

Newcastle Boys' High School Old Boys Association**Dinner Address 11 August 2012****Lauchlan McIntosh AM**

President Australasian College of Road Safety and Chairman ANCAP

“Public Speaking or Speaking Publicly-and reducing road crashes.”

Gentlemen,

When I was asked to give the address tonight I was flattered. When I looked back through the list of previous speakers, many of whom I had had the privilege of hearing; I was humbled. But I am proud to join their company, I have always been proud of being an NBHS Old Boy. Thank you for the invitation.

It was with some nervous trepidation I climbed the steps of the town hall when I came to my first reunion over 20 years ago, recalling the memories of fellow students I hadn't seen for around 20 years, and some of the events I had been associated in this Town Hall. I was on that stage at 13, singing as a boy soprano, “O for the wings of a dove”. . (I recall my voice broke not long after singing on the stage at school, let's hope that doesn't happen tonight.) My graduation ceremony for my first degree from the University of Newcastle was held in this Hall.

That trepidation has faded over the last 20 years and I have enjoyed annually catching up and reminiscing; and of course singing.

Public speaking or speaking publicly then is my topic. I have done both.

I enjoyed about 20 years as a national advocate for two major organisations; in those roles I was very busy speaking publicly; firstly for a large business/industry organisation, the Australian Mining Industry Council through a great period of economic reform where we were active participants and through some interesting issues such as a Coronation Hill and Mabo; and secondly a large consumer organisation, the Australian Automobile Association with issues which continue today; petrol pricing, road infrastructure and funding, alternative fuels, road and vehicle safety and new technologies. This work was very much 'speaking publicly' and both where I was able to speak not only as paid advocate, but from some personal and passionate experience, as a miner and then as a motorist. I still

have roles in road and vehicle safety, management and stewardship where I can still speak publicly.

The aim of speaking publicly, in that very competitive space, was to make a difference, to either reduce some impediments or gain some benefits.

Perhaps I was asked to speak tonight as I used to be seen on TV and heard on radio. At these dinners, some would say to me; "I saw you on TV" or "I heard you on radio"-when asked what I had said, most replied "Whatever it was, it sounded good"-so let's hope tonight I can at least achieve that!

Now my initial exposure to public speaking came when I was NHBS.

Some of you may remember I used to stammer, and my father thought that public speaking would help reduce that stammer. You will recall the recent film, the Kings Speech where Geoffrey Rush as Lionel Logue, the speech therapist who worked with King George V1, to overcome the King's stammering.

I can tell you that I probably was exposed to most of the treatment techniques exhibited in the film; and for me, as for the King, not all worked.

At school, public speaking was encouraged by Harold Beard the headmaster. Ross Gittins outlined in great detail in his after dinner speech here in 2009 how much Harold encouraged us to take an interest in current affairs, with our classes in debating and listening to "guest speakers". In doing some research for tonight I came across a small report in the school magazine on the results of the Commonwealth Public Speaking Prize in the Hunter Valley in 1962. I came third that year with a very well prepared address. It was listed surprisingly in the same size print as the sports reports!

Our headmaster, Harold, nominated me to give my 8 minute, prize winning address to the full school assembly.

Now my stammer often made it difficult to start speaking; -some might say it is a pity that still doesn't occur more often.

So, picture the scene. The quadrangle outside the hall, 600 or so boys aligned in class groups, the small rickety rostrum with a microphone, the headmaster-and me. A brief introduction on the value of public speaking for all us young men from Harold, some additional comments on the importance of the Commonwealth, the prize and then over to me.

Well, with such a build-up, all I could do was freeze. The problem with rote learned or read speeches for stammerers is that there is no way out. Ad libbing was frowned upon. So-I pretend there is a problem with the microphone; I look desperately to my mates in the front row for some support; but by this time the bastards are beginning to snigger. No comfort there; so I the only solution is to say something not written, something altogether different, and launch into the speech.

So “AH SHIT!.... Gentlemen today my topic for my address is.....”

I can feel the wrath of Harold behind me, my mates are now in open laughter, but I have the power, the microphone is mine and I have 8 minutes before I finish. Harold got over it; I wasn't expelled or even sent to the Deputy Head's office for punishment...at least not then. (Remember words like that, used back then, were 'swearing'!)

Over time I worked out how not to stammer which reduced the need for the opening 'Ah Shit' line. But the concept of saying something different, something unexpected, always has some merit in getting attention .

That was public speaking, almost akin to entertaining. I did join the Public Speakers Association for a time, a worthy group of professionals with a predominate interest in speaking to entertain, and speaking to be remunerated.

There are of course key tools; Preparation, brevity, recognising the audience, getting feedback, building on experience, relevance, repetition, good facts, the pause, good luck and of course- be entertaining.

