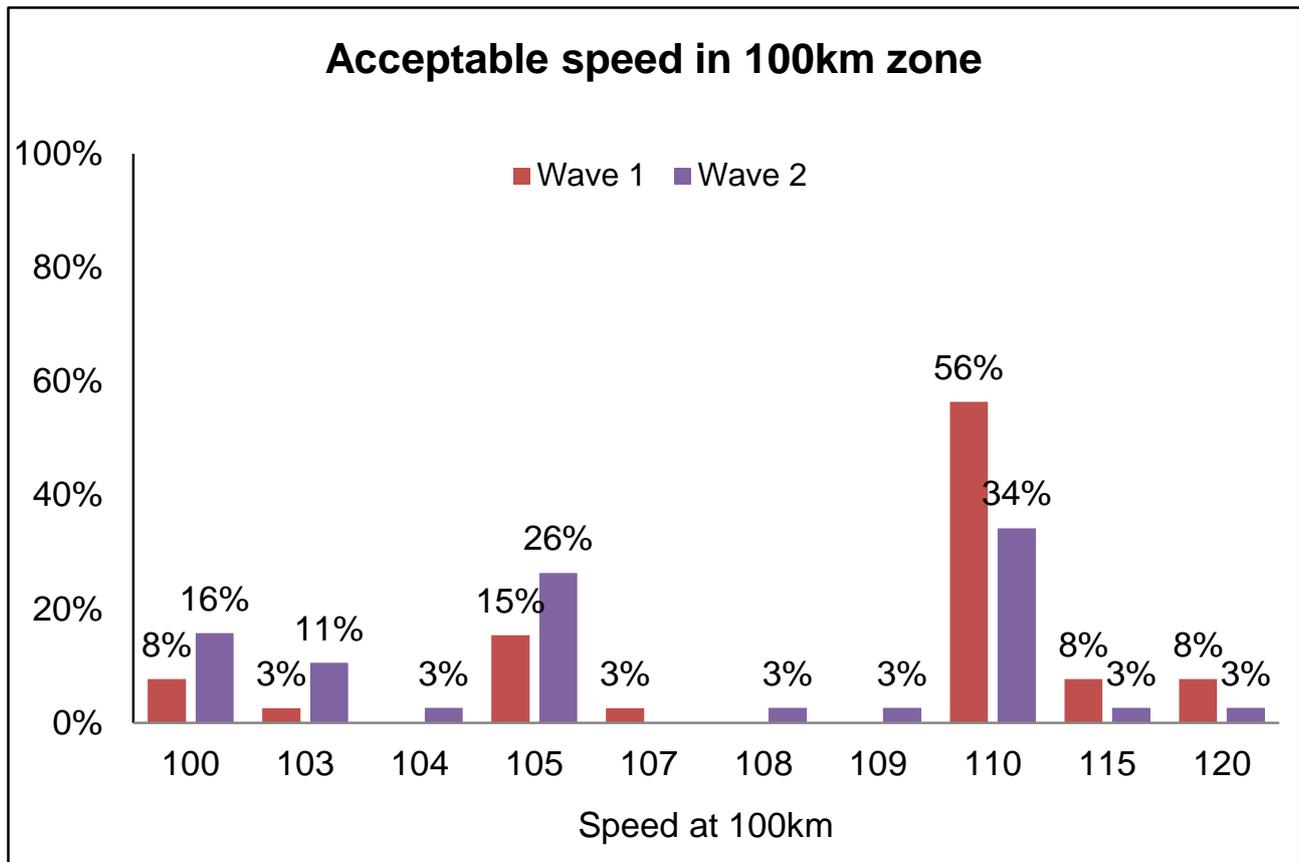
I have been more conscious of my speed I think (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

I don't speed as much; I check my speed (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

I did think about my speeding a little bit, but it didn't change my driving (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

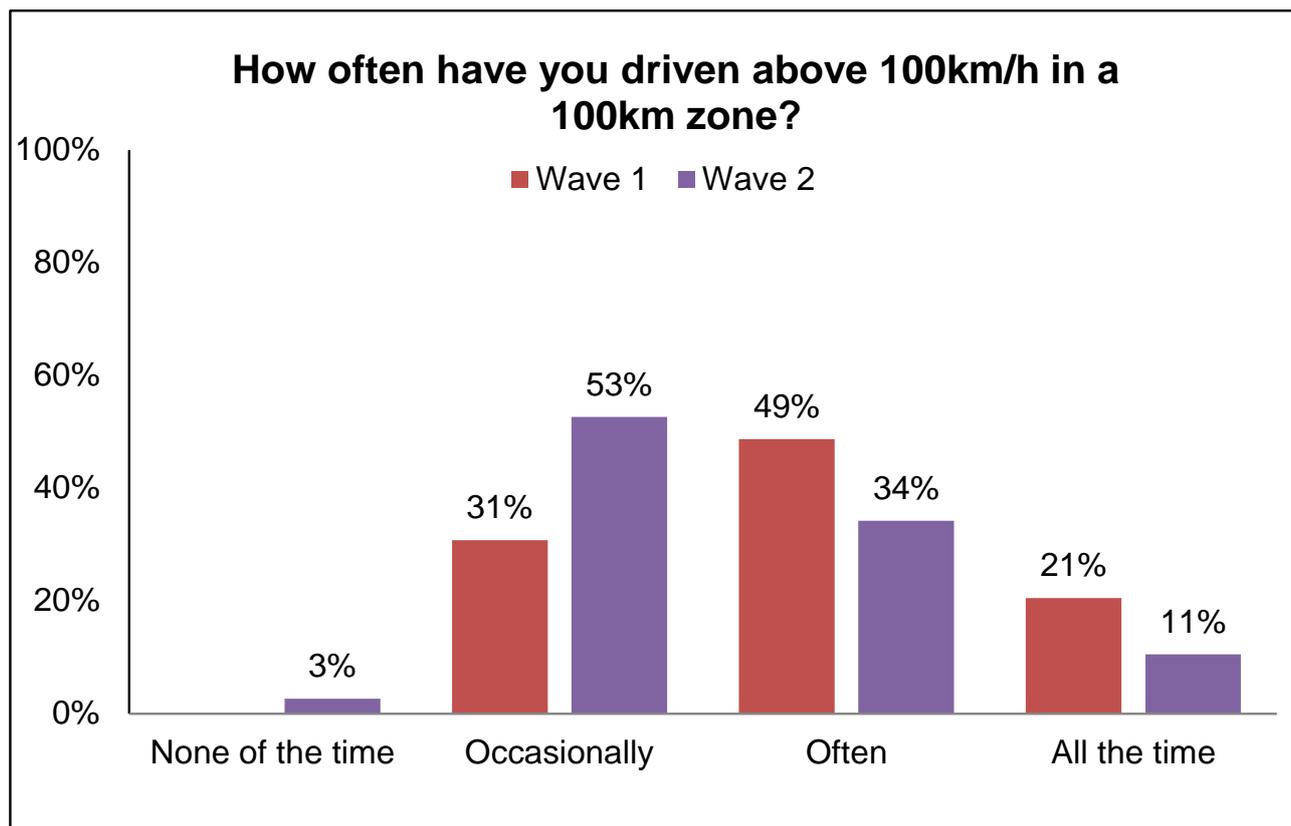
Error! Reference source not found. and **Error! Reference source not found.** below illustrate that, although by Wave 2 some participants may have lowered their acceptable speeding level, and/or reduced the frequency with which they broke the speed limit, many still felt that it was acceptable to moderately drive above the limit, and to not be booked for it.

Figure 5.1 How fast should people be allowed to drive in a 100km/h zone without being booked for speeding?



n=39

Figure 5.2 How often, if at all, have you driven above 100km/h in a 100km/h zone?



n=39

5.2.3. Drink-driving

In the Wave 1 focus groups, drink-driving was often a contentious topic – some were strongly opposed to it, some were opposed but admitted to doing it ‘occasionally’ or when they were younger (or, in contrast, when they got older and more experienced on the roads) and a few were complacent towards it. There were also examples given by respondents of where they recognised it was very risky, but those ‘risks’ could be assessed (and hence potentially reduced) depending on factors such as who the driver was, the amount of alcohol consumed, the distance to travel and the roads to be travelled on.

By Wave 2, there had been some more reflection among some on the issue of drink-driving, including greater awareness of the behaviour and actions of friends, and others around them. One example given was a respondent thinking about her peers, and their acceptability of drink-driving.

Respondent *What scared me a lot was how many people thought it was okay to have drink and drive, and I've always had that policy of no. And then drugs and driving as well... it didn't really change my attitude towards driving as such, but it was just like, I thought about my friends a lot more and what they would do. And unfortunately a lot of my friends would drink too, but I'd never thought of it that way*

- Moderator* So has that actually changed how you think about drink driving?
- Respondent* Yeah well it actually made me make more comments to my friends when they were drinking (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

In another example, a respondent was more proactive than he said he would have been prior to discussing the issues at the focus group.

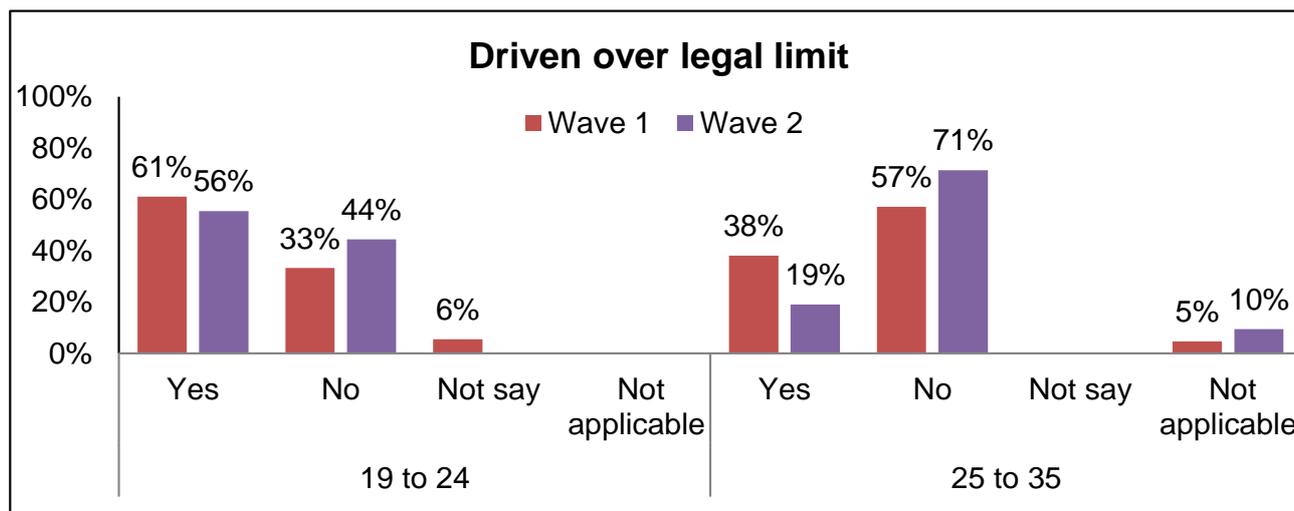
- Respondent* I've taken keys off a couple of the boys at the pub ...I've done that a couple of times since then ... or offered to take them home before you have a beer or something like that, or drive their car and get their Mum to drop you back there
- Moderator* And is that different for you to be doing that?
- Respondent* Yeah, I would have usually just said – wouldn't have thought about it not think twice about it but it has hit home a few times (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

One respondent described an experience where having discussed the issues relating to risk and drink-driving, he had become more hesitant than previously about whether or not he was over the limit.

- Respondent:* I've thought about in terms of the drink-driving ones. I was at a mate's place not long after we had the last meeting and only had maybe two or three beers, but even got to the point where I was just like turning around the corner and it's just not worth the risk and ended up getting me partner to pick me up, even though I'd only had maybe two, three beers, and was probably on just the edge, but it just wasn't worth, oh I thought about it and you know, it just wasn't worth it
- Moderator* So if you hadn't have been discussing it at the focus group....?
- Respondent* Yeah nah I probably would have just, you know – being around the corner and only having just a very little amount, I would have probably just driven.... The risk is losing my license and can't get to work, you know. I could hurt someone else or, even though it's only from here to maybe the pub away from here, it's just... (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

Consistent with the findings from Wave 1, and the discussion from Wave 2, **Error! Reference source not found.** below illustrates how the frequency with which people engage in drink-driving is closely associated with the age, or life stage of the driver, whereby it is almost three times more likely for younger drivers between the ages of 19 and 24 to do so. It is evident too, that there was a greater drop in the number of participants who admitted to drink-driving between Wave 1 and Wave 2 for those between the ages of 25 to 35, compared to those under the age of 24.

Figure 5.3 During the last 6 months, have you driven a car when you knew, or thought, you were over the legal drink/drive limit? By age group:



N=39

5.3. Encouraging change in behaviour of others

Some talked about giving more thought to the driving behaviour of those around them or being more aware of others – particularly their peers or family members – since taking part in the research. This was particularly the case with drink-driving. Examples were given of suggesting to a friend who was clearly ‘inebriated’ that he or she should not be driving or taking away the keys of someone who was clearly over the limit.

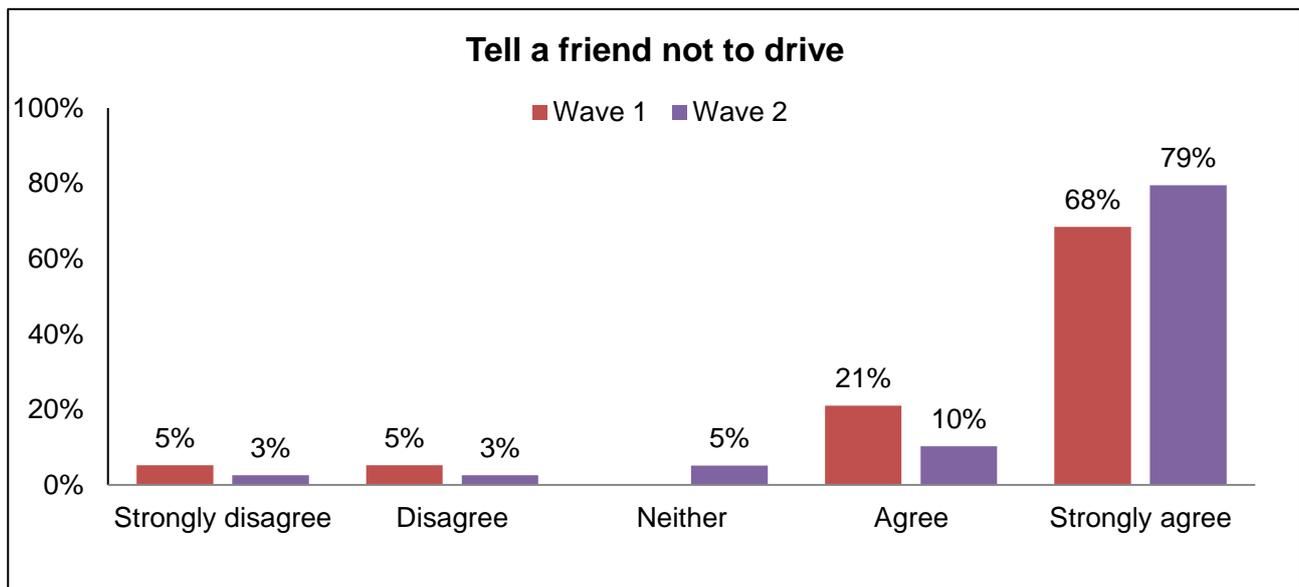
Yeah it made me think twice when he said 'oh I'm going home' and picked up the keys (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Another example was given by a female respondent who felt more motivated to talk to her partner about his (apparently poor) driving.

