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CASE
STUDY

THE ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA – A DRIVING FORCE FOR A BETTER WA, 1905-2020



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Case Study Research Report | CERU



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface to this Edition	5
Preface.....	6
Acknowledgements	7
Introduction.....	8
Chapter 1: The Excitement Builds - Automobilmism 1896-1904.....	10
Before the Club: The self-propelled vehicle emerges	10
The automobile finally lands in Western Australia	15
Chapter 2: Building a Club - Giving a Voice to Motorists 1905-1928.....	19
Founding a Club	19
Creating the traveller’s map.....	22
The Great War, 1914-1919	24
Taking Stock and Building Membership	27
The first Traffic Act 1919.....	28
The Wonders of Touring.....	30
Chapter 3: Making Do - Depression and War 1929-1948	36
Centenary Celebrations 1929	36
The Great Depression.....	37
Contract service stations	38
War Service	42
Third Party Insurance	45
Signing the Way	48
The East-West Highway	49
Chapter 4: All That Glisters - Post-War boom to Energy Crisis 1949-1985	52
After the War.....	52
Signs of the Times	52
New Money, New Measurements.....	60
The Eyre Highway realised.....	62
Embracing Seat Belts, Speed Limits and Sober Driving.....	66
Members as Consumers	70
The Rise of Environmental Crises.....	72
Looking Ahead.....	79
Chapter 5: Continuities and Changes – safety and uncertainty 1986-1998.....	80
Continuities in safety	80
Going off-road.....	84
Environmental impacts, lead and taxes	86
Coming or going?.....	89

Chapter 6: Expanding Mobility for All – Innovation, Creativity and Continuity 1999-2019.....	93
Ever Safer.....	93
Building relationships with governments	96
Building social capital	97
Embracing environmental responsibilities.....	100
Centenary Catalyst for Renewal	102
Into the 2010s.....	112
A Black Swan Lands in the Form of COVID-19.....	121
Chapter 7: Reflections.....	124
To Be the Driving Force.....	124
Our First Asset is Our Members	126
Chapter 8: Applying the CME research framework.....	129
Assessing the Critical Events that have faced the RAC WA.....	130
The first critical event – Establishment of a motor club where none had previously existed, 1905.....	130
Second critical event –Invention of road signs and other motoring infrastructure, 1908	131
Third critical event – Commencement of Roadside Assistance services, 1926.....	132
Fourth critical event – Getting into the motor vehicle insurance business, 1947	133
Fifth critical event – Introducing road safety to WA drivers, 1971.....	134
Sixth critical event – The gradual move into electric vehicles, 1978	136
Seventh critical event – Responding to the Covid 19 Pandemic.....	138
Systems Level Analysis – Input factors	140
Social Cooperation	140
Role of Government and Regulatory Framework.....	141
Industry Structure.....	143
Natural Environment.....	144
Enterprise Level Analysis – Assessing the Business Model	146
Purpose.....	146
Member Value Proposition	146
Governance.....	148
Profit Formula	149
Resources and Processes	149
Systems Level Analysis – Output Factors.....	150
Economic contribution	150
Social contribution.....	151
Key lessons from The Co-op York case.....	151
Conclusions	153
References	154
Figures and Images.....	175



Appendix A: RAC WA within the CME Research Framework.....	177
Appendix B: RAC WA Patrons, Presidents, Councillors and Executives.....	179
Appendix C: RAC WA - Historical Timeline 1895-2020.....	192
Appendix D: Currency and Measurements	205
Measurements.....	205
Currency.....	205
Appendix E: Notes on Methods and Archives	206
On Methodologies.....	206
On the RAC Archives	209
Digitisation of RAC magazine collection.....	210

PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

This edition of *A Driving Force for a Better WA* reproduces the text and images of the 2020 edition, but without the Forward from Jacqueline Ronchi, RAC President.

This edition also includes a Strategic Framework Overview (Critical Events), and sections of Applying the Conceptual Research Framework – System Level inputs and outputs, and an Enterprise Level analysis, that are not in the 2019 edition. These are drawn from the research framework for the *Looking Back – Looking Forward: The economic and social contribution of the Western Australian Co-operative and Mutual Enterprise (CME) sector to the state’s development project*. The addition of these sections provides an analytic component to the study to facilitate a cross-case analyses across all the case studies.

The case studies are:

- Perth Building Society 1862-1987 (2023)
- Albany Co-operative Society Ltd 1867-1883 (2023)
- Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia (RAC), 1905+ (2021)
- Westralian Farmers’ [Co-operative] Ltd (Wesfarmers) 1914-1984 (202x)
- Quairading Co-operative Society Ltd, 1917+ (202x)
- York Co-operative Society Ltd, 1917+ (202x)
- Co-operatives Federation of Western Australia, 1919 + (2019)
- Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd 1933 + (2024)
- Ord River Co-operative Ltd 1963 + (2024)
- United Crate Co-operative Ltd, 1964+ (2024)
- Capricorn Co-operative, 1975+
- Galactic Co-operative, 2014+

PREFACE

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia, better known by its initials as the RAC, marked its 115th anniversary in 2020. This was a year marked by the global COVID-19 Pandemic which has had fundamental public health, economic and social impacts in countries around the world including Western Australia and Australia. It has also made and left deep scars in the memories and life experiences of individuals and families, many of whom have been personally touched by the pandemic. Western Australia has, more than most communities, through State leadership, expert management and a measure of good luck, escaped the worst of the pandemic but at the time of writing was still largely isolated from the other states and territories in Australia and even more so from countries overseas.