This list is too long to cover tonight, but let me give you a couple of examples. (Malcolm Fraser and Simon Crean)

One of the best examples of brevity was a member of the Upper House in the WA Parliament- Ron Leeson. After six years in the Upper House, he was due for re-election. I was the Manager of a small iron ore mine at Koolyanobbing near Southern Cross in about 1978. The union delegate invited me to a Labor election rally on the oval after work. Leeson and the famed Julian Grill the potential MHR turned up. Grill, then just a Kalgoorlie solicitor (to be become the confidant of Brian Burke and lobbyist fame) droned on to the 30 or so in the crowd for half an hour on why he should be elected. Leeson stood up, said; 'I have been in the Legislative Council for six years, vote 1 for me on the yellow ticket and I will be in for another six', and sat down. He got back in, and I don't think he gave more than one speech in the parliament in 12 years. Nice work if you can get it!

Let's consider how to get feedback from the audience.

Many years ago I attended the London Metals Exchange Annual Dinner. The then President of the Australian Mining Council, Sir Bruce Watson, was the guest speaker. 4000 guests, 400 tables; video coverage in several rooms at the Grosvenor Hotel. As we sat down at our table, one of the metal traders casually put a 50 pound note on the table and said; "21 minutes". All the other guests equally casually dropped 50 pound notes and in rapid fire suggested other times...15 minutes; 23 etc. Here they were doing what they did best...betting on a future event... how long the speech would be.

Having read the speech in advance, and having heard Sir Bruce speak on many occasions, I felt somewhat conflicted and also 50 pound was a lot of cash for a humble travelling Australian. I had the 50, and made my bet. I didn't mention Bruce was a Queenslander through and through. What was written was mainly overlooked and as you know there is a tendency for Queenslanders to s p e a k s l o w l y. (So inside information was of no value.)

Now in terms of feedback for the speaker, 4000 guests now had a serious stake in one component of the speech; the time. Once the speaker exceeds your estimate, your interest is reduced, drinking and conversation reignites and once over half the audience's estimates have been exceeded the background noise tends to drown out the speaker. (I don't think Bruce noticed however.)

Perhaps that could become a custom for this dinner....then again we wouldn't want to encourage gambling at an NHBS OBH event. After all, many of the previous speakers have related the alleged gambling habits of our well-loved teachers. Just imagine Keg McCrae or Charlie Goffet having a few bob on the length of this after dinner address.

So before you now start to bet on how much longer I will keep speaking about public speaking let me take the opportunity to tell you what I am speaking about publicly now. It is an area where again I have a personal interest and one where I am passionate about the opportunity to make a difference by speaking publicly.

I hope the difference I can make is reducing unnecessary road trauma; trauma unfortunately termed 'the road toll'I believe a toll we don't have to pay.

This week as President of the Australasian College of Road Safety, I oversaw our annual conference in Sydney entitled "A SAFE SYSTEM: EXPANDING THE REACH". Our Governor General HE Quentin Bryce gave the introduction.

Now I realise that you are thinking that reducing road trauma is not likely to be too entertaining. So;

I will be brief.

There are two ways to comment on road safety.

One is to focus on the extent of the problem.

Every year at least 1, 300,000 die and 50 million are seriously injured worldwide from road crashes. Predominantly in low-income and middle-income countries. **This is the leading worldwide cause of premature death for children, adolescents, and young adults aged 10-24.** Nearly half of those dying on the world's roads are "vulnerable road users": pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

33,900 die or are seriously injured in Australia every year from road crashes.

The other way is to focus on solutions and results;

In 1970 road deaths in Australia peaked at 3800 for that year, or around 60,000 deaths and serious injuries every year. The efforts of many with better roads, better cars and better drivers have **saved perhaps over 100,000 lives and over 1,500, 000 serious injuries.**

In this decade, 2010-2020, a United Nations designated Decade of Action on Road Safety; there is a **program to reduce road deaths by 5 million and injuries by 50 million.**

In Australia we have a national target to reduce deaths and injuries from road crashes by 40% in this decade. The annual cost to the nation is at least \$27bn pa. (The current Australian Defence Budget is \$24bn).

Speaking publicly about this issue has a purpose beyond entertainment. But the public speaking techniques apply. I have just used two; Repetition and relevance.

Road safety campaigns for decades have, in my view overemphasised, a 'blame the driver' approach.

I am also Chairman of ANCAP the Australasian New Car Assessment Program, the company which tests and compares the relative safety of new cars in Australia. Look up the web site www.ancap.com.au

Car manufacturers have for decades developed safer cars.

The Tucker Corporation in the USA even made a special padded and strengthened compartment in their 1948 Tucker Torpedo, where front seat occupants were advised they could throw themselves in a fraction of a second to avoid injury in the event of a collision.