But now I think I find times to talk. Especially my husband who is a bad driver, and I worry. And so I make times to talk about it, because I think it helps, and I think it has changed his behaviour somewhat (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

At both Wave 1 and Wave 2, participants felt comfortable actively discouraging friends to drink/drive (Figure 5.4); with a slight increase in the number of people who felt that they would not have a problem with this at Wave 2.

Figure 5.4 I would not have a problem with telling a close friend not to drive if I thought they were over the legal drink/driving limit



n=39

5.4. Were changes sustained?

There were mixed responses about whether any changes in attitudes or behaviour over time were sustained (over the six month study period). For some – males particularly – whilst they may have thought about some of the issues discussed in the short term, after a while this appeared to fade.

It's like quitting smoking, though. It's just that initial period and, then, after that you just fall back into old habits. Because it's not there reminding you. It's the same sort of thing, I reckon (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

However, for others – particularly females – there was evidently sustained change. In the main, this was related to attitudes including a general heightened awareness of risk and of the possible consequences, but in some cases respondents clearly reported enduring changes, particularly related to reducing speed.

5.5. What about those who hadn't changed their behaviour?

Although there were many who said that, at the very least, they had given a little more thought to driving and risks since taking part in the research, there were also some who said that they had not given it much more thought, and that it certainly had not made a difference to how they drove. This was more common in the male focus groups than in the female groups, but was evident in both (see

below). Often even though their attitudes to other drivers may have changed - insofar as they may have become more aware of the kind of risks other drivers take - this often did not manifest in sustained changes in their own behaviour. In part, this was because many felt that they were still 'good' or 'safe' drivers (for example, only taking risks when they were alone, they judged it 'safe' to do so or they knew that they would not get 'caught'). In such cases, respondents reported that they may have thought fleetingly about the issues, but made no actual changes.

To be honest, I didn't really view anything much differently other than the group. When I went away, like, as the other girl said, I was probably a bit more cautious, but not dramatically. I think just a little bit thinking about my actions and that kind of thing but, again, that probably only lasts for about four weeks and then it just kind of... I just forgot about it and got back into old habits (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

No I don't think my driving has changed at all, actually (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

I don't know, I think I'm a pretty safe driver. I've never been in an accident. I get out of situations pretty well when there's idiots around (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

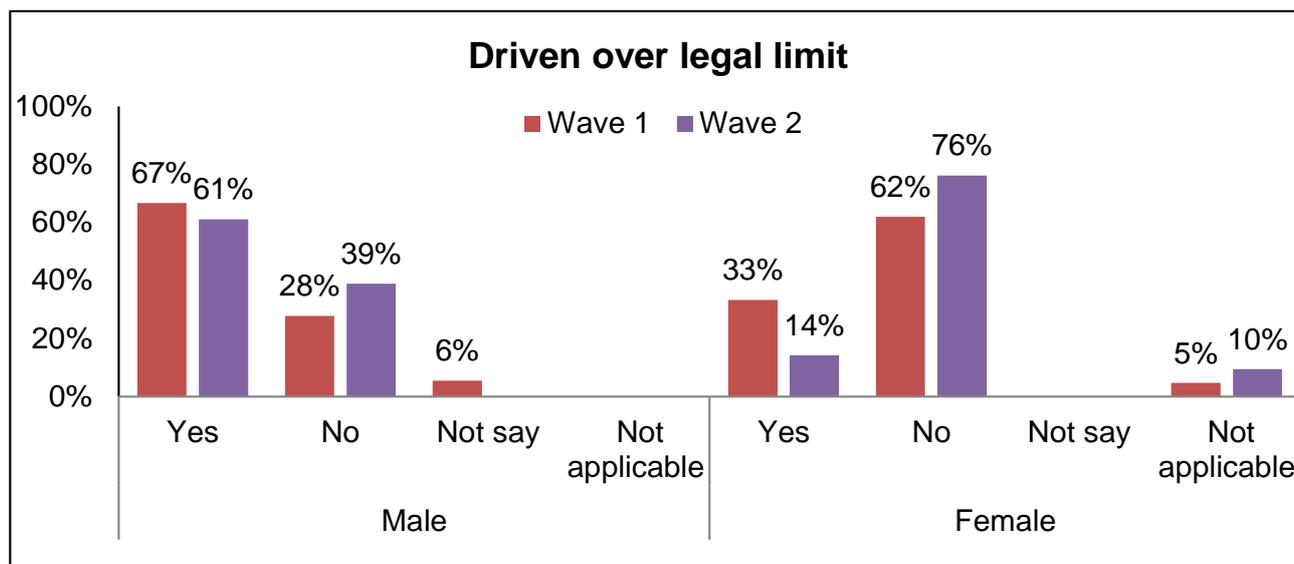
However, in other cases the view was that they had always driven this way, and it was difficult to change at this stage – what had a bigger impact on their behaviour, it was said, was specific outcomes such as points or loss of licence.

I think a meeting doesn't change our speed or driving things, I think the thing what change all speed, driving is, after we lost points, after we get a fine... (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

... Count how many beers I'd had and figured... spend an hour in KFC and ate as much as I could, I'd be right to walk - ah, drive home. So drove home, thought about the risks ... thought about what we talked about, yeah drove home anyway (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

I feel fine to drive home like I've got my own points towards it but then that's just normal if I go and play pool I'll have a beer or two over the whole night just playing pool and then I'll ride home. If I was planning on getting real drunk, I'd get someone to pick me up and get someone to drop me off then start (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Figure 5.5 During the last 6 months, have you driven a car when you know, or thought you were over the legal drink/drive limit? By gender



n=39

6. Other factors moderating thought and behaviour over time

This section considers other factors that appear to have had an influence on people's behaviour over the six month study period that may not be directly attributable to or caused by the experience of participating in this research. It considers (and in some cases, revisits) issues relating to:

- fear of loss of licence
- interlocks
- the TAC campaigns
- recent experience of accidents, and
- life stage or lifestyle changes.

6.1. Fear of loss of licence

At Wave 1, the potential accumulation of demerit points and the resultant loss of licence were recognised as a factor that contributed to moderating risky driving behaviour over time. This was particularly the case for those who had already lost their licence and hence had 'first-hand' experience of the associated inconvenience and disruption on their everyday life of not being able to drive. This subject was raised again by respondents in the Wave 2 discussions.

I now stick to the speed limit everywhere, I'm sick of getting fines and losing demerit points (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

At Wave 2, particular consideration was given in the focus groups about the relative deterrent of loss of licence compared to the issuing of fines. In one focus group, reference was made to other states that were said to have recently reduced fines but increased the demerit point system. This was said to be a much greater deterrent (and perhaps negated the general view that the fine system was primarily 'revenue-raising').

I take more issue with the fact that if they seriously wanted to reduce the road toll, they wouldn't just fine you, they'd take away your ability to drive.... I think that would be more of a deterrent (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

The demerit point loss is more than enough, that's what people worry about, it's not the fine it's 'shit, who can I get to take the points, I've got none left' (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

I'm more worried about the points because if I lose my licence it's a bigger issue than forking out a few hundred bucks, you know (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

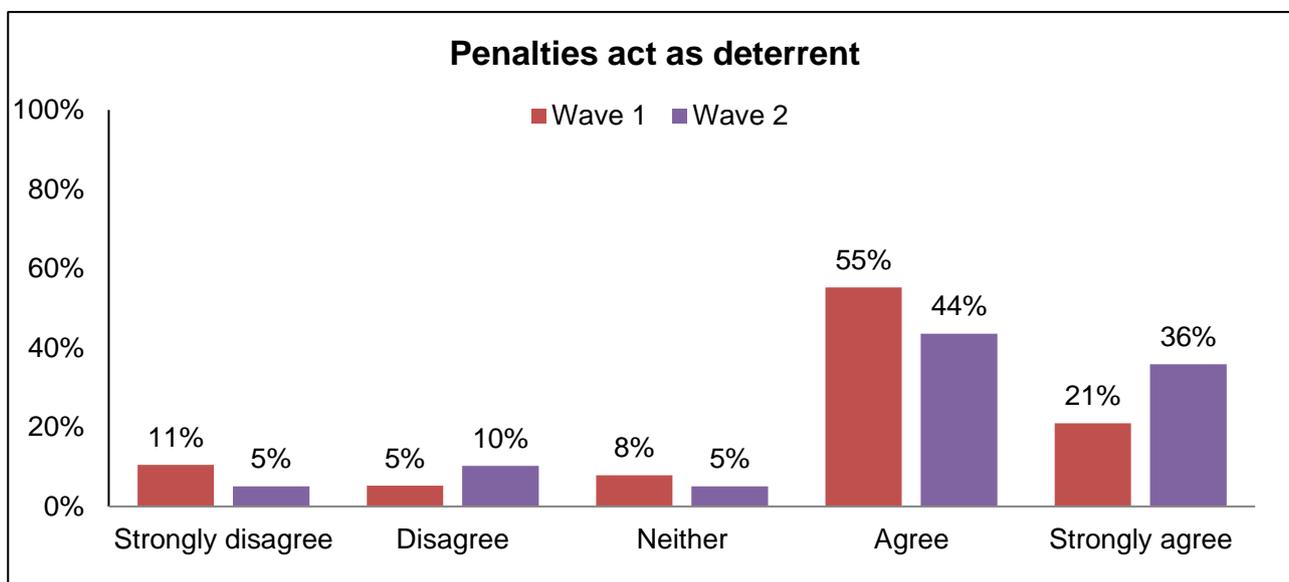
Related to this renewed concern about losing one's licence, was peers losing their licence. This was mentioned as something that had happened since the last focus group which had changed people's attitudes and behaviour, but was not directly

associated with participating in the research (although people’s awareness, thoughts and reasoning may have arguably been heightened).

Yeah, well that’s one thing that has happened, three of our friends have lost their licence recently and I haven’t, oh well I have definitely stopped drink-driving (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

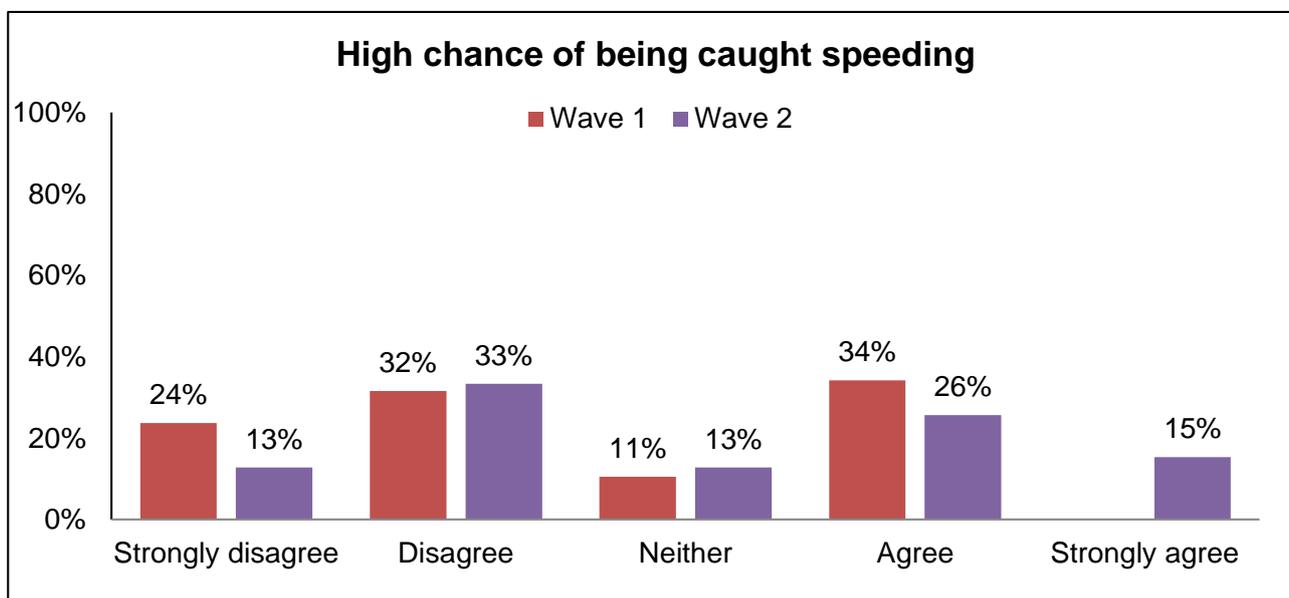
At both Wave 1 and Wave 2, participants generally agreed that penalties for speeding did act as a deterrent when driving (Figure 6.1). Nevertheless, participants were almost evenly divided as to whether or not getting caught for speeding would be likely (Figure 6.2). Thus it makes some sense that at Wave 2, less than half of the participants (16) claimed that ‘My chances of being caught speeding’ was either an ‘Important’ or ‘Very important’ factor in deciding how fast to drive.

Figure 6.1 Penalties for speeding act as a deterrent when I’m driving



n=39

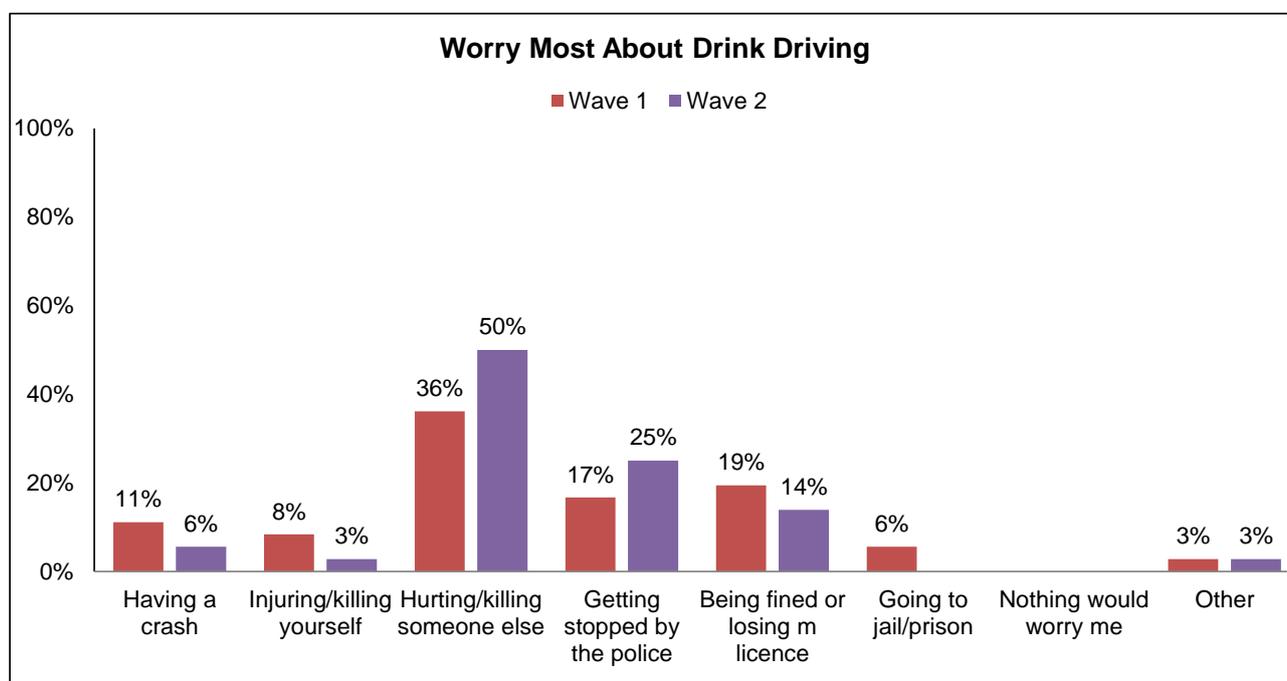
Figure 6.2 If I was to speed the next time I drive, I would have a high chance of being caught



n=39

It should be noted that in both Wave 1 and Wave 2 discussions, participants expressed that their primary disincentive for breaking the road rules, including speeding or drink-driving, was being caught by the police and receiving a fine/losing demerit points/losing their licences (this view was also shared by bulletin board participants, as discussed in Section 8.1). Nevertheless, it is evident at Figure 6.3, that when answering the question ‘If you were to drive while over the legal drink/drive limit, what would you worry about the most?’ in the questionnaire, the primary response given was ‘Hurting/killing someone else’ (13 participants at Wave 1, 18 participants at Wave 2). This difference between the responses may be due to the fact that one was provided in a group discussion whereas the other was provided individually as a written response.

Figure 6.3 If you were to drive while over the legal drink/drive limit, what would you worry about the most?



n=39

6.2. Alcohol Interlocks

Victoria has implemented alcohol interlock legislation which requires that an alcohol interlock is fitted to a car whose driver has been convicted of serious drink driving offences, to prevent the car being started if the driver has been drinking. The alcohol interlock program begins when a drink driving offender has been banned from driving and the banned period is about to end¹. The compulsory fitting of interlocks is being extended to all drink-drivers in Victoria, not just those with high BAC readings, or persistent offenders. There had been some media coverage about this around the time of the second wave of focus groups and as a result it was raised in five out of the six focus groups (it was not raised at all at Wave 1). Discussions were around the cost of installation and servicing to the

¹ VicRoads ‘Victoria’s Alcohol Interlock Program’, see <http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/165AE18C-BBCF-4E49-8A08-AD9DF906E11D/0/AlcoholInterlockSummary.pdf>

driver, what kind of drinking offences would lead to the interlock being installed and stories of its actual use – either from some within the groups who had had it fitted to others who had friends with it installed.

Me brother's just come through it .. he had the mortgage, the kids and all that and it was costing him, you know \$400 something dollars a month (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

I had the interlocker and stuff, I don't want to go down that path again, and cost meself a fortune, but if that didn't happen to me, I'd probably still.... I was not lucky I got caught but if I hadn't been caught at this stage I'd probably still be five or six cans, drive home, no worries (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

I've got a friend who's got a bretho in his car and it's the most annoying tool in the world (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

I have an interlocker and I can't wait to get it off... (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains).

6.3. Greater awareness of TAC/campaigns

Certainly by the second wave of the focus groups it was evident in most cases that respondents were much more au fait with the TAC and appeared to have a greater awareness and/or knowledge of some of the TAC campaigns, and most had an opinion on the relative efficacy of these.

The TAC keep shooting themselves in the foot with all of these things... they keep doing these deso ads, if you're ever gonna go to a party and need a designated driver, you're probably between the ages of 18 and 21, you're a P-plater, and then you're not allowed to have enough people in your car so every second bloke's a designated driver (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

Every time I see the TAC (signs) I'm like Oh, I did a group on that.... They've pretty much been there since the group so I'm assuming they were there before the group as well, and it's just that I'm more aware of it now (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

However, others said that they did not think of the TAC ads differently as a result of participating in the research – this was particularly evident where people already seemed to have a high awareness and recall of high profile TAC campaigns (such as the motorcycle one).

Those sorts of ads have always gotten me (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

Respondent 1 Cos that one of the bike overtaking, sliding into the truck, that just sort of...

Respondent 2: Yeah, that one's shocking

Respondent 1: ... makes me shiver, yeah pretty careful when I get on the bike (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

In both Mitchell and Ballarat/Golden Plains, mention was made of the new TAC distraction campaign (the Cardinia fieldwork took place prior to the launch of the distraction campaign) – with particular recall of the texting whilst driving. This campaign seemed to particularly resonate among some who felt that it could easily be them.

I think it's pretty powerful... there was so many different scenes where he near misses, and then it was just that one last... it was like a two-second thing. I suppose that's true though, because it's always near misses... I have had near misses before so I suppose it brings it home that we've had this many near misses that one day we're not going to be so lucky (Wave 2 females, Mitchell)

Of all the things that I could be doing that is similar to that situation (Wave 2 females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

... the distraction advertising, I think of other people, not myself.. it hasn't changed my personal attitude, that stuff. But having said that, I'm conscious of that being a distraction every time I do that, by the same token too. Keep your eyes on the road (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

6.4. Themselves/others in accidents

In considering the impact of the TAC campaigns on driving attitudes and behaviour among Wave 2 respondents, there was some discussion about the relative greater effect of first or second hand experience of road accidents or incidents – in a few cases incidents had occurred between the first wave and second wave of interviews and it was this that had, unsurprisingly, had a far more profound impact.

The only thing that's got me with the motorbike rider, I had a mate who had his licence for about two, three weeks and then went to overtake a car and, I dunno what happened, he spun off and yeah, he passed away... that put an effect on me, just keep an eye out for them, but not really the live TV ads (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

Just because my brother died, so I had the life experience that already brought the awareness.... A conversation, I don't know whether it helps but hearing someone's story as well (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

6.5. Life stage or lifestyle changes since Wave 1

As has been found in previous research, life stage is a major determinant of risky driving behaviours. In Wave 1 of this study, it was evident that changes such as family responsibilities, more financial responsibility and a general greater maturity were reasons for adjusting driving behaviour over time. This 'life stage' significance was returned to in the Wave 2 focus groups, with respondents further reflecting on how their current circumstances or situation had impacted on how they drove and the risks they took. It seemed apparent that such reflection was influenced by the earlier discussions at Wave 2, as some respondents had mulled

over those discussions and how their driving decisions and behaviour could potentially impact on their current situations.

I think it could be that we've lived more, but also quite often we've got more to lose (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

Some felt that life change had probably had the most significant impact on risky driving.

But the thing that has changed me is having my daughter. Obviously now I don't ever speed unless accidentally, like, and then I realise 'oh crap, I was speeding' and then slow down. But to be honest, yeah the focus group didn't really have that much impact on me on the road (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

7. Feedback from respondents on wave 1 findings

Within the Wave 2 focus groups, some of the qualitative and quantitative findings from Wave 1 were presented back to Wave 2 participants to provide them with some feedback with regard to the findings as well as to gather their responses to some of the specific findings, and their views on the researchers' interpretations thus far. The specific findings that were presented back to Wave 2 respondents were:

- typologies of risky driving behaviours
- drink-driving
- speeding, speed limits and enforcement, and
- perceptions of driving ability.

The 'Safe System' approach was also presented to respondents, to gauge their understanding and acceptability of such an approach².

7.1. Typologies of risky driving behaviours

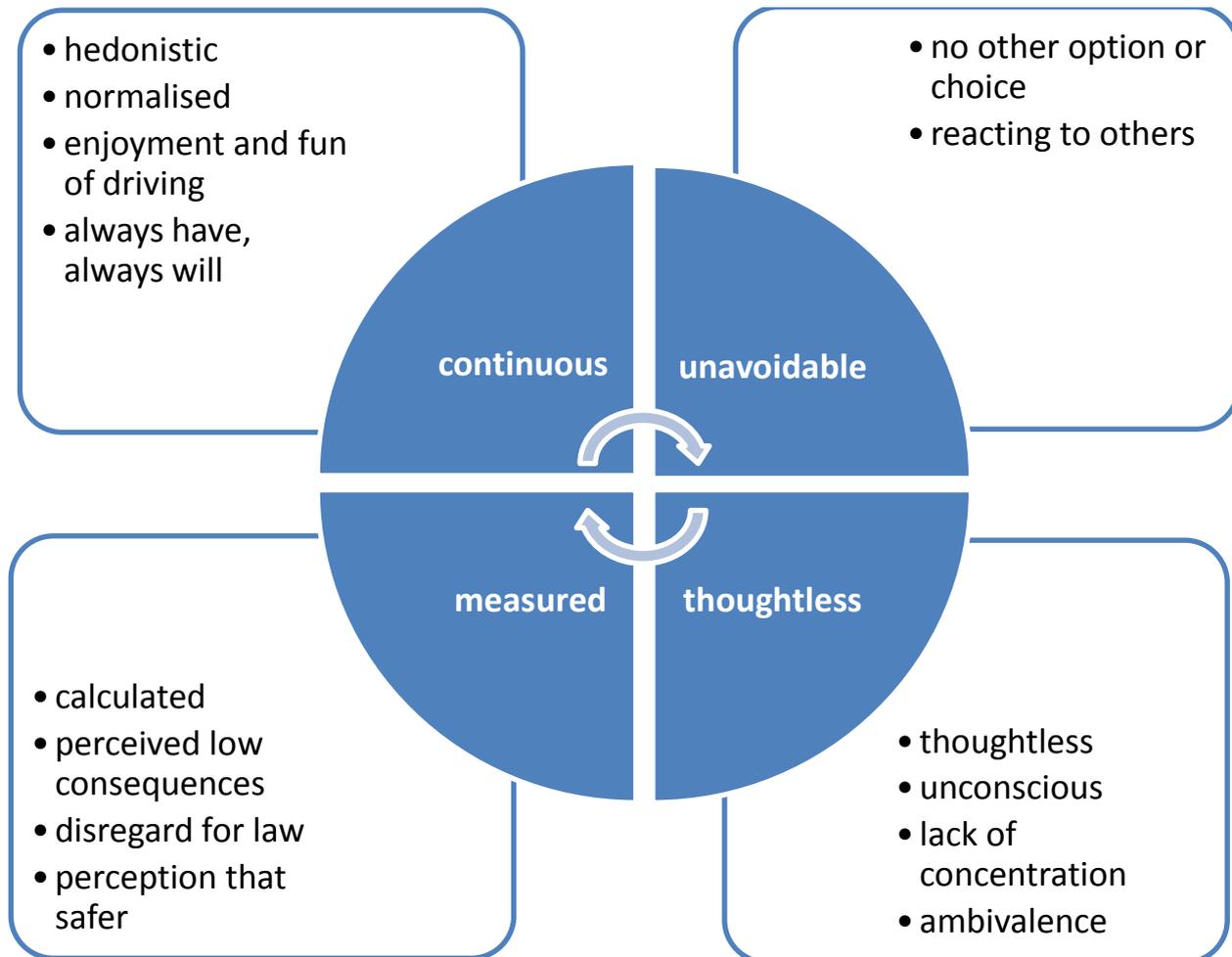
The Wave 1 qualitative data and subsequent analysis indicated that, broadly speaking, there were four different typologies of risky driving behaviour. These are:

- unavoidable/reactive behaviour
- thoughtless/unintentional behaviour
- measured/calculated behaviour; and
- continuous behaviour.

These typologies are summarised in Figure 7.1 below.

² The TAC has adopted a 'safe system' philosophy on road safety, which is a holistic method that aims to minimise the risk of death or serious injury on the roads by taking into account the interaction between roads, vehicles, speeds and road users. See <http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/the-safe-system> for further information.

Figure 7.1 Typologies of Risky Driving Behaviour



In Wave 1, examples of all of these risk taking behaviours were evident within and across the groups (see Wave 1 report for full details). In the Wave 2 focus groups, these four typologies of behaviour were presented to participants and a discussion was had about how salient these typologies were to people and whether they could recognise themselves (or others) in the different actions. A description of each type of behaviour is provided below (informed by the data analysis from Wave 1), together with Wave 2 respondents' thoughts on each typology.

7.1.1. "Unavoidable" (reactive) risk taking

This type of risk taking is considered by the driver to be 'unavoidable' in that at the time of engaging in the risk taking behaviour there seemed to be no other options left to the individual. The types of 'unavoidable' risky driving common to participants included driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, driving without a valid license because respondents reported there was no other way of getting around at the time, or driving above the speed limit was done because of the unavoidable lengthy distances that had to be travelled on a daily basis when living in non-metropolitan regional areas. Likewise, risky behaviours such as overtaking at great speed, or on an unsuitable stretch of road were often considered to be unavoidable reactions to others on the road. Driving fatigued was also something that a number of participants justified as unavoidable, because they simply wanted to get somewhere and stopping was not considered an option.

Interestingly, few respondents at Wave 2 recognised themselves in this category (despite many of them providing evidence to the contrary during earlier Wave 1 group discussions). Where they recognised that it could occur was primarily related to drink-driving (and even then, it seemed that it could be justified by there could be a legitimate, external reason for it, such as high cost of cabs or not *really* being over the BAC limit).

Yeah, I don't think with the cabs, it mainly is I don't ever think to call them I just think oh I'm not gonna pay that money for a cab I'd rather just drive home (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

It's also when there's no other option, there's no taxis, there's no trams (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

There generally is another option, I think, I know that I've driven home when I could have gotten mum to come and get me the next day, or someone, one of my friends would have come, but oh I don't think I'm that much over, I definitely don't think I'm over .05 (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Reacting to others' behaviour on the roads was also discussed as a reason or taking an unavoidable risk, for example, swerving to avoid an accident. Others felt that behaviour that fitted in to this category was actually avoidable, even though people may feel that it was not.

Just a general excuse maker, because as we said there's not really an unavoidable circumstance (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

7.1.2. "Thoughtless" (unintentional) risk taking

This type of risk taking involves a more subtle, unconscious form of justification by the driver and is engaged in with a relatively low level of personal responsibility for risk and danger on the roads. Thoughtless or unintentional risk taking was common amongst males and females from all regions. Generally, these risks occurred because of boredom, a lack of concentration, or general ambivalence. These include accidental speeding, or unintentionally driving over the BAC limit when unsure whether they are over or not. Related to this unintentional behaviour are actions that can be considered ingrained or habitual to the individual and thus engaged in with little thought or contemplation. The most common forms of this habitual risky behaviour were speeding and using a mobile phone device behind the wheel, and also included failing to wear a seatbelt, or driving without paying much attention. Some participants explained that this behaviour became more common as they got older, more confident and less diligent as a driver.

The types of risks that could be categorised as unconsidered also include those where the perpetrator appears to have an unrealistic or misguided sense of what was risky or dangerous. This included behaviours considered inconsequential such as failing to wear a seatbelt or driving with too many passengers in the car. Some recognised that they may have an unrealistic perception of risk because they had never experienced a negative consequence of their risky behaviour.

Many participants commonly admitted to engaging in risky driving with ambivalence.

Wave 2 responses to this category indicated that, as with the 'unavoidable' behaviour, most respondents did not recognise themselves in this category. Again, this was despite giving many examples in previous waves for this kind of driving behaviour. When the behaviour type was presented to the focus groups, the main recognition was related to speed 'creeping up' without people realising it, or not appreciating what the speed limit was in a particular (unfamiliar) area.

I lost my licence between the last meeting and this one, so ...but that was a school zone, but I didn't realise it was a school zone and it was in an area I wasn't familiar with and I didn't see the sign, so I feel really stupid, but I have this rule for myself that I don't speed (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

I think another thing with that one is sometimes you can pull out of a T-intersection onto a main drag and they don't have a sign up in front of thefour, five hundred metres up the road and yeah, sometimes you'll guess what pace you're doing (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

Another example given in one group was driving the morning after drinking, and not realising that they were still over the limit.

Next morning could be (over the limit) next morning if you've had a massive night you get up at 8 o'clock and you want Macca's yeah you haven't gone to bed until 5. You are usually going to be still over (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

7.1.3. "Measured" (calculated) risk taking

This type of risk taking shares similarities with the 'unavoidable' and 'thoughtless' risk taking types, but is different in that measured risks involve an increased process of personal assessment and consequent justification based on the particulars of a specific situation the driver is in. For many, a risk could be considered acceptable if there was little chance of consequence, where the consequence could be an accident or police apprehension. In this sense, these risks can be considered 'measured', in that the consequences are taken into account (either accurately or inaccurately) and an active decision is made to take the 'calculated' risk. A very common measured risk participants engaged in was speeding 5-20km above the speed limit. For many, slight increases in speed were not considered dangerous, nor did they increase the chances of being caught given the right road or time of day.

Some illegal behaviours were considered to be safer than obeying the road rules at times, for example, overtaking at a high speed, or driving in the middle of the road at night time in order to avoid the unsealed roadsides or wildlife. In making a personal calculated assessment of risk that disregarded the law, many participants explained that they drew a line at particular behaviours that they themselves assessed to be genuinely risky, and therefore, to be avoided. These subjective

divisions of acceptability and unacceptability were more commonly made by males than females.

In the Wave 2 discussions, this was the category that most respondents could relate to in terms of their own behaviour.

I think most people would be in that (calculated risk taking category), I think there would be a lot of people who are making excuses for themselves, like I do, to go a little bit faster or do something that I reckon most people would ... I just think it's all the time, because you are always thinking about when you can and can't do little things that are illegal, all the time I'm in the car I think I better not do that right here, or I can do that here (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Many talked about the risks they took in driving as being related to a measured or calculated decision, based on their perceptions of their ability as a driver, and the environment in which they were driving in. In the main, this was related to speeding, but drink-driving was also mentioned, as well as using a mobile phone.

Talking about the highway one, the calculated is putting your cruise control on a hundred and five k's an hour... You know you're going a hundred and five k's an hour, it's telling you ... (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

Speeding on an open road, that's a calculated risk, you know (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Respondent ... little short funny Facebook things, you're scrolling down your newsfeed like oh that's hilarious, watch that

Moderator Where would that fall into then?

Respondent Calculated (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

Can I just say, as someone who does speed every day, I tend to, I'm really particular about when I speed, where I speed, and what traffic is like, what the road conditions are like. If I know the road really well, and I know the road is pretty good standard, and the weather is ok, and I know that the traffic is fairly light, I will speed. But if there's lots, if one of those factors change then I'll go back to the speed limit (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

If it's a road that I know pretty well, I'll give it a bit, or if I'm just running late, yeah, but not stupidly do it, just a couple of k's over (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

It was pointed out in one instance that this kind of driving behaviour was not necessarily risk-taking, but was common sense – particularly relating to calculated decisions about speeding.

I don't think it's calc-, I think it's just common sense, like don't mean to be rude but .. if you're gonna overtake somebody... for me it's common sense: speed up, go round, get back in, and then ...return to the normal speed limit to go around a slower car (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

A particularly common example given by respondents of calculated risk taking related specifically to driving at excessive speeds on 'country' roads, whereby respondents made the decision and calculated an acceptable speed, based on their knowledge of that road, their perception of whether there would be others around (such as pedestrians, other vehicles or police).

Just speeding that tiny bit over, or on country roads, like I know I'm doing it, I know it's wrong, I choose not to do it in the city, but I will do it on country roads (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

7.1.4. "Hedonistic" and continuous risk taking

Continuous risk taking here is conceptualised as risks that are taken intentionally and for their own sake, for example for pleasure or to impress one's peers. It also includes risky behaviours that are engaged in consistently, as, for example, a driving norm, or risky behaviours that are part of how individuals drive at all times. For many males across all regions, particular risks behind the wheel were undertaken as a pastime that provided great pleasure. Risk taking for the thrill of breaking the rules, was also reported. For these participants, there was no justification other than the enjoyment they got from the activity. Whilst this was the case for a small number of women too, it was far more common for males. Pleasure-seeking risk taking of this nature was almost always accompanied by a strong interest in cars and car maintenance.

In the Wave 2 discussions, there was a general view that this behaviour was most prevalent among young people, particularly males and P-plate holders. Some respondents did recognise themselves as being in this group in the past, and a few (males) said they still took these kinds of 'risks'. Often, it was said to be about the 'adrenaline'.

The younger people would probably, a lot of them would fall into the 'continuous' one (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)

I don't fit into continuous anymore, I used to but I don't any more I grew up (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

Respondent: Intentional hooning... Yeah I do it

Moderator You still do it?

Respondent Yeah... Just for fun really (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

Speeding really, I like speeding, going fast, it's fun... Only in a controlled area, I only do it when there's no other cars around... So you know you're not gonna hurt anyone else, and you don't have anyone else in the car (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

Others, notably females, felt that this was not the kind of behaviour they regularly involved themselves in.

Probably, yeah (I do) the three, the unavoidable, the unplanned and calculated. Probably not continuous, I don't speed because I think it's fun, I don't risk take because I think it's fun, it's just more for getting places fast and not because I feel like a rebel or anything like that (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

7.2. Drink-driving

The Wave 1 data that was fed back to Wave 2 respondents (via a handout and explanation from the moderator) was as follows:

ALCOHOL & DRINK-DRIVING (Wave 1 findings)

- Alcohol was ranked (by respondents) as the #1 factor most often leading to serious road accidents
- Driving with a blood/alcohol content of .05 or more received the highest 'danger' ranking from a list of 8 risky driving behaviours
- But, almost half (49%) of you admitted to driving whilst suspecting yourselves to be over the .05 limit in the last 6 months

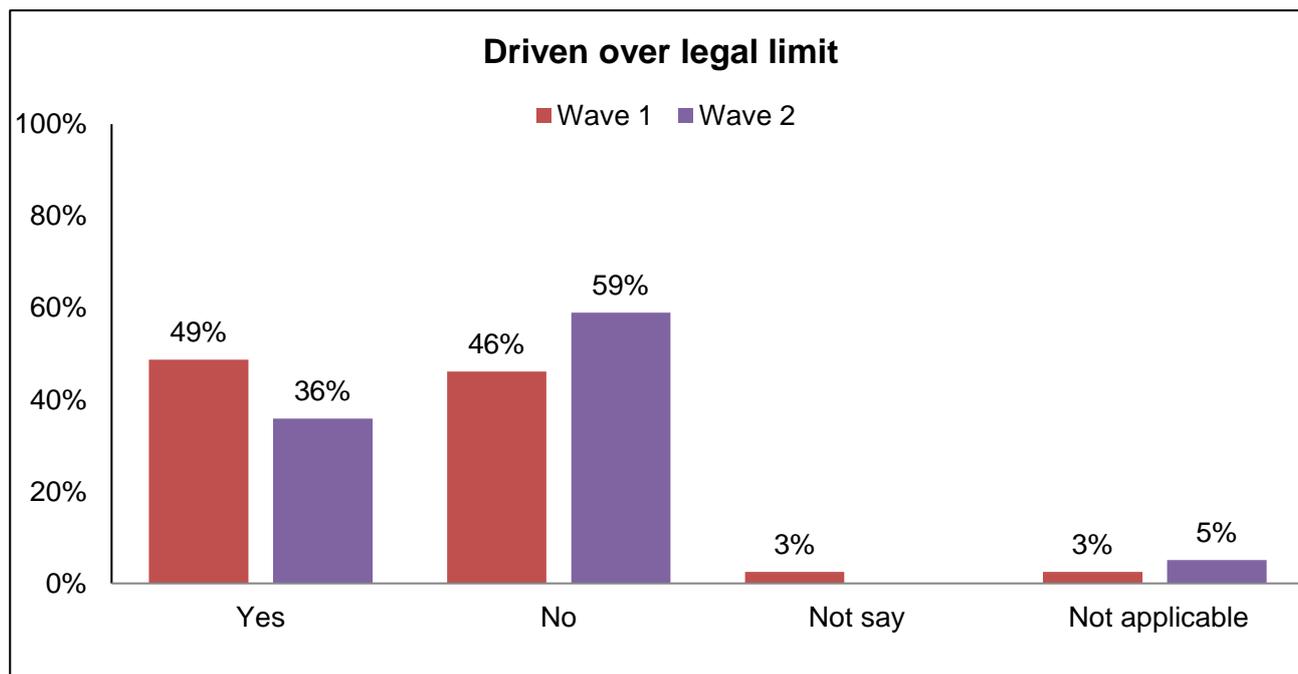
Respondents were asked what they thought about these findings, and about the apparent contradiction between recognising that drink-driving was dangerous and was the most probable cause of serious accidents, and the admission by half that they had indeed driven when over the limit in the previous six months. The explanation for this appeared to be related to people's own perception of their driving ability, a view that *'it won't happen to me'* and admission that it was only something that was done occasionally.

If I feel like I can't drive, I won't, but if I feel like I'm up to it and I've only had three beers or something like that, I'll drive. I'm just a lot more cautious when I do drive (wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Interestingly, among the longitudinal cohort (the 39 people who took part in both Wave 1 and Wave 2), the numbers reporting having driven whilst over the legal drink/drive drink/drive limit in the last six months had fallen slightly (

Figure 7.2), although it still remained that a third said they had (rising to two-thirds when looking at males only).

Figure 7.2 During the last 6 months, have you driven a car when you knew, or thought, you were over the legal drink/drive limit?



n=39

7.3. Speeding, speed limits and enforcement

The Wave 1 data around speeding that was fed back to Wave 2 respondents was as follows:

SPEEDING (Wave 1 findings)

- Speeding ranked (by respondents) as #2 factor that most often led to serious road accidents
- 71% of participants claimed that speeding greatly increased the chances of crashing
- However, 72% claimed to drive above 100km/h in a 100km/h zone “often/all the time”, and almost half (47%) of you believed people should be able to drive up to 110km/h in a 100km/h zone before being booked

Discussions were had in Wave 2 about the also seemingly contradictory findings about speeding, including the finding that at Wave 1 about half felt that enforcing the speed limit did help to lower the road toll (amid views that speeding fines were simply a way to increase revenue rather than making the roads safe). Respondents were often still of the view that the revenue from speeding fines was not put to ‘good use’ (such as on road repairs), and some still felt that the speed limits could at times be arbitrary and could change on one section of the road to another for no obvious reason.

Again, it was evident that respondents explained this apparent inconsistency by separating their own risk from that of others, and that speeding greatly increased the chance of *others* crashing, but not necessarily themselves.

I can speed because I trust myself (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

It's bad drivers; like, you can't handle going that fast, don't go that fast, with the conditions, if you can't drive in the conditions at that speed, don't do it (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

Related to this was a view among some that there should be more of a 'buffer' on the speed limit – particularly at 100km.

Moderator *why do you think the limit is 100, what is the basis for that, would you say?*

Respondent1 *Overprotectiveness?*

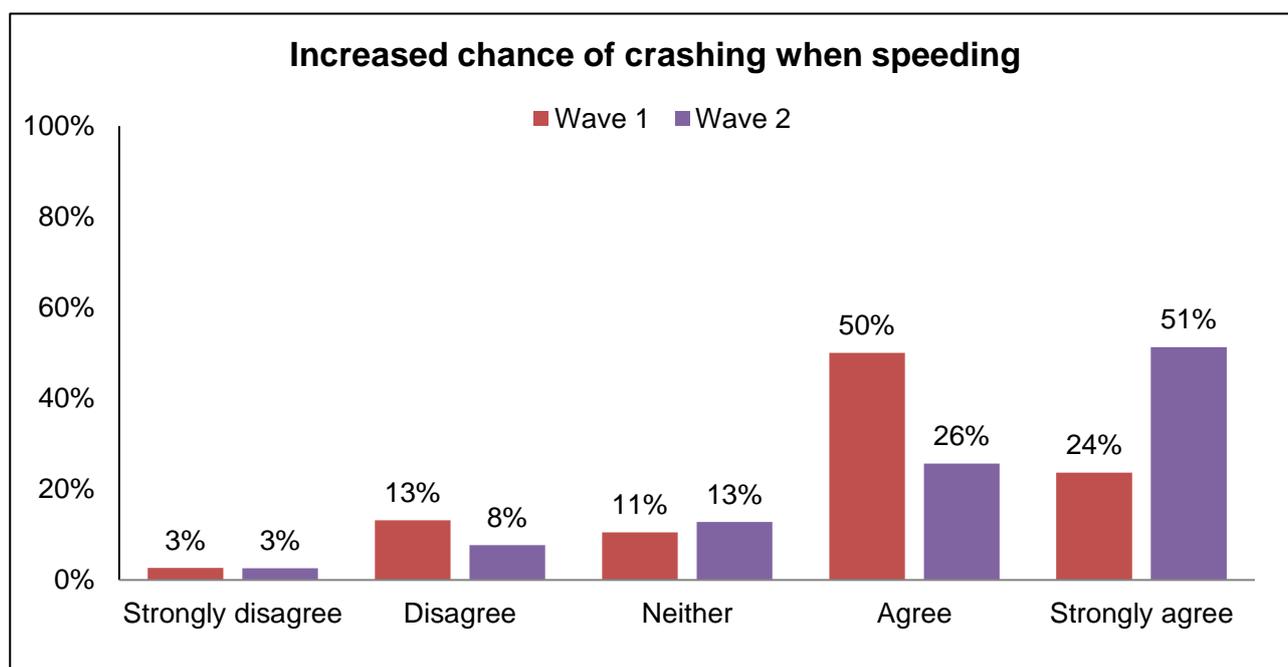
Respondent2 *Australia's the new grandma state*

Respondent3 *mmm basically, 'specially Victoria, I think it's just overprotectiveness (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia)*

Interestingly, results for the questionnaire item 'Thinking about how fast or slow you travel when you are driving, what influences your driving speed?' changed considerably from Wave 1 to Wave 2. At Wave 1, 12 participants rated 'the speed limit' as being either an 'important' or 'very important' factor in deciding how fast to drive, compared to 23 participants at Wave 2.

As with the quantitative findings from Wave 1, the questionnaire responses from Wave 2 (shown below in Figure 7.3) show that generally, participants believed that speeding increased the chances of having a crash. However, there was a considerable shift from 'Agree' to 'Strongly agree' – at Wave 2, 20 participants selected 'Strongly agree', as opposed to only 9 at Wave 1. Likewise, at Wave 2, 10 participants selected 'Agree', as opposed to 19 at Wave 1. This suggests that for some at least greater thought had been given to the consequences of speeding.

Figure 7.3 Speeding greatly increases my chances of crashing



n=39

At Wave 1, many respondents justified speeding because they had long distances to drive because of living in a regional area, even to get to places such as the supermarket or work, and that they were often short on time. During the Wave 2 discussions, a finding from the TAC was presented to the group on journey times, and that driving 110 in a 100 zone only saves around half a minute on a 10km journey. Respondents were asked whether they were surprised at hearing that, and whether it made them feel differently about speeding to get somewhere quicker. Most were surprised.

It does make you think why would you do it. Really (Wave 2 Males, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Yeah it's true, when you do the maths you don't really save any time at all (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

However, others felt that it was still justified.

I don't know, sometimes that 30 seconds is still whether I get to work at 8.30 or 8.31, I still feel satisfied I got here in time (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

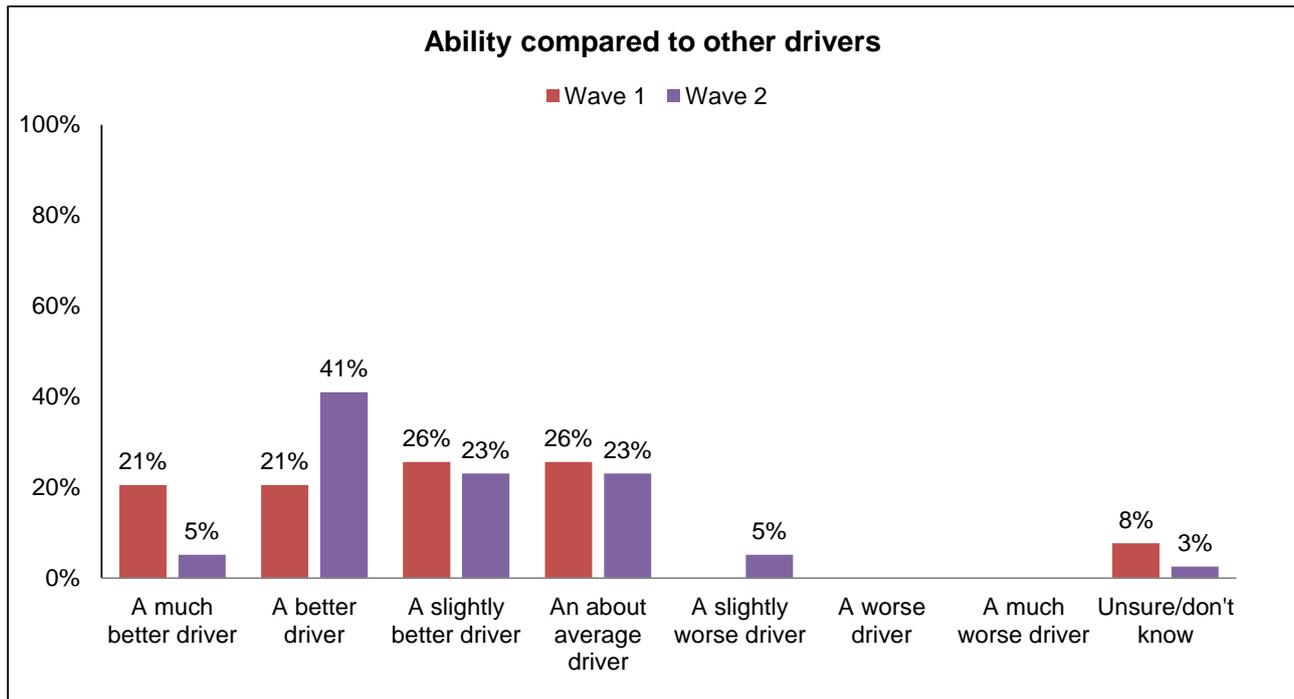
7.4. Perceptions of driving ability

At Wave 1, respondents were asked (in the self-completion questionnaire) to rate their driving ability compared to the average driver on Victorian roads. Almost all respondents rated their driving as above average compared to other drivers on the roads.

I guess because I trust my own judgement and I trust my own driving skills (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

A comparison of self-rated driving ability of the cohort who participated in both Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the research (Figure 7.4) shows that while most still thought that they were above average in their driving skills, there was a slight downward shift of those who thought that they were a 'much' better driver (only two drivers – both males – said that they were a much better driver at Wave 2, compared to eight people at Wave 1). This may suggest that people fluctuate in their self-assessment of their driving ability, or that there has been some subtle adjustment over time in how they view their own driving.

Figure 7.4 Self-assessment of driving skills compared to the ‘average’ driver



n=39

7.5. Safe System

The Safe System approach was described to respondents as a TAC approach to road safety, which adopts safe system principles (as in the box below), which means that drivers need to take on some responsibility, for example, in complying with the road laws. In the focus groups, respondents were asked what they thought of such an approach, and whether they could foresee it working in their locality.

SAFE SYSTEM

Safe System requires action in 3 areas:

- Road users to comply with the ‘rules’
- Safer cars
- Roads and roadsides are safer (e.g. sealed shoulders and side barriers, appropriate speed limit, roundabouts etc.).

“5 star drivers in 5 star cars on 5 star roads”

Within the groups, respondents did have some difficulty with understanding the concept of a Safe System approach, and the principles inherent in that. That said, one of the biggest concerns respondents articulated with this approach was feeling that it meant that ‘safer cars’ meant that people would have to have newer cars. Discussions in the groups revealed a concern about the feasibility of this approach in terms of how people would afford to have safer (newer) cars, and what it meant for those who preferred to (or were obliged to) drive older cars (related to this was a view in a few of the groups that older cars could be more robust and sturdy than

newer ones and less likely to '*crumple like cans*'). Furthermore, there was a view in some of the groups that having safer cars could encourage drivers to be less compliant with the road rules and perhaps take greater risks.

Well it makes them lackadaisy 'cause they think I don't need to drive 'cause the car's doing it for me (Wave 2 Males, Mitchell)

It was also suggested that there will be some drivers who will never comply with the 'rules', and that risks will also remain with, for example, large trucks on the roads.

People lack the responsibility... there will be a subset of people that will never, ever, consider doing that (Wave 2 Females, Cardinia)

The 'Safe System' approach was also covered in the second bulletin board discussion, which included some more complex topics related to crash safety avoidance systems, injury prevention systems, road design issues and speed impact. Data from this revealed that when explained in detail, people did understand the principle, but participants struggled with the reality of the concept (see Section 8.3).

8. Bulletin board findings

In the intervening period between Wave 1 and Wave 2, three online ‘bulletin board’ discussions were held. This was an innovative departure from TAC’s previous regional qualitative research and as such was seen as both exploratory in its purpose and experimental in its design and use for this type of study (qualitative longitudinal social research) and with this type of client group (young ‘risky’ drivers).

Consent from participants in two of the three areas (Cardinia and Mitchell) was sought at the end of Wave 1 focus groups to invite them (by email) to participate in these online discussions (see Section 10 for a more comprehensive description of the methodology). Participants in the third area – Ballarat – were not invited to take part to retain a ‘quasi-control’ element in the research. This approach was taken so that at Wave 2, one of the issues that could be explored was whether on-going dialogue, prompts or other forms of engagement in the research would (further) sustain the salience of the issues discussed at Wave 1 around risky driving. Each bulletin board had a theme: speeding, general road safety and the Safe System, and drink and drug driving.

8.1. Speeding – feedback from the first Bulletin Board discussions

Photos of some local roads (which participants would have been familiar with) were posted on the bulletin board, and participants were asked what they thought the hazards were in the photos, and what they thought the speed limits should be on that stretch of road (see Appendix 3 for example screenshot). There were just five responses to this – all felt that the main hazards on those roads were poor conditions (pot holes, mud), wildlife, cyclists and insufficient space at the side of the roads to be able to pull over or around hazards if needed.

On the topic of speeding, participants were also asked about speed enforcement, particularly views on speed cameras. Participants were also asked to watch a video clip about the possible use of drones for speed detection, and then asked for their opinion. There were 22 responses to this section – interestingly many of the responses were lengthy, indicating the strength of feeling on this topic.

With regard to speed enforcement, views were mixed – as was evident in the focus groups most had been caught speeding at some point in their driving history, and found the fine an annoyance at the very least.

*The more people are fined the more likely they are to stop speeding
(Bulletin Board, Cardinia)*

*Fear of getting caught does stop people from speeding more than
fear of crashing I think (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)*

*Higher fines will result in more people screaming ‘revenue raising’
but ultimately you are still doing something illegal. I speed. I know I
do, but if I get caught They are doing their job, you are breaking
the law. It is as simple as that (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)*

That said, most recognised that loss of licence is perhaps the biggest disincentive to speeding and that a greater police presence (as opposed to fixed cameras) was the most effective in reducing speeding.

If you would like to deter drivers from speeding, change the law so that you lose your licence doing 10km over instead of 20km. I remember a comment made by a member of my discussion group that really stayed with me since then – ‘I never do more than 20km over the posted speed limit so I don’t lose my licence’ (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

Comments in the bulletin board also related to the use of avoidance techniques (such as the commonly mentioned practice of flashing others to warn them of a speed camera or police presence ahead), and concerns about the risks of everyone slowing down quickly when a speed camera is spotted.

I notified oncoming drivers by flashing my lights because I like it when I am notified by other drivers so as to reduce my speed and avoid receiving a fine (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

Bulletin board participants were also provided with a short video clip about the use of drones for detection and deterrence. Respondents were mixed in their views about this. On the positive side, there was support for them in principle, as an additional deterrence and detection tool.

It’s a great idea, if you have nothing to hide and are obeying the road rules, why would people mind? (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I think generally people would drive slower if there were drones in the sky (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

Yes it would be a great tool, in catching people speeding, car chases and other offences causing serious injury (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I think those are a great idea, but not until the technology is better... with the technology years away they should focus on other things (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

I think a police presence in any form is welcomed if it means people will slow down (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

However, there were also concerns about privacy (although one respondent felt that it was no more an invasion of privacy than is the case with CCTV), about drones being an additional distraction and about a potential inefficient use of government spending.

A squad of drones is definitely an over-reaction by the police (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

I think it would be a good idea for car chases but for everyday use this is an invasion of privacy (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I think a drone device would just become another distraction on the road that we don't need, and another government project that would cost lots of money that could be better spent on fixing the roads (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

8.1.1. Speed TV campaigns

The video clips shown were two TAC campaigns ('Gone' and 'No Accident') plus an Eastern European one entitled 'Enjoy the Speed. To the End', which used 'dark' humour. Respondents were asked to view them and then give their thoughts on them – who they felt they were aimed at, whether they thought they were effective and so forth. Sixteen responses were received on this topic. The feedback on the TAC campaigns was similar to that gathered during the focus groups, insofar as respondents were mixed as to the impact of the campaign on them but generally feeling that they were effective. Some reported feeling disturbed by them, and avoided watching them if possible (particular reference being made to 'No Accident').

I often change channel the moment I see one of these start (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

Although these ads are confronting, they are realistic and should hopefully make people think. Sadly though most people switch the channel when they come on or simply think 'this won't happen to me' (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

Others said they did not necessarily feel that the campaigns were targeted at them.

I'm 21, I kill people in HD on my PlayStation all the time, I am desensitised to most things I see on television. I can honestly watch each one of these ads and not give it a second thought. It's unfortunate really because if I experienced any one of these personally I'd probably be devastated. It will be a smart man/woman that can finally come up with effective advertising to deter reckless driving (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

The first one you see the ad so much that you don't think when it comes on TV (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

The general consensus was that the humorous campaign was not liked, not generally understood or just not 'very good'.

The last one, again, no impact, I get what they were trying to do, however it's just 'eh?'. That's the easiest way to describe it is 'eh?' (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

The last one is making a mockery of a serious topic, I don't like it at all (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

8.2. Participants' feedback on data from Wave 1

Bulletin board participants were also provided with some data from the Wave 1 self-completion questionnaire (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 8.1 Bulletin Board questions about the Wave 1 data

Below are some interesting results from the self-completion questionnaire you filled out at the end of your focus group in August; we've collated everyone's answers from across all 92 participants:

Question 1: We asked you to compare your driving to the average Victoria driver.

- Almost 3/4 of you said you were better than average drivers (compared to everyone else).

What do you think of these results?

Are you surprised?

How acceptable is it?

Question 2: We asked you how fast you should be able to drive in a 100km/h zone without being booked.

- Around half of you said that you shouldn't get booked when driving up to 110km/h.

What do you think of these results?

Are you surprised?

How acceptable is it?

Question 3: We asked you how often you drove above the speed limit in a 100km/h zone.

- Around 3/4 of you said you did this often or all of the time.

What do you think of these results?

Are you surprised?

How acceptable is it?

There were 12 responses to these questions. None of them indicated that they were surprised at the results – particularly around people believing that they are better drivers than the average, and that people said that they regularly drove over the speed limit.

I'm not overly surprised by these results, when I think about the demographic and age group surveyed (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

These results don't surprise me. Especially on roads you know you feel that you can speed (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

The fact that so many people regard themselves as better drivers than everyone else is a huge problem (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

However, responses were mixed as to whether the findings were 'acceptable', particularly in terms of the numbers that said that they were regularly speeding.

The statistics are not acceptable at all, speeding is speeding. It can danger the life of others and now looking back in the focus group I definitely am more aware of the erratic (sic) driving behaviour and have definitely learnt from the idea of speeding before it's too late (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

Drivers who do not know their own limits have lowered the speed limits significantly and the rest of us have to suffer so yes, I think it is okay to speed in areas you feel you are doing a safe, not endangering yourself or others (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

They (speed limits) are there for the safety of the majority. The majority of people don't take that road 2 times a day like you do, the majority of people don't know where each pothole is or that blind corner coming up ahead. So they tend to take it slower than locals who form the minority... (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

These results show that most people think they are great drivers, and can risk speeding because of this and don't really consider the consequences (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

This technique – of 'feeding back' findings to the same groups of respondents – appeared to be particularly effective in getting people to think about and reflect on their own behaviour and the behaviour of others like them.