To celebrate an anniversary at such a time is a measure of the confidence within the RAC that it has the capacity and structures in place to respond to the pandemic and emerge having provided the best in the way of services for its members and the community during such a time. Further, the RAC has good reason for such confidence. It has faced numerous hard times since its foundation, notably the Great War, the Great Depression, World War Two, the oil crises of the 1970s and 1980s, the impacts of global terrorism in the early 21st century, and the slowly unfolding dramas of great environmental and technological changes over the past fifty years. Many organisations have fallen by the wayside in such times, but the RAC has emerged each time, maybe a little battered, but also with an enhanced corporate wisdom and strength in seeking ways to better serve the needs of its members and its broader community. This history documents and analyses some of the dynamic of these changes over time.

The author, Bruce Baskerville, has a long record of researching the ways in which established institutions are transplanted and adapted to new environments, especially in settler societies. His research interests have given him an abiding interest in community and co-operative models of self-governance, and the historical bases for such models. The RAC, as a member-based incorporated not-for-profit association, is one outstanding example of autonomous community self-organisation and self-governance.

Bruce is a member of the RAC and has on occasion made use of its roadside breakdown service, especially in the days when the second (or third or fourth) hand cars beloved of students lacked so many of the safety and technical features of contemporary vehicles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No historian is an island, a truism illustrated by the work of researching and writing this book. Within the University of Western Australia, Emeritus Professor Tim Mazzarol of the Centre for Entrepreneurial Management and Innovation (CEMI) and of the Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU) within the Business School kept me on track with proofing and checking chapters as they were drafted, clarifying the state of research around co-operatives and mutual enterprises, and summarising trends within the work, Professor David Gilchrist, also in the Business School, kept me engaged with the world of business and economic history, and Associate Professor Andrea Gaynor, Director of the Centre for Western Australian History within the School of Humanities was always ready to provoke my thinking on the ways communities organise and form themselves to manage their shared interests, and to stimulate my research on the environmental implications of motoring and road building.

The COVID-19 pandemic rules precluded the making of formal oral history interviews for the project as originally intended, although one interview was able to be undertaken with Patrick Walker, Group Executive Social and Community Impact in November 2020 as COVID restrictions were lifted. Informal discussions with Terry Agnew former RAC Group CEO, Freda Crucitti and other RAC council members at the Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) conference in Perth in November 2019 were a window into the RAC, and the pride held by its leaders in their organisation and their striving to serve the community needs.

Within the RAC offices in Wellington Street the professional staff under Pat Walker have provided unlimited access (albeit interrupted by COVID-19 restrictions), especially Katie Baker, Heritage Project Officer and Nikki Turner, Senior Manager External Relations to the RAC's archives and historical collections. It was a pleasure to work with such people, and within an archive that was orderly, organised and largely free of dust! The Community Education team was also very helpful in providing insights into their work and the crucial role of outreach to the rising generations of motorists and road users (and future members).

The professional staff of the State Library of Western Australia and the State Records Office reading room were unfailingly helpful with access to legal deposit copies of RAC publications. I don't think too many people can claim to have read every issue of *Road Patrol* between 1930 and 2007, and the value of the legal deposit system in maintaining the communal memories of Western Australians cannot be underestimated. A special thanks is also reserved for Helen Tuck of the Royal Association of Justices WA who was able to solve for me the small but seemingly irresolvable question of the first names of RAC president Mr L. R. Butt (1921-1928), from an age when a gentleman's surname was considered a sufficient identifier.

Finally, all the members of the RAC who, at any time I mentioned I was working on a history of the Club, always seemed to be present in any audience or group and freely shared with me their associations and memories of the Club and the ways in which it had assisted them over the years. It did seem that, in any gathering of say three Western Australians, at least one would be an RAC member. The continuity of the Club, and the stories in this history, ultimately reflect the enduring value placed by the community on the RAC and are a tribute to all members past and present and future.

INTRODUCTION

Automobile clubs arose in Britain, France, Germany and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century as self-propelled or motor vehicles became technologically feasible, began to be produced in large enough numbers to create a market for sales, and a social class developed that recognised it might have some common aims that could be advanced by associating in self-governing bodies.



These organisations, especially the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland, which became the Royal Automobile Club, or RAC were the models copied with more or less fidelity throughout all the European empires and in other countries.

The Automobile Club of Western Australia was established in 1905 and consciously sought to emulate the British example. The Club became an incorporated association in 1916 under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1895*, and in 1922 King George V bestowed upon the club the honour of using the royal prefix in its name. From this time the Club began to use the abbreviation RAC as its informal name.

There are several continuous themes running through the RAC's history. It has lobbied governments, State and Commonwealth, for better legislative and regulatory measures to manage road traffic and road safety since its role in developing Western Australia's first Traffic Act in 1919. It has played a significant role in the development of the tourism industry in Western Australia since the 1920s when it began promoting motor touring through the provision of road maps showing road conditions, accommodation, service stations and other useful information, and also began lobbying the State Government for the creation of national parks that tourists could visit.

Until 1975 the RAC provided most of the directional and warning signs on roads, especially in country areas, both to help tourists and as a road safety program. It sought to extend from the 1920s its role in providing support for motorists through the development of a system of roadside assistance patrols and contract service stations and lobbied for the establishment of an effective third-party insurance system, finally achieved in the 1940s.

The RAC was central to both having a regulatory environment established for the wearing of seat belts, establishing and managing speed limits and speed zones, and the reduction in drink driving, as well as (perhaps even more effectively) operating programs to change driver behaviours in ways that made safer driving acceptable and eventually desirable. These are all areas in which the RAC brought about long-lasting change in Western Australia.

The Club has also invested heