



**AUSTRALIAN
AUTOMOBILE
ASSOCIATION**

AUSTRALIAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION

OLDER DRIVER

POLICY FRAMEWORK PAPER

DECEMBER 2010

Constituent Members



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WORLD WIDE AFFILIATION THROUGH THE AIT AND FIA



Vision statement:

This policy framework seeks to encourage all levels of Government, community stakeholders and individuals to:

- Reduce the incidence and extent of older road user trauma in Australia
- Ensure that older drivers can drive for as long as they are safe to do so and that licensing and testing regulations are based on function and ability, not age.
- Facilitate a smooth transition from driver to non-driver while maintaining good mobility and quality of life.
- Provide adequate services and facilities to ensure this safe mobility for all, in line with the FIA principles.

Recommendations

The issues relating to the safety and mobility of older Australians are of paramount interest to AAA and all constituent motoring clubs, with nearly *two million* of our members aged sixty years or older. An OECD Report (2001) identified major policy priorities required to address the mobility and safety issues arising from the ageing of the population.

- Support and funding to enable lifelong mobility.
- Support for older people to continue driving safely.
- Provision of suitable transport options to the private car.
- Safer vehicles for older people.
- Development of safer roads and infrastructure.

This policy framework covers the areas which have been identified in Australia and which the following priority actions seek to address.

- **A National Strategy for safe mobility for all Australian seniors:** The issue of mobility is **not** identified in current national plans as one of the challenges for our ageing population even though it is an integral part of access to employment, health, other essential services, volunteering and social capital contributions. Strategic leadership is required. The Australian Government should develop a Green (Discussion) Paper on Safe Mobility for all Senior Australians as a matter of urgency, feeding into a White (Policy) Paper. The COAG Cities Taskforce, formed in 2009, should also take into specific account the mobility needs of older Australians in the “better cities” planning.
- **Tackle the research vacuum:** The literature review in the previous paper “Let Miss Daisy do the Driving” highlighted areas of research where information about Australian conditions is not widely available. This includes information about the specific mobility needs of older Australians, the way they travel, differences between rural/regional and urban characteristics, and any community transport models that are in operation, for example. The Australian Government, in collaboration and consultation with the AAA and perhaps other advocacy organisations, should urgently design and undertake some comprehensive research to inform the development of the Green Paper for the national strategy.

- **Safer vehicles for older drivers:** Vehicle manufacturers should consider the specific needs of older drivers and pedestrians. The AAA and Clubs should advocate for appropriate engineering to assist older drivers and passengers (eg: door opening, seat adjustments, location and size of instrumentation, type of mirrors) to be built into new vehicles.
- **Roads and pedestrian areas:** Help ensure that the needs of older road users are included when advocating on infrastructure needs of the future. Road designers should consider specific needs of older drivers and, importantly, pedestrians. For example, signage and line marking, turn right arrows, longer timing for pedestrians to cross at traffic lights, and other engineering measures can all assist older road users. This is particularly important for older drivers in regional areas. The adoption universal design principles for all government funded capital works should be mandatory.
- **Improved systems for assessing competency to drive:** AAA and the clubs should advocate for on-road mandatory age-based testing to be abolished across Australia. In jurisdictions that still have mandatory on-road aged-based testing, this should be replaced by a uniform referral system built on evidence-based assessment on the principles of function, ability and fitness to drive.
- **Cost of Occupational Therapist assessments:** The Australian Government should consider a new Medicare item to help subsidise the cost of occupational therapists' senior driver assessments.
- **Improved alternative transport options:** Greater advocacy for a broader range of transport options for seniors, possibly through the COAG Cities Taskforce program, as part of an integrated planning process including seniors' mobility issues and the development of new services (eg: park and ride, lighting, seating, lifts. etc). This initiative is especially important for rural communities, where public transport is minimal or non-existent.
- **Build partnerships:** Develop more, broader strategic partnerships with organisations and groups that may provide advice and assistance to older drivers (see below) where appropriate.
- **Transitioning from Driving:** Measures should be introduced to make the transition from driver to non-driver less traumatic. This should include:
 - initiatives that provide both practical and emotional support to older people who need to stop driving;
 - more information for older people and their families about what transport options are available to help them maintain their mobility;
 - programs that provide training and information about public transport usage; and
 - initiatives aimed at encouraging older people to become or continue to be engaged with the community when they stop driving.

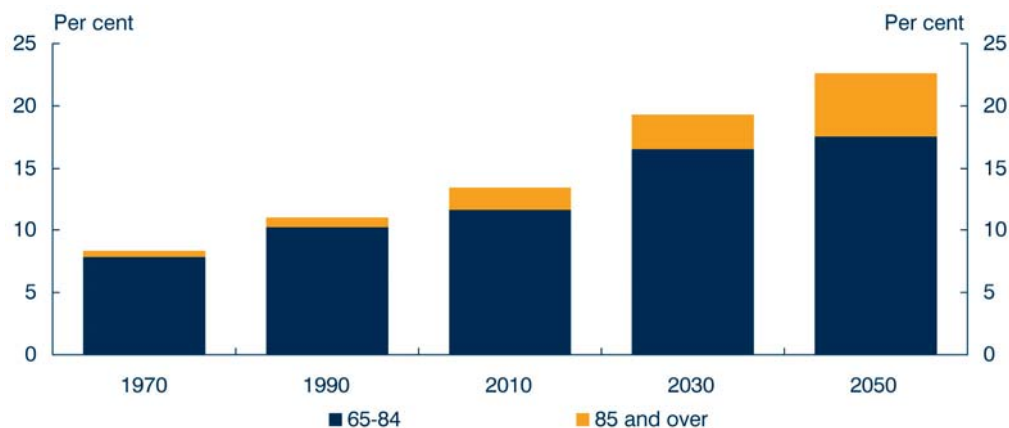
Background

Governments around the world are focussing on the needs of their older citizens in a wide range of portfolio areas, reflecting the “clout” that the baby boomer generation retains at a political and societal level.

In terms of motoring, this baby boomer generation will have held driving licences and had access to vehicles, will prefer driving as their primary means of transport, and will have been the first to have been dependent on their driver’s licence and car for their whole lives. The implications of what to do when this massive proportion of the population can no longer drive are significant.

And in many cases they rely upon the motoring clubs to represent their interests – the motoring clubs are a first point of call, either in terms of roadside service, information or for representation on their behalf.

This is a very real and immediate issue at a national level in Australia. A variety of recent population projections have all illustrated a significant growth in the older demographic sections in Australia. The recently-delivered Federal Budget estimated that, by 2050, nearly a quarter of the entire population will be aged 65+



The AAA’s constituent motoring clubs have almost 1.8 million motoring club members over the age of 60 years, representing a significant challenge for AAA and the clubs to provide services for this demographic and to advocate on their behalf with regard to continued driving and ensuring mobility for the people who are no longer driving.

In recent years, AAA has established an Older Driver Working Group, comprising club representatives. This group has, among other things:

- been tasked with assessing the American Automobile Association’s *Roadwise Review* DVD (which, following a research program conducted by MUARC, concluded the DVD was not an appropriate assessment tool for the clubs to distribute);
- co-ordinated the 2010 visit by American occupational therapist and older driver expert, Elin Schold-Davis, to Australia and New Zealand to speak with older driver agencies and groups and to showcase the CarFit program for older drivers in their vehicles (NB: this visit was not taken up by all clubs);
- prepared a Board paper on older driver issues; and
- prepared a position paper for PPF to consider in developing a policy position on older drivers (this document).

Older Driver Motoring Club Members

Following is a breakdown of motoring club members over the age of 60 years, as at January 2010.

NRMA	603,280
RACV	556,980
RACQ	353,208
RAASA	183,225
RACWA	172,331
RACT	54,922
Total Members 60+	1,923,946

Issues

Our previous discussion paper, *Let Miss Daisy Do the Driving*, clearly demonstrated the scope and importance of issues around older drivers in Australia, and how crucial it is that the Clubs be seen as being proactive in assisting their older Members. It also contextualised the Australian experience from an international perspective, highlighting (amongst other things) the fact that a number of advanced economies have a more strategic and engaged approach to older drivers than does Australia.

Whilst this is a problem, particularly for the growing demographic group in Australia itself, it also remains a big opportunity for the AAA Clubs to position ourselves as the leaders in Older Drivers advocacy in Australia. *Let Miss Daisy Do the Driving* clearly illustrated the need for a “national” older drivers strategy.

At a national level the Clubs through AAA have, rightly, focused on the safety of younger drivers in a number of efforts to influence road safety policy in this sector. The development of *keys2drive* is a successful policy response to the higher risks faced by novice drivers and their over-representation in crash statistics.

AAA is now focusing on older drivers for a combination of reasons including their mobility requirements, driving abilities as they age, and their safety.

This is also an issue of ‘safer drivers’ – but from a different perspective. We know that the use of the private car is vitally important to older people for mobility, independence, lifestyle, social and health reasons. For many older people, particularly those living in regional and rural areas, the car is the only available form of transport. Public transport is often not an option due to lack of availability or reliability, perceptions of social isolation, or anxiety about higher risk of fall-related injuries.

We believe that public policy settings should encourage and enable drivers to be able to drive their vehicles for as long as they are safe to do so. Maintaining a driver’s licence should be based on ability (or more specifically, by identifying the medical or functional impairment of some older drivers), rather than arbitrary age limits; and Clubs should be doing everything they can to assist their Members in this area.

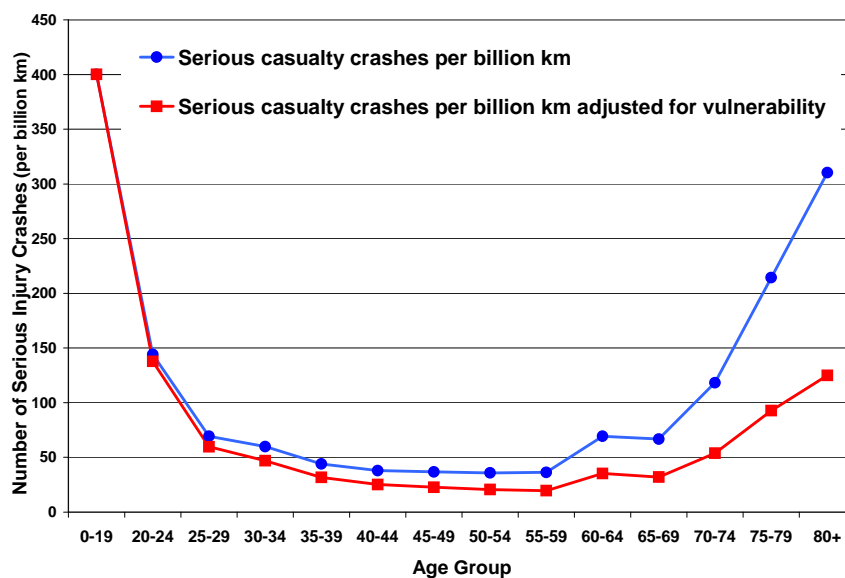
Our literature review showed that older drivers are lower-risk drivers when compared to other age groups, especially young age-groups. For example:

- they wear their seatbelts;
- they don’t drink and drive and don’t drive tired as often as other groups; and

- they are rarely involved in high-speed driving, “hooning” or other anti-social driving behaviours.

In general, older drivers regulate their driving and avoid driving in areas and at times of the day where they feel uncomfortable. Their aim is to minimise risks to themselves and to others. However, due to the ageing process, older drivers face a number of physical and psychological challenges in maintaining safe and effective control and use of their vehicles, for as long as is reasonably possible.

Frailty and age-normal biological changes *per se* lead to higher risks for older drivers, passengers and particularly older pedestrians. Older drivers/passengers are more likely to be killed or injured in a crash due to their frailty and so feature more prominently in the statistics. Once vulnerability is taken into account the risk profile is lowered, but is still significant.