8.3. General road safety and the 'Safe System'

The second bulletin board, which ran in December 2012, focused primarily on the Safe System and introduced some detailed and relatively complex topics related to crash safety avoidance systems, injury prevention systems, road design issues and speed impact. Participation in this bulletin board was lower than for the first round, with 15 people taking part. Possible reasons for this low response include the proximity to Christmas and the holiday period and the complexity of the topics involved (there was much more text for participants to read, and some more difficult questions to answer which required participants to make considered responses).

Data from the second wave of focus groups also found that although people understood the principle of Safe System, they struggled with the reality of the concept (and indeed the 2012 Road Safety Monitor also showed that less than half of respondents thought that it was achievable – mainly because of other road users' behaviour). Comments were made about a more effective approach being to have a greater police presence (this was also raised in other strands of this research) and better road quality. Participants were also concerned about the potential cost implications for the individual road user, in terms of affordability of a vehicle with all of the safety features. Another comment made was about the safety features in a car making drivers complacent – again this was raised in the focus groups.

All the new technologies they are adding to cars are great, but as someone above said there is a huge chance drivers will get lazy and let the car do all the 'thinking' for them (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

One of the ultimate aims of the TAC's Safe System principle is that there can be a future without road deaths or road injuries (TAC, 2013³). Bulletin board participants were asked about an acceptable road toll for the future and overwhelmingly the response was zero. That said, despite this being seen as a laudable target, there was also a view that this was unrealistic, and unachievable.

Unfortunately I think that zero road deaths is an unrealistic target, there are so many factors that contribute to accidents... having said that I believe that if all drivers on the roads were to think of their loved ones and drive to keep the road toll at zero, we could drastically cut the number of fatalities on Victorian Roads (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

Zero would be nice but is totally unrealistic. As long as you have drunk/drugged drivers, inexperienced or elderly drivers, wildlife on the roads and many many more factors people will always die on the roads. People think they are invincible and it will never happen to them (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I understand the Safe System theory but I don't think it will make a difference until people start taking responsibility for their own driving and bad habits (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

8.4. Drink/drug driving – feedback from the Bulletin Board discussions

In the final online bulletin board, the topic was drink and drug testing while driving. Contributions to this bulletin board (which was over the holiday period) were the lowest of the three, with just nine contributions made. Participants were asked to recount any experiences of being tested for alcohol or drugs whilst driving. Most of the participants had at some point been tested for alcohol but only one of them had been tested for drugs (this pattern was similar in the focus groups). The general consensus was that the enhanced police presence over the holiday period was welcomed (although in a few cases it was reported that the presence had been very low).

This year the police have been everywhere, speed cameras and breathos. The only encounter I had with them was when high way patrol pulled me over and gave me a breath test and a drug test at the same time I was fine and was let go but it did make me very nervous (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

³ TAC 2013 (<http://www.tacsafety.com.au/campaigns/the-safe-system>) 'No road death, no road injury – a future where every journey is a safe one'

9. Overview – what changed and why?

The research has shown that there is a wide spectrum of both opinion and experiences; even within this purposively selected cohort of risky drivers there was clearly a diversity in both attitudes and behaviours around driving and taking risks. Unsurprisingly, the younger drivers described the most risky of behaviours, particularly among males. Nevertheless, across all groups in both waves risky driving behaviour was acknowledged, and to a degree, justified by respondents.

The research has focused on these attitudes and behaviours, whether they changed over time, and whether such change is influenced by the research discussions. Thus, the subject of change was explored and discussed in the second wave: the topic was discussed in the Wave 2 focus groups, data from the Wave 1 and Wave 2 questionnaires was compared, and questions about change were asked of participants in the online bulletin boards.

The main changes that were evident among respondents (see Chapters 5 and 6) were:

- A general increased thinking and awareness about road safety and risky driving (and as a result feeling less safe on the roads)
- Adjusting 'risky' driving behaviours such as using a mobile phone whilst driving, or speeding, and
- Encouraging change in others' attitudes and behaviour.

9.1. A general increased thinking and awareness

What evidently changed across all of the groups was a raised awareness of the risks in driving, and an increased cautious observance on the roads of some of the driving behaviours discussed in the groups. Respondents frequently mentioned that they had subsequently reflected on the Wave 1 discussions (and notably what they had heard from other drivers), thought about some of the issues, and been more aware of the dangerous or risky driving that could happen around them.

A view among some was that it was the experience of listening to other people in the focus groups, and their stories of risky driving (by themselves or their peers) that had the greatest impact on them and that had led them to become more cautious or, at least observant, of others' driving (rather than necessarily tempering their own driving).

I think I'm more cautious of other drivers on the road now, but in terms of phones and speeding and that, nothing's really changed from coming to these TAC things, in my opinion, in my experience, I don't know why.... But it does kind of make you realise other drivers and what kinds of things they do on the road, so I think I'm more cautious of other people on the road now (Wave 2 Females, Mitchell)

Yes I'm definitely more cautious of my driving and felt the meeting opened my eyes to all problems on the road (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

Participants in the online bulletin board discussions were also asked to reflect on the impact of participating in the focus group discussions – whether it made them think about things differently in relation to driving, and whether they had made any changes to their driving. As with the focus groups, participants generally agreed that hearing people’s experiences and actions in a focus group setting and talking about the risks had made them more aware of other drivers around them, and that they were more cautious or at least paid more attention to other drivers than they might have done previously.

It was common for people to say they felt less safe as a result of taking part in the research, because of hearing about *other people’s* driving behaviour, the risks they took and the dangers that presented. It was less common for people to say that as a result they had changed *their own* behaviour. However, there were some that said this and this was evidently more apparent among females than males.

9.2. Adjusting ‘risky’ driving behaviour

For some, concerns about feeling less safe on the roads because of others had led to some adjustment in respondents’ own risky behaviours (see Section 5.2). This included less use of a mobile phone whilst driving, reduced speeding and less drink-driving.

The comparative results from the Wave 1 and Wave 2 questionnaires also show some subtle shifts in attitudes and behaviour among some respondents. Whilst these data are not significant in any statistical sense, they do suggest that the mere discussion of topics and issues among people similar to themselves can bring about a gradual change in attitudes and behaviour. For example, there were fewer people at Wave 2 who said that they drove above the 100km limit often or all the time (although over half still did so occasionally), and there was a slight drop in those thinking that driving at 110km without being booked was acceptable (see Figures 5.1 and 5.3). There were also more respondents at Wave 2 who said that they had not driven over the alcohol limit in the previous six months than at Wave 1 (although males were still much more likely to report doing this than females – at both waves).

Talking about changes in the focus groups also indicated that for some people, discussion and reflection about risky driving had had an impact on them and had facilitated a reassessment of their own attitudes and behaviours. Some comments from the bulletin board offered an even greater insight into how people had thought about the issues than they may have revealed in a focus group setting. This was particularly around reflecting on their own driving, the habits they had and the risks that they took.

What made me think the most was the fact that so many of us felt that it was OK to speed (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

I learnt there was an alarming amount of calmness round drink-driving ... the amount of people who knew people who drink and drive and let them do so frightened me and kind of sickened me (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

I definitely thought about the way I drive and the bad habits I've gotten into and how common these habits were with the entire group (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I am someone who does sometimes speed on country 100km roads but since this group I have started to rethink my driving (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I think it has made me realise that nothing is as important as people's lives and that a message on the phone can wait (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

Of particular interest were comments made about how actually discussing their risky behaviour had made them realise that they were taking risks that were perhaps unnecessary.

After actually saying out loud my bad habits whilst driving, I became more aware of actually how dangerous it is and therefore have since been more cautious while driving and have actually driven more safely since attending this discussion (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I always thought my excuses for speeding and talking on the phone were OK. But after listening to everyone else I'm constantly thinking about it when I'm driving (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

Speaking out loud about the things we do puts them into perspective and it made me realise that some of the risks I was taking were silly and pointless. I'll admit that I still drive above the speed limit occasionally but not as much as I used to! (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

9.3. Those who did not change

As noted earlier, there were some respondents who reported that their attitudes and behaviours had not changed since the first discussions back in 2012. Among some respondents, there was a view that for them to really change their behaviour, there would need to be an accident or incident. Whilst this was evident among both men and women, it was more common among men.

... the only thing that would really change my habits on the road are if I knew someone that was in an accident or something like that, so that's why I didn't really change anything at all after discussion (Wave 2 Males, Cardinia).

I would either be in a car accident or lose someone I love or, do you know what I mean? When it's more personal, that would really change it [behaviour] (Wave 2 Females, Ballarat/Golden Plains)

Explicitly, many contributors to the bulletin boards said that they had not changed their own driving as a result – often because they felt they were good drivers (again, this was also a finding from the focus groups) or because the main problems were external to them (for example, road conditions, road rules and other drivers).

The discussion definitely made me consider how I drive and made me pay more attention to those around me. However, I did not change my driving. This is not because I think that I am invincible but that driving is second nature to me... you get used to things, you get comfortable... you form habits... but I'm definitely more aware of how I drive (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

To be honest, the focus group experience made me more cautious of other drivers on the road than my own personal driving. The amount of stories of reckless driving and drink-driving makes me raise an eyebrow whenever other P-plates are around (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

I did think about my driving but it also made me think about the changes that can be made to improve road safety in general (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

I do think more about how I drive now, but I am also thinking more about the ways the road rules could change to be safer and more consistent for drivers (Bulletin Board, Cardinia)

9.4. Changes in thinking about responsibility

The ultimate vision of the TAC is one where the whole society and community takes responsibility for road safety (TAC, 2013⁴) – it is this principle that underpins the Safe System philosophy. It was evident in this research that – at least among this cohort – there is still much progress to be made in relation to individual responsibility for safer roads. Although by the second wave many respondents were more reflective about their behaviour (and some had indeed adjusted their behaviour) there remained a tendency to ‘blame’ others’ recklessness or to perceive that if they themselves did take risks in their driving (and in fact many played down the risks they took because of their own perceptions of their driving ability) then it was only themselves they were putting at risk. Where they did talk about responsibility it tended to be in relation to other parties, rather than themselves

It would be wonderful if the road toll could be zero but that's just living in a fairy tale. Unless people start taking responsibility for their own driving it will never happen (Bulletin Board, Mitchell)

There was also evidence from the qualitative data that suggests some could be virtuous or even righteous in their perspectives, feeling that they were a safe driver, a better driver than others and that they themselves had a negative view of others who took risks. In the same vein, however, many recalled examples of their own behaviour, or behaviour of friends or family members close to them which was deemed as dangerous, reckless or risky. This was particularly the case with speeding, and driving whilst under the influence of drink or drugs.

⁴ TAC website 2013 <http://www.tacsafety.com.au/campaigns/the-safe-system>

Whilst many said that they did not condone such behaviour, and would intervene where applicable, it remains that for others there was a certain acceptance that this type of behaviour was not unusual, and often commonplace particularly in regional settings and among this age cohort.

10. Methodology discussions/reflections

The approach used for this qualitative longitudinal study, which focused on risky drivers and used a mix of methodologies, was innovative and exploratory. In considering good research practice, this section highlights some key aspects of the design, identifying approaches that worked well and others which may need further refinement in the future should similar qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) studies be commissioned, or further qualitative work be undertaken with 'risky' young drivers. This section therefore covers:

- the recruitment and sampling of 'risky' drivers
- conducting QLR using a focus group methodology
- online bulletin board discussions
- using self-completion questionnaires in focus group settings, and
- using Wave 2 to 'check-back' Wave 1 findings

10.1. Recruitment/sampling of 'risky drivers'

The recruitment for this study was undertaken by telephone and mail, selecting respondents from a VicRoads database provided by the TAC, along with the recruiters' own networks. For the recruitment, it was important that drivers were recruited who demonstrated risky attitudes or behaviours around driving. Respondents were selected on the basis of their answers to a number of 'risk' questions. However, the risk 'score' had to be lowered for females, as far fewer females reached the original risk threshold.

During the recruitment phase, it was evident that there was some concern among potential participants with regard to confidentiality, and the implications of their participation. Some were concerned that they would be identified in the research, or that their name would be passed on to the TAC, to VicRoads or to the Police. This concern was also raised by some at the focus groups themselves. Full assurances were of course given to respondents at all stages of the research, reiterating privacy, data protection and confidentiality legislation and practices. Whilst the focus groups clearly represented risk-takers in driving (evident through both their responses to the self-completion questionnaires as well as the focus group discussions), there is a concern that people who demonstrate the most extreme risk-taking behaviours may chose not to participate in this kind of research.

10.2. Qualitative longitudinal research using a focus group methodology

Reconvened focus groups have a particular strength in understanding change over time. It is also a valuable and often enjoyable experience for participants, giving them the opportunity to reflect on previous stages and to make further contributions (interestingly, out of 92 participants at the first wave, 91 gave consent to be recontacted for further research).

Recruitment for the second phase was relatively straightforward – all those contacted were willing to take part in a second focus group.

Because of the research design and associated parameters, it was not possible to run the same number of groups at the second wave as there had been in the first wave (12 at Wave 1, 6 at Wave 2). Reconvening the same groups would have been an optimal design, where the same individuals were brought back together again. Furthermore, a longer time period (perhaps 12 months instead of 6) would have enabled a more detailed assessment of sustained changes, and triggers or reasons for that.

10.3. The online bulletin board discussions

The online bulletin board is a qualitative methodology which uses online software to design and run an online qualitative discussion. This enables direct engagement with participants through a web-based informal discussion environment.

10.3.1. The design and content of the online bulletin board discussions

Invited participants are provided with a secure unique identifier by email which enables them to log in (anonymously) to the discussion board at any time whilst the discussion is 'live'. There were three separate discussion boards between October 2012 and March 2013 – each one had a different theme and was open for between two and three weeks (see Table 10.1 for a description of each board's theme and contents).

Participants were invited to comment on different topics or themes, which they do by logging in and typing their responses or thoughts. The moderator (a researcher from the Social Research Centre) is able to ask additional questions or probe responses by posting on the discussion board (for example, *'that's a really interesting perspective, can you tell me a bit more about that please?'*). Participants are also able to vote on others' comments, or add their own perspectives to the comments raised (just as they would in a focus group setting). The software used for this exercise also allowed the incorporation of 'straw polls', pictures, photos and video clips on the theme of the board.

A prize draw was offered for each board, with a name being randomly selected from all those who participated in each board. The prize for each round was \$200 (one main prize of \$200 for the first board and \$100 x 1 and \$50 x 2 for the second and third boards). An extra prize at Wave 2 was awarded for the most insightful comments (as judged by the TAC).

Table 10.1 Online Bulletin Board timelines, themes and contributions

Bulletin Board	Theme	Content	Number contributed
1 (Oct 2012)	Speeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General feedback on taking part in the focus groups • Speed limits (including photos of local roads to ask people’s views of what the hazards were and what the limits should be) • Speed enforcement (including a video clip of drones and how they could be used to detect speeders) • Speed adverts (clips of TAC and other TV campaigns) • Feedback from the self-completion questionnaire 	24/64 (38%)
2 (Dec 2012)	General road safety and the ‘Safe System’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road toll goals (including video clip of public perceptions) • Introducing the ‘Safe System’ – making roads and vehicles safe 	15/64 (24%)
3 (Dec-Jan 2012)	Police testing for drugs and alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encounters with the police – where and when • Whether tested and by who 	7/64 (11%)

10.3.2. Participation in the Bulletin Board discussions

As noted, this online qualitative methodology was exploratory, designed to test the methodology itself, how engaged this client group might be in such an approach, and whether online engagement in the subject of risky driving was sufficient to ensure that the topics remained at the forefront of people’s minds in the intervening period between Wave 1 and Wave 2.

Over a third of invited participants (out of 64 people) took part in the first online Bulletin Board discussion (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Participation declined in each subsequent board, with a quarter taking part in the second round and just over one in ten taking part by the final stage. A review of the participation data revealed that most participants who had logged on did then make a contribution. However, in order to understand why respondents did or did not take part in this online option, questions were asked of respondents both at the recruitment stage for Wave 2 of the focus groups, as well as during the focus group discussions themselves. The main responses given were:

- no internet access or no computer
- only internet access on a smart phone (which would have made it difficult to navigate their way through or to view video clips and large amounts of text)
- too busy (with work, young family etc.)
- no real recollection of being invited as don’t look at emails very regularly

Some suggestions from respondents about increasing participation included:

- making it easier to log on by having the same password for each board
- offering an incentive for all participants, rather than a prize draw.

Other considerations for future use of online discussions in this context include having simpler discussion themes, with fewer topics, or using content that is more accessible via a smartphone. Notably, the more straightforward and interesting/interactive topics and themes appeared to have a higher engagement. That said, engaging in research with this client group is not without difficulties (young, 'risky') generally.

The findings from the bulletin board have been included in this report. However, in thinking about the reliability and validity of the data collected and analysed in this manner a note of caution should be added: the overall cohort of risky drivers was purposively selected and the 'opt-in' online cohort is a self-selected sub-set of this cohort. One should bear in mind that it is quite likely that a different sub-set of the cohort (i.e., those who did not log on, for whatever reason) may have given entirely different responses to the questions posed on the bulletin board. Nevertheless, the bulletin board does offer unique insights from those 'opt-in' individuals, informed by discussions that had already taken place in the Wave 1 focus groups, but articulated on an individual (and anonymous) basis.

In summary, the online qualitative methodology used offers an efficient way of engaging with the cohort during the Wave 1 to Wave 2 intervening period, and enables a relatively quick way of posing questions and presenting information to an audience. Some valuable insights were gained from the bulletin board – particularly on an individual level (as the board was anonymous) – which was helpful in terms of triangulation with the other evidence sources. However, take-up is limited with this cohort and as a tool in its own right.

10.4. Use of the self-completion questionnaire to assess change

As with the online bulletin board data, the data from the self-completion questionnaire provided useful additional evidence to be reviewed alongside what was learnt through the focus groups. Interestingly, in a few cases some more extreme attitudes were revealed in the individual questionnaires than was revealed in the groups. A further strength of this approach was that it provided a further measure of attitudinal and behavioural change, clearly identifying some shifts in some elements. In addition, being able to present some of the aggregated data from the Wave 1 questionnaire back to participants in the Wave 2 focus groups was an approach that worked well, and enabled further validation and understanding of views. Feedback from respondents at Wave 2 indicated that they found it interesting to hear what the researchers had learnt, and what others had said in other focus groups. This is in line with a general interest among respondents about the research findings, and how they would be used in the future.

Appendix 1 Discussion Guides (Wave 1 and Wave 2)

TAC Regional Qualitative Research Discussion Guide Wave 1 (August 2012)

Overall Research Aim

The overall aim is to explore attitudes, perspectives and behaviour in relation to driving and road safety among young people in regional Victoria.

Research Objectives

- To understand the driving behaviour of participants and others in the local area generally.
- To explore key areas of road safety and risk-taking such as speeding, drink and drug driving, driving whilst tired, driving whilst distracted.
- To understand in more detail *why* drivers may take risks – moving on from the observational to the analytical
- To gain a greater insight into perceptions of risk and consequences and how and why these vary within and between groups
- To explore and identify acceptability and norms relating to risks among young drivers
- To explore the notion of personal responsibility and how these influence attitudes and behaviour
- To assess awareness of Talk the Toll Down campaign
- To gain insights that can be used to inform marketing and road safety strategies.

Explanation to participants

- Introduce Group Moderator(s) and TAC observer (if applicable).
- Thank participants for their time and contribution. Confirm end time, explain 'house rules' (i.e., mobile phones on silent, refreshments, talking one at a time, confidentiality)
- Explain what the research is about - "*We're here to talk about issues to do with driving and road safety*".
- Explain recording, and client viewing and confidentiality of participant information. – "*With your permission we would like to record the group. The recording will only be used to help us with analysing the results. Your personal details are confidential, and we will not keep or pass on any personal information about you. Is it OK for us to record the group?*"
- Explain the importance of honest opinions – "*Your views and experience are important, so we would like you to tell us what you think and feel about your experiences and about each of the topics we talk about. It's not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. We would just like to hear your honest opinions. Also, as we are talking about your personal opinions and experiences, it is not necessary for everyone to agree with each other. It is helpful for us to find out the different opinions that people have, as well as where people have the same opinions, so please feel free to tell us whatever you think and feel, even if it might be different to what other people in the room are saying. It is also important that you know that everything that we talk about today is treated with confidence, and we expect that you will also treat anything that you hear in the discussion with confidence, thanks.*"

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

I'd like to start by asking a bit about yourself: your first name, where you live, who you live with and what age you were when you started driving.

Interviewer note: throughout the discussions ensure that identifying differences between different risky behaviours (e.g., drink/drug driving, speeding etc.).

2. Driving and road safety in general (5 minutes)

- Can we start by talking about driving in this regional area of Victoria – what is it like? What are the positives and negatives?
- What are the main road safety issues here?
- How are these different to other areas (e.g., metropolitan, or other parts of Victoria)
- What (or who) would you say causes the most road accidents around here?
- Whose responsibility would you say it is, to keep our roads safe
- Prompt: individuals, community, police, TAC, other?)
- How would you describe the local police enforcement in this area, when it comes to driving? *Explore for perceptions*

3. Risky driving (15 minutes)

3.1 In your view, what is risky driving? What kinds of things are risky when it comes to driving safely? *Prompt for behavioural and environmental 'risks'*

Behavioural/individual

- Drink driving
- Driving fast/speeding
- Drug driving
- Driving whilst tired
- Not wearing seatbelt

Environmental/external

- Distractions (e.g., mobile, smart phone, others in the car etc.)
- Driving an 'unsafe' vehicle, older vehicle etc.
- Road conditions
- Adverse weather
- Rurality (wildlife etc.)
- Time of day/night, days of week, time of year
- Other drivers/other vehicles on the road

- 3.2 What are your views on these types of risky driving? Do you ever think about these kinds of risks? If so, which ones and why?

Prompt on risks mentioned in the group, rather than going through each of the above systematically. Note any particular risks to return to in the bulletin board discussions.

- 3.3 What is the difference between risky driving and dangerous driving (if any)?

- 3.4 Are there levels of acceptable and unacceptable risk-taking in driving terms?

Prompt: What is acceptable or OK? What is unacceptable? Why? Can you give examples?

- 3.5 Is this different in rural or regional areas compared to more metropolitan areas?

- 3.6 Does risk acceptability change, eg, time of day, who's with you?

- 3.7 Are there some types of risky driving that are seen as 'the norm' for you/your peers?

Prompt: explore norms for this group. Are there things that you used to see as the norm or OK to do but don't anymore? If so, what and why? Prompt for recent examples.

- 3.8 What about things like getting your driving licence suspended – how common are those kinds of things around here for your age group?

- 3.9 How do people react to this? Prompt for acceptability/inevitability, consequences (eg, offering lifts to unlicensed, driving anyway, how are things like this viewed in the community?)

4. Risks and consequences (10 minutes)

Opening statement - previous research has clearly shown a link between risk and consequences, where taking risks is closely linked to the likelihood of something happening as a result (i.e., getting caught or crashing), and how severe that might be.

- 4.1 So thinking about the behaviours that we have just been discussing – what kinds of consequences are we talking about?

Prompts:

- Getting caught – fines and demerits, losing licence
- Injuring oneself or others
- Impact on others
- Impact on self

- 4.2 And which of these are the most influential on you?

Explore to see whether can establish a hierarchy – is the uppermost concern getting caught? Injuring oneself or others?

- 4.3 What's the likelihood of these things happening? What are the chances of getting 'caught' if you do take these kinds of risks? *Probe to understand perceptions of police effectiveness locally in enforcing the law relating to driving.*

5. Moderating behaviour, risk reduction and deterrents (10 minutes)

OK, we are just going to move on now to talk about accident prevention, and ways in which the severity of accidents can be reduced, particularly among your age group.

5.1 So if we take risks as drivers, what can be done to moderate those risks (*i.e.*, those discussed at 4.1)?

Probe: do respondents think that there is there a need to moderate risky behaviour – either theirs or other people's?

5.2 What about things such as the type of car and its safety features?

Use example if needed: say for example a car drifts off road on a slight right hand bend in 100k/h area, loses control in the gravel shoulder and collides with a large tree. The driver is killed instantly. What sorts of factors do you think could have led to this crash and the fatal outcome?

5.3 (How) does risk-taking change as you get older, or circumstances change?

Explore for examples of anyone whose behaviour has changed

5.4 Driving alone or with others – how does this change behaviour?

5.5 What about levels of personal responsibility – thinking about the consequences of taking risks whilst driving? Is this something that you think about? Why/why not?

5.6 What does “personal responsibility” mean to you? What would you be doing differently if you were being “personally responsible”? why would / wouldn't you do this?

5.7 Do you anticipate that your attitudes and behaviour now is likely to change over time? *Why/why not? Has it already changed from when you first started driving? What has happened to change your attitude / behaviour?*

6. Scenario testing (15 minutes – 5 minutes per scenario)

Moderator to present a series of scenarios, to ask respondents to think about what they might do in such a situation, how risky they perceive the situation to be. The purpose of this is to explore people's active or passive participation in risky driving behaviour, and the extent to which they are influenced by, or can influence, situations.

For each scenario ask:

- a) How realistic a scenario is this for you? Anyone been in a similar situation?
- b) How risky, if it all, do you see this situation?
- c) If you were in this situation what would you want to do?
- d) And what would you actually do?
- e) What is the main thing that you'd be thinking about when you make the decision?

- You're out with friends and all of you are well over the .05 limit at a party. One of you wants to drive home and offers to give you a lift – there are no taxis available for ages, and it's too far to walk. *What about if there are more people in the car than there should be – does this make a difference to your decision?*
- You're in a car with a few friends, driving at some speed. One of them (the driver) is not wearing a seatbelt.
Prompts: Would you suggest s/he puts it on? Would you make any kind of comment or ignore it completely? Would you wear yours? What about if you were the driver and it was one of your passengers?
- Your mate is driving during a night out, she/he has had no alcohol at all (you have) but has smoked a lot of cannabis (as you both have).
What if they'd also taken other drugs? What if they were prescription drugs – is that different or not?

7. Talk the Toll Down Campaign Knowledge (5 minutes)

7.1 Have you ever heard of the Talk the Toll Down campaign?

Prompt with visual aids of campaign articles, if aware explore knowledge and relevance/salience

7.2 Do you ever talk about risk-taking and driving with friends? With family?

8. Suggestions (5 minutes)

Do you think that anything can be done to moderate risky driving behaviour, the kinds of things that we have been talking about?

Thank you and close

That brings us to the end of the discussion questions. Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your opinions.

Do any of you have any questions about the study? Or anything else you would like to add?

Checklist

1. *Driving and road safety in general*
2. *Risky driving – what is it, what causes it*
3. *Risk and consequences – influences on risky behaviour, likelihood of getting 'caught'*
4. *Moderating behaviour, risk reduction and deterrents – what changes behaviour*
5. *Scenario testing*
6. *Talk the Toll Down*
7. *Suggestions*

TAC Regional Qualitative Research Wave 2 Discussion Guide (February 2013)

Overall Research Aim - of this second round of focus groups

The overall aim is to explore attitudes, perspectives and behaviour in relation to driving and road safety among young people in regional Victoria.

Research Objectives

- To understand the driving behaviour of participants and others in the local area generally.
- To understand in more detail *why* drivers may take risks – moving on from the observational to the analytical
- To gain a greater insight into perceptions of risk and consequences and how and why these vary within and between groups
- To explore and identify acceptability and norms relating to risks among young drivers
- To explore attitudes to safe systems and revisit the notion of personal responsibility, and how these influence attitudes and behaviour
- To assess awareness of Talk the Toll Down and other recent TAC campaigns
- To assess changes in driving attitudes and behaviour over time, and how these changes can be attributed (i.e. focus group participation, bulletin board involvement, etc.)
- To gain insights that can be used to inform marketing and road safety strategies.

Explanation to participants

- Introduce Group Moderator(s).
- Thank participants for their time and contribution. Confirm end time, explain 'house rules' (i.e., mobile phones on silent, refreshments, talking one at a time, confidentiality)
- Explain what the research is about. – *"We're here to talk about issues to do with driving and road safety, and specifically, to explore how your views and experiences of driving and road safety may have changed since we last met in 2012"*
- Explain recording, and client viewing and confidentiality of participant information. – *"With your permission we would like to record the group. The recording will only be used to help us with analysing the results. Your personal details are confidential, and we will not keep or pass on any personal information about you. Is it OK for us to record the group?"*
- Explain the importance of honest opinions – *"Your views and experience are important, so we would like you to tell us what you think and feel about your experiences and about each of the topics we talk about. It's not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. We would just like to hear your honest opinions. Also, as we are talking about your personal opinions and experiences, it is not necessary for everyone to agree with each other. It is helpful for us to find out the different opinions that people have, as well as where people have the same opinions, so please feel free to tell us whatever you think and feel, even if it might be different to what other people in the room are saying. It is also important that you know that everything that we talk about today is treated with confidence, and we expect that you will also treat anything that you hear in the discussion with confidence, thanks."*

Introduction (5 minutes)

Unlike the first focus groups we held here last year, we've mixed the age groups that were originally separated, so there will be some new faces here tonight. For this reason, I'd like everyone around the table to briefly introduce themselves again: your first name, where you live, who you live with, how old you are and what car you normally drive.

Because a major point of tonight is to explore how, and to what extent, people's attitudes and behaviours on the roads have changed – if at all – since our first focus groups, and to perhaps try to understand what has caused these changes. I'm going to be sharing with you some of the findings we have gathered from the information you have given us, from the first focus groups, and the questionnaire you filled out then.