In 1965, Ralph Nader, in his book *Unsafe at Any Speed*, blew the whistle on the major car makers for ignoring the technology available to make cars safer, preferring instead to concentrate on style, speed and power.

In 1966 Nader wrote: "It is faster, cheaper and more enduring to build operationally safe and crash-worthy automobiles that will prevent death and injury than to build a policy around the impossible goal of having drivers behave perfectly at all time under all conditions in the operation of a basically unsafe vehicle and often treacherous highway conditions. Nader saw in 1996 the mistake in blaming the driver. Car manufacturers are now on the cusp of delivering what Nader wanted.

So, let me make an assertion; again, something you might believe is unexpected.

In 10 years' time hi-tech cars will have reduced road crashes and road trauma by 50%.

Just over a decade ago, research showed that safer roads could reduce road deaths by around 50% and safer vehicles by around 25%.

Ten years ago ANCAP announced the first five star ANCAP rated car in Australia. Manufacturers then claimed it would not be possible for all cars to meet such a high standard.

It took until 2008 for the Ford Falcon, an Australian made car, to achieve that rating. But what has followed in the last 3 years is a cascade of cars with 5 star ratings. Research released last week in the USA shows the savings due to improvements in the fleet from 2001 to 2008 are remarkable. For example in 2008 about 6,000 lives would have been saved in the USA if all vehicles had been as safe as the 2008 new vehicle fleet

The risk of serious injury or death in a collision is doubled in a two star car compared to a five star car.

Australian research shows that **"if all young drivers involved in crashes were driving the safest car available, rather than the cars they usually drove; their road fatality and serious injury rate could be reduced by more than 80 per cent.** The overall reduction in road trauma would be 15%"

Safe cars are not only expensive cars

Many of the new cars in the under \$ 20,000 bracket are 5 star rated.

A five star car is a “gift that keeps on giving”. You buy one, you pass it on to your kids or grandkids, or better still you should make sure they, the most vulnerable drivers, have one. Make sure they drive yours on Saturday night.

From 1 million new vehicles sold in Australia in 2011, over 80 per cent have a 4 or 5-star ANCAP safety ratings. So the car fleet sold today is much safer than a decade ago. And at ANCAP we are raising the bar year by year.

But that leap forward will be dwarfed by the leap in vehicle safety over the next decade.

New cars will not only be more crashworthy but will feature crash mitigation and reduction technologies.

(A similar leap in road infrastructure and enforcement technologies will also reduce the crash rates.)

Collision avoidance technologies such as electronic stability control (ESC), the feature that stops the car from yawing or drifting by individually braking wheels, now mandatory in new cars but in many since 2007 or so, have been shown to reduce fatalities by at least 25%. Autonomous emergency braking (AEB) available not only in high end cars now similarly is showing crash reduction rates as high as 27%. Pedestrian avoidance, lane keeping, blind spot monitoring, alcohol interlocks (now in thousands of trucks in Sweden) and various fatigue alerts are becoming readily available accessories and in some cases standard equipment.

Our car fleet average age is over 10 years; but as fleet owners, major corporations set purchasing standards to only buy new cars with the latest safety technology, the fleet will upgrade more quickly.

BHP Billiton, my old employer, this year announced it would only buy ANCAP rated 5 star cars and would require it's contractors to do the same.

So feedback and repetition as public speaking techniques, I have covered; I notice the background hum increasing, so I assume my time is up. I could take the alternative view and in recognising that some have closed their eyes to concentrate, I could go on.

Now is the time for the pause....what did he say? Something unexpected.

Let me tell you the story of the mature age motor mechanic apprentice who has a final assignment to reassemble from a bin of spare parts a complete car. He worked diligently

alongside his younger colleagues who dashed about. At the end the supervisor remarked what an amazing job he had done. The supervisor said in 40 years of setting such a task, he had never seen such a meticulous and accurate result. He was a somewhat puzzled as he had observed that the student had completed the task by assembling everything through the exhaust pipe. When questioned about this method, the apprentice said;

“That is what comes naturally, I don’t know any other way. I used to be a gynaecologist.”
Something unexpected!

So think about that vision in for new solutions in reducing road crashes, they can and will be reduced; add it to your knowledge tonight, have some imagination to believe there are new ways to reduce unnecessary road trauma.

Don’t get stuck in your views like I did when I stammered...continue to blame the other driver if you must, but have a look for a few of those alternative ways of reducing road crashes and hence the unnecessary trauma that I outlined tonight; like I did at school so long ago...recognise the value of something unexpected, those ‘ah shit’ moments you might call them and press on. And don’t forget to buy the 5 star ANCAP rated car.

Speak out publicly on what you believe in, if you don’t someone else will only fill the space.

Thank you.

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