(Source Monash University 2005)

MUARC research shows the crashes of older drivers tend to have the following characteristics: multi-vehicles; occurring during the daylight hours of weekdays; occurring at intersections or roundabouts; at low speed, and; involving failure to give way, improper turns, disregarding traffic signals or angle collisions.

Older drivers are generally aware of vehicle safety features but they often have not connected this to themselves in terms of their personal risk, medical conditions or age-related frailty. Many are also under the mistaken impression that an older “stronger” car will protect them in a crash.

Stakeholders/Target Audiences

In formulating any AAA/club policy, there are a number of stakeholder and target groups and/or networks that need to be engaged and involved in developing, promoting and managing any AAA policy initiatives in their demographic. These include:

- State and Federal Governments;
- Government departments and agencies;
- Local Councils
- Aged demographic groups and advocates (eg: COTA, National Seniors, and veterans' groups including the RSL and Legacy;
- Service groups such as Lions, Probus and Rotary Clubs etc;
- Family support groups (St Vincent de Paul, Wesley Mission, and health support groups eg. Alzheimers Australia etc);
- Media;
- Motoring clubs, their members and families.

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Appendix 1: Club Activities in Australia

The AAA motoring clubs undertake a range of activities for older members. There are two major programs which the clubs are promoting and implementing in dealing with older drivers. These are *Years Ahead* and *CarFit*.

Years Ahead is a road safety information and awareness program for older road users. It was developed in 1997 based on a review of scientific road safety literature and extensive community consultation, and involves a free one-hour presentation to organised groups of older people. *Years Ahead* aims to promote safe driving, offer information about how to choose a safe car and encourages older drivers to plan for their future mobility. Issues like road safety tips, the importance of choosing a safe vehicle and being fit enough to drive are all covered.

CarFit is a program developed in North America which aims to ensure older drivers are comfortably placed in their vehicles and able to utilise the vehicle features such as rear mirrors, steering wheels, seats and dashboard accessories. This program was a focal point of the recent Elin Schold-Davis visit, with workshop sessions run for older drivers, and a pilot program successfully conducted in Dubbo by NRMA. The potential that CarFit has to help older drivers in a very practical way has been embraced by some of the clubs.

An outline of the clubs' older driver activities follows:

RACV

RACV contributes to the mobility and safety of older Victorians through our road safety and mobility programs. We advocate on behalf of older road users' mobility and safety needs, and conduct research on safety and mobility issues for this demographic. RACV's older driver programs and initiatives are detailed below.

- ***Years Ahead – Road Safety for Seniors Program***

Since its inception, the *Years Ahead* program has been successfully delivered throughout Victoria to more than 100,000 older Victorians. The program has also been licensed to NSW, Queensland and South Australia. There is opportunity for the *Years Ahead* program to be licensed to other clubs.

- ***Senior Driver Program***

RACV Drive School began offering a Senior Drivers' Program in January 2005. The aim of the program is to provide an assessment of the driving ability of older drivers and offer tuition to improve driving skills and road safety so that mobility is maintained. The program provides the client with information, advice and guidance so that they can ideally make important decisions about their mobility for themselves. Driving instructors receive additional training to be part of this program and policies and procedures on dealing with older drivers have been developed. There are also guidelines on what to do if an instructor believes an older driver is unsafe.

- ***Vehicle Safety for Older Drivers***

This program involves initiatives to encourage older people to better understand the benefits of safety features and to purchase safer vehicles, whether new or second hand. Promotion occurs through a variety of channels including Years Ahead sessions, "Making the right choice" brochure,

RoyalAuto, the media and RACV's website.

- ***The New-Old Research Project***
Communicating road safety messages to this group is vital to ensure their safety and mobility needs are addressed, and the most effective way of communicating with this group needs to be determined. To address this need, research was conducted on communicating road safety messages to the next generation of older drivers in 2009. This research will help guide the direction for future older driver programs.
- ***From Motoring to Mobility for Non-Drivers***
This program involves the provision of information to Victorian non-drivers (including but not limited to older non-drivers) to help them improve and maintain their mobility. Activities undertaken in this area include developing a local government "best practice" criterion for land use planning to ensure the mobility of residents is a key consideration; and provision of information to older and disabled people about how they can extend their driving lives and make a smooth transition to a non-driver. In 2009, RACV released a report titled '*Stranded: Experiences of non-drivers in Victoria*', which studied the effects of not driving on older people, people with a disability and young unlicensed people.

RACQ:

The RACQ acknowledges that the safety of older drivers and road users is an important issue. As such it has been a focus for Club education and advocacy activities for many years. The RACQ's current activities in this area are as follow:

Years Ahead: The *Years Ahead* program underlines the RACQ's ongoing commitment to older drivers and aims to assist older motorists to drive safely for longer by being aware of their own capabilities. The RACQ has offered the *Years Ahead* program since the year 2000. Program initiatives include:

- ***Years Ahead workshop presentation:*** A 90-minute group discussion-based presentation covering age-related safety issues, awareness and application of road rules. *Years Ahead* workshop presentations are available free-of-charge to any community organisation or sporting group at their own venue. In 2010 to date, the RACQ Road Safety Education Team has presented 17 *Years Ahead* workshops, with a total of 690 participants.
- ***RACQ Refresh handbook:*** The RACQ *Refresh* handbook is an easy reference guide covering fitness to drive, defensive driving techniques, road signs and markings, road rules and sharing the road with other road users. *Refresh* handbooks are available for purchase at all RACQ branches, and were originally introduced as the *Years Ahead* handbook in the year 2000.
- ***Years Ahead refresher drive:*** The *Years Ahead* refresher drive is a 50-minute practical on-road drive with a qualified driver trainer. The *Years Ahead* refresher drive is not a test, but an opportunity for older drivers to have their driving observed with constructive comments and a written report on ways to improve their on-road safety. The refresher drive was introduced in the year 2000.

- **Older Driver Self-Assessment Questionnaire:** In 2005 the RACQ introduced the on-line, interactive *Older Driver Self-Assessment Questionnaire* (ODSAQ) to help provide older Queenslanders with advice about common driving issues, based on their circumstances. No information is collected by RACQ and the ODSAQ is completely anonymous. The Questionnaire can be viewed online at: (http://www.racq.com.au/motoring/driving/road_safety/older_road_users/older_driver_self_assessment)
- **Driver Assessment:** RACQ Driver Education also offers a one-on-one practical *Driver Assessment*, which appraises driving skills and behaviours, application of road rules in traffic and hazard perception in every-day driving. The *Driver Assessment* may assist older drivers, family members or medical professionals in deciding whether the older driver is safe to continue driving. There are costs associated with both the *Years Ahead* refresher drive and the *Driver Assessment*.
- **RACQ Road Safety Priorities :** The RACQ's *Road Safety Priorities* publication includes a factsheet (no. 17) entitled *Fitness to Drive*, which includes some discussion of issues relating to older drivers in Queensland, and makes numerous recommendations relating to them. *Road Safety Priorities* can be viewed online at: http://www.racq.com.au/motoring/driving/road_safety/road_safety_priorities

RAA (SA)

With almost a third of its members over the age of 60 the RAA has a vested interest in both advocating and providing programs for older drivers. An Education Co-ordinator was appointed to the RAA in late 2008 with a focus to develop programs and resources for younger and older drivers. Recent RAA projects for older drivers:

Years Ahead:

- Launched in South Australia in August 2009
- Presentation and design is closely aligned with the RACV model
- Extremely well received by the community
- Target 75 presentations per financial year
- The waiting list for presentations is 12 months.

Elin Schold-Davis visit:

- Two events held - a CEDA forum for business and an open community meeting
- Large amount of media interest was generated
- Visit was used as a way of positively advocating for older drivers

From an RAA perspective the cross-club collaboration that has developed as a result of the "Let Miss Daisy do the Driving" paper and the Elin Schold-Davis visit should continue to be encouraged and developed. In the future, the RAA will be looking to further develop other programs for older drivers and therefore would look favourably at any cross-club collaboration in this area as a way of developing quality programs that are cost effective.

RAC (WA)

The RAC Community Education Team was established in 1990 with the aim of educating members and the wider community about topics related to road and community safety, including dealing with the concerns of seniors. Since the establishment of the Seniors Program the RAC has had a prominent place as an expert voice in matters that relate to seniors and driving.

The focus of the Seniors Program has been on three main areas:

1. To increase a senior driver's knowledge on factors that contribute to road safety,
2. To educate and assist seniors in their preparation for the Seniors Driving Assessment, and
3. To educate seniors on alternate modes of transport.

Each of these areas is addressed in the following presentations:

Road Safety (Formerly known as Surviving Our Roads): This presentation covers everything a senior needs to know to keep safe on the roads, as both a driver and a pedestrian. It discusses current road safety information, tips and initiatives, how to choose the safest car and survival tips for driving on today's roads. From January 2000 to April 2010 Community Education delivered 296 Road Safety presentations to 10177 seniors.

Your Driving Future: This presentation helps seniors brush up on their road knowledge and prepare for their driving future. It discusses changes in road rules and regulations, how to assess your own driving ability and provides tips and advice for the Seniors Driving Assessment. The 2007, 2009 and 2010 Seniors Program brochure also contained basic written advice for the Seniors Driving Assessment. From January 2006 to April 2010 Community Education delivered 155 Driving Future presentations to 6844 seniors.

Scooters for Seniors: The presentation explores how scooters can allow a person to become more mobile. It discusses types of scooters, transporting, registration, licensing and insurance, road rules and safety advice for scooter users. From January 2006 to April 2010 Community Education delivered 75 Mobility presentations to 2343 seniors.

RACT

RACT believes that public policy settings should encourage and enable drivers to be able to drive their vehicles for as long as is safely and reasonably possible. The RACT Board has recently adopted a new policy document reflecting this view.

The Tasmanian Government's road safety consultants (Department of Infrastructure staff) conduct a series of community seminars (in partnership with local councils) featuring a classroom-style information session for older drivers. With very few resources in comparison to the larger Clubs, and in light of the Department's seminars, the RACT's public policy officer has focused recent activities primarily on:

- a program of public advocacy and government lobbying to raise awareness of older drivers' needs, "bust some myths" about older drivers specifically, and to build 'critical mass' around the issues that are specific to Tasmania; and
- developing relationships with key government agencies, seniors' advocacy groups and relevant health professionals to influence decision-makers in favour of RACT members; and

- a structured program of collaboration with the AAA and other Clubs to survey and research the literature as part of the AAA's Older Drivers' Working Group.

Issues and activities specific to Tasmania include:

Mandatory on-road assessments: The Tasmanian regulations still require drivers to pass an annual driving re-test from the age of 85 onwards. The RACT opposes this as it leads to competent and medically fit drivers giving up their licence before it is necessary; often causing unnecessary anxiety and loss of self-confidence. Further, the test itself fails to "net out" a huge number of "bad" older drivers as the pass rate is around 95%. Maintaining a driver's licence should be based on ability and function (or more specifically, by identifying the medical or functional impairment of some older drivers), rather than arbitrary age limits.

Safe vision: RACT has participated in several public relations campaigns with the optometrists' professional body in Tasmania to highlight the risk faced by older drivers through deteriorating vision.

Regular community engagement and information for members: RACT maintains a presence and distributes information at a range of seniors' expos and similar events and actively seek the views of older drivers through this type of public engagement. Senior RACT staff have also given road safety, road rules and related presentations to retirees associations and 'school for seniors' at several locations across Tasmania. In addition, the Club regularly publishes relevant information to older members in our magazine *Motor News Journeys*. An online information resource through ract.com.au is an upcoming project. An extension of the *Years Ahead* program to RACT members is also a potential future project.