Reactions to the first focus group (10 minutes) 15mins

I'd like you to think back to the time just after our last focus group...

Of all the issues raised in the group, which struck you most strongly/what did you remember most clearly? Why is that? Unprompted initially, then prompt with some brief reminders of what was discussed – factors affecting road safety, types of risky driving, consequences of risky driving, changing your behaviour, etc.

- What kind of things did you think about when you got in your cars after our last discussion?
- Do your family (parents/partners) ever talk to you about driving safely/the road toll? What kinds of conversations did you have with friends and family regarding driving and road safety after the group, if any?
- Can you provide me with any examples of how our discussion changed the way you thought about driving, or your behaviour on the road?
- Have these changes remained, or did your thinking eventually go back to how it was before the group? Why/why not? How long did those new thoughts or behaviours last?
- Did participating in the focus groups and hearing other people's perspectives make you feel less safe or safer on the roads? Why/why not?
- Has there been anything else that has changed the way you drive?

Self-completion questionnaire (10 mins) 25mins

Before we carry on with the discussion, I'd like to ask you to fill out the same questionnaire as last time. Please take 5 to 10 minutes to give some thought to the questionnaire....

Awareness of TTTD and other TAC campaigns (5 minutes) 30mins

We had very few people recall having seen 'Talk The Toll Down' coverage in local papers in the first focus groups.

Show 1-2 examples of TTTD from local newspapers again.

- Since then, have you noticed anything regarding the Talk the Toll Down campaign? What? Where?
- Have you noticed any other TAC campaigns since our last focus group? Which ones?
- (NOT IN CARDINIA/ LAUNCH WED) What do you think about the new distraction campaign (if they have seen it)?
- Did you think about TAC ads differently in any way after participating in this research project for the TAC? How? Why do you think that is?

Risky driving (15 minutes)

We talked quite a bit last time about what defines risky driving – what kinds of things are risky and why. I'd like to explore with you some collated findings from our research thus far...

[Provide handouts]

- a) *PAGE 1 – When we asked you to rank the 3 main factors that most often lead to serious road accidents, **alcohol** was ranked first across all 12 groups. Likewise, 'driving with a blood/alcohol content of .05 or more' received the highest 'danger' ranking from a list of 7 other behaviours. However, almost half (49%) of you admitted to driving whilst suspecting yourselves to be over the .05 limit in the last 6 months.*
- b) *PAGE 2 – **Speeding** was ranked as the second factor that most often led to serious road accidents, and 71% of participants claimed that speeding greatly increased the chances of crashing. However, 72% claimed to drive above 100km/h in a 100km/h zone "often/all the time", and almost half (47%) of you believed people should be able to drive up to 110km/h in a 100km/h zone before being booked.*
- What do you think when you hear these contradictory results? Does it make sense? Why?
 - Whose responsibility would you say it is, to prevent people being hurt on the roads/to get you home safe tonight?

Prompt: individuals, community, police, TAC, other?

c) *Interestingly, many of you justified speeding because you often had long distances to drive with little time to do so – to and from work, to the supermarket, etc. HOWEVER, according to the TAC, driving 110 in a 100 zone only saves 33 seconds on a 10km journey...*

- What do you think of that statistic? Is it surprising to think about that? Does it make you feel any differently about speeding as a means of getting somewhere quicker?

Categories of risk-taking

After listening to what you had to say in the first focus groups, we noticed that, generally, risky behaviours could be categorised into four broad areas, based on people's explanations and justifications for such behaviours. We created categories that we feel broadly summarises the different types of risky driving behaviour...

[Refer to hand-out page 3]

- **Unavoidable** – driving home after a few drinks because there are no cabs; having to speed because of long distances or slow drivers on the road etc.
 - **Unplanned** – accidental speeding, unintended drink-driving (not sure if over the limit) etc.
 - **Calculated** – considered justifiable e.g. won't get caught, no one else in the car or on the road, familiar with the roads and a good enough driver etc.
 - **Continuous** – intentional risk-taking for its own sake, hooning, etc. Normalised behaviour – 'always have, always will'.
-
- What do you think of these broad categories of risk taking?
 - Can you provide examples of such risk taking from your own experiences?
 - Do they apply to you? All/ some of them? When do they apply?
 - What kinds of people do you think these different categories would generally apply to?

Moderating behaviour, risk reduction and deterrents

There was quite a bit of discussion about police speed enforcement in the first focus group, and on the bulletin boards. Interestingly, in the questionnaire just over half of you stated that **enforcing the speed limit helped lower the road toll**. Yet, it was common for people to express that **finest for speeding were simply a way to increase revenue** rather than making the roads safe.

- What do you think about these somewhat contradictory findings?
- In what ways, if any, did your views on police speed enforcement change after the last focus group and bulletin boards?

Safe System

The TAC has an approach to road safety, which adopts Safe System principles. This requires action in 3 areas: road users to comply with the 'rules', safer cars, and roads/roadsides that are safer (e.g. sealed shoulders and side barriers, appropriate speed limit, roundabouts etc.).

So for drivers, this means taking on some responsibility, for example, in complying with the road laws... "5 star drivers in 5 star cars on 5 star roads".

[Refer to hand-out page 4]

- Would you like a Safe System to be implemented in your neighbourhood?
- If Safe System was implemented, in order for it to work, you and others in the community would have to follow the road rules. How likely is that?
- Should the police/government implement stricter measures to make it more difficult to break the road rules (e.g. speed limiters in cars for people regularly caught speeding, cars forced to have seatbelt interlocks that stop a car from driving if anyone is not wearing their belt, etc.)

Suggestions (5 minutes)

- Do you think that anything can be done to moderate risky driving behaviour, the kinds of things that we have been talking about?
- What effect has engaging in this research project had on your views and behaviour on the road? Has it influenced you? How? Why do you think that is?

Thank you and close

That brings us to the end of the discussion questions. Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your opinions.

Do any of you have any questions about the study? Or anything else you would like to add?

TAC may publish the report from this research on their website when the project is complete. Would you like to be emailed with a link to the report when it is published?

Appendix 2 Self-Completion Questionnaire (Wave 2)



Car Drivers – Victorian Regional Research

Thank you for taking part in this focus group, the final stage of our research project. We would now like you to complete this short questionnaire, which is very similar to the one you completed in your first focus group last year. This will provide us with some additional information on people's thoughts and views on driving in regional Victoria.

Your answers will be kept confidential. The Social Research Centre will not pass on your details to anyone. Only anonymous results will be provided to the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).

Please answer the questions by putting a cross ☒ in one box for each question (unless it states otherwise). If you have any queries, please ask one of the researchers.

Road Accidents

Q1 Please look at the list below. What do you think are the three main factors that most often lead to serious road accidents?

Please write the three letters that correspond with your answers in the boxes below

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| A Young drivers | H Tiredness/fatigue |
| B Alcohol | I Road rage/impatience/aggressive driving |
| C Distraction | J Weather conditions |
| D Driver inexperience | K Poor vehicle maintenance |
| E Drugs | L Disregard for road rules/reckless driving |
| F Road conditions/design | M Older drivers |
| G Speed | N Other (please specify)..... |

.....

Driving Speed

Q2a In your view, how fast should people be allowed to drive in a 100km/h zone without being booked for speeding? *Please write your answer in the box below*

	km per hour
--	-------------

Q2b How often, if at all, have you driven above 100km/h in a 100km/h zone?

Please cross one box only

- None of the time.....
- Occasionally
- Often
- All of the time

Q3 Thinking about how fast or slow you travel when you are driving, what influences your driving speed?

Please score each item 1 to 5, where 1 is 'not important at all' and 5 is 'very important'

	Score out of 5
The speed limit	
The road conditions (gravel, paved, quality of the road surface, road design, etc.)	
The weather conditions (wet, windy, foggy etc.)	
My chances of being caught speeding	
The speed of other traffic	
The amount of traffic on the particular road	
Whether or not I have passengers in my car	
If I'm late/in a hurry	

Q4 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "Strongly disagree" and 5 is "Strongly agree", to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Please circle one per row

		Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
a)	Speeding greatly increases my chances of crashing	1	2	3	4	5	6
b)	If I was to speed the next time I drive, I would have a high chance of being caught	1	2	3	4	5	6
c)	Penalties for speeding act as a deterrent when I'm driving	1	2	3	4	5	6
d)	Enforcing the speed limit helps lower the road toll	1	2	3	4	5	6

Driving and Drinking Alcohol

Q5 During the last 6 months, have you driven a car when you knew, or thought, you were over the legal drink/drive limit? *Please cross one box only*

- Yes
- No
- I'd prefer not to say
- Not applicable (e.g. do not drink, no car or no licence).....

Q6 If you were to drive while over the legal drink/drive limit, what would worry you the most?

Please cross one box only

- Having a crash
- Injuring/killing yourself.....
- Hurting/killing someone else.....
- Getting stopped by the police.....
- Being fined or losing my licence.....
- Going to jail / prison.....
- Nothing would worry me.....
- Other (specify).....

Q7 Generally speaking when you go out and drink alcohol, do you decide how you will get home..... *Please cross one box only*

- ...before you start drinking?
- ...after you start drinking?
- It varies

Q8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Strongly disagree' and 5 is 'Strongly agree'

Please circle one for each row

		Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
a)	I would have no problem with telling a close friend not to drive if I thought they were over the legal drink/driving limit	1	2	3	4	5	6
b)	I would not get into a car driven by a friend if I thought they were over the legal drink/driving limit	1	2	3	4	5	6
c)	If I was driving and over the legal drink/driving limit, I am very likely to be caught	1	2	3	4	5	6
d)	The penalties for drink driving are too soft	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix 3 Online Bulletin Board Screen Shots

Introduction page

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying an introduction page for an online discussion board. The page header includes the logo for 'THE SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTRE' and the title 'Driving in Regional Victoria (Cardinia)'. The main content area contains an 'Introduction' section with a welcome message, a paragraph explaining the purpose of the discussion board, a prize draw announcement, and a disclaimer. Below the text is a table listing discussion topics with their respective comment counts and 'View' buttons. A right-hand sidebar contains navigation and user settings options.

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the online discussion board about driving in regional Victoria.

You have been invited to contribute to this as you recently attended a focus group in Gembrook to discuss driving in the area, and in particular risky driving. This is the next stage of the research, inviting you to take part in an online discussion on similar topics.

Everyone who contributes to the discussion will be entered into a prize draw to win \$200! Please do check back over the week as new topics may be posted which you might want to comment on.

The research is being conducted on behalf of the Transport Accident Commission. However, all responses are anonymous - you will not be identified here or in any reporting.

We look forward to hearing your views!

Alana and Karen at the Social Research Centre.

Order	Discussion topic	Total comments	
1	Tell us about the focus group experience Posted 7 months, 1 week ago	9	View
2	Tell us about speed limits Posted 7 months ago	7	View
3	Talking about speed enforcement Posted 7 months, 1 week ago	10	View

Refresh Logout

Settings

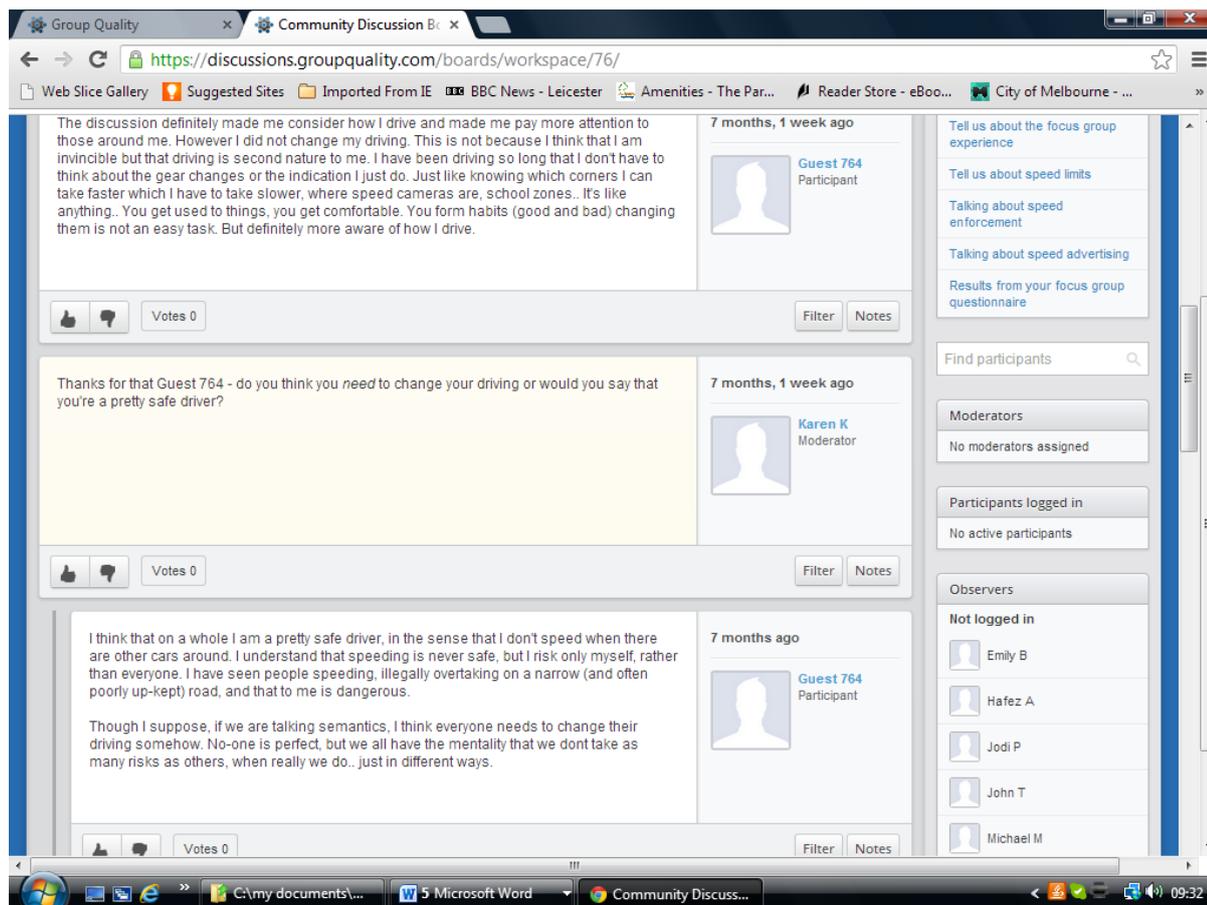
[Edit your avatar](#)

Your alias: Karen K

Available discussion topics

- [Tell us about the focus group experience](#)
- [Talking about speed advertising](#)
- [Talking about speed enforcement](#)
- [Tell us about speed limits](#)
- [Tell us about the focus group experience](#)
- [Results from your focus group questionnaire](#)
- [Talking about speed advertising](#)
- [Talking about speed enforcement](#)
- [Tell us about speed limits](#)
- [Results from your focus group](#)

Example of participant/moderator interaction



Example of use of photos