Building community stakeholder support: RACT has previously held a public forum on the issue of older drivers. Recently, we hosted Dr Elin Schold Davis in a roundtable discussion with a broad cross-section of community stakeholders and government agency officers. This level of collaboration and exchange and the range of participants involved is simply unprecedented, and clearly demonstrates the value of the RACT's "honest broker" brand in discussing these sorts of issues.

RACT Driving Schools: The Driving School also provides a range of 'road rule refresher' and confidence-building driving sessions for older drivers (a number of these are booked by drivers who are in trepidation of the mandatory re-test requirement).

NRMA

NRMA's key principle is that age should not be the sole deciding factor when determining when an older person should stop driving, or have restrictions imposed on their licence. Rather, the right to a driver's licence should be determined by ability and not by age.

Recent and upcoming NRMA activities include:

Let Miss Daisy do the Driving: The production and release of this report (December 2008) clearly identified the transport needs of an ageing population.

Years Ahead Program: Is free and delivered by trained NRMA presenters from within the peer age group. The one hour presentation is available free to organised groups of older people. All drivers, passengers and pedestrians are at risk every

time they use our roads, and as people get older their risk of being involved in a crash can increase.

The program aims to:

- Increase awareness of safe driving practices
- Encourage all drivers to monitor their ability to drive
- Encourage older drivers to seek advice from their doctors regarding their capacity to drive
- Provide information about alternative transport options

Facts about Driving in the Years Ahead program

- Run by seniors for the benefit of seniors
- Sessions last for approximately one hour
- Sessions include an engaging formal presentation.

Older Persons Mobility Summit: Later this year (September) NRMA, in conjunction with the Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF) will be hosting an Older Persons Mobility Summit at NSW Parliament House to highlight the mobility needs of our ageing population in the lead up to the NSW State Election in March 2011.

Informal discussions with Ministers and Shadow Ministers indicate that there is a high level of interest in participating in the Summit.

NRMA Safer Driving Schools: Our Safer Driving Schools are accredited to assess the competency of older drivers for their Senior Driver's Licence Test.

Glove Box Guide for Older Drivers: NRMA also produces an older drivers version of its Glove Box Guide.

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Appendix 2: Elin Schold-Davis Visit

AAA recently funded a visit to Australia by American occupational therapist and older driver expert, Elin Schold-Davis, with some clubs and the NZAA co-ordinating her activities. Ms Schold-Davis met with officials and conducted sessions in New Zealand, Sydney, Dubbo, Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart.

Ms Schold-Davis ran some CarFit workshops and a number of seminars which looked at issues such as capacity to drive, dementia and Alzheimer's Disease and older driver behaviour.

The stakeholder meetings and forums were highly valuable in helping to establishing a range of relationships with key groups involved in the issues – especially seniors groups, occupational therapists and health professionals – as well as strengthening existing ones with relevant government agencies, and other road user groups.

Feedback from the hosting clubs was very positive (please refer Attachment 1 – Older Driver Working Group Teleconference 22/3/10) and the visit was a good example of AAA/club collaboration in hosting the visit and taking the lead in this demographic issue.

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Appendix 3: Dementia

No discussion or policy position on older driver support can be reached without acknowledging the growing impact of dementia on the older population and its effect upon older people's ability to keep driving. It was Waller, as long ago as 1967, who first hypothesised that cognitive decline associated with the dementing process may account for an increased risk of motor accidents in older drivers.

The loss of a person's driving licence because of old age is a contentious and emotional issue. As Dr Schold Davis told Australian audiences recently:

There needs to be a greater recognition that the progression of the disease erodes self-awareness...[in fact] driving may be the first concern to require family transition to a "caregiver" role.

Governments and advocacy organisations such as Alzheimer's Australia are actively looking at the impact of these diseases and programs to identify them, and their effects on the individual's ability to drive.

Alzheimer's Australia NSW has recently completed a major paper – *Driving and Dementia in NSW* – providing some underpinning research and recommendations which the NSW Government is currently examining (please refer Attachment 2 – *Driving and Dementia in NSW*). It is important to recognise NRMA's role (through their former road safety adviser Anne Morphett) in developing initial collaborations with Alzheimers's Australia NSW in these specific areas.

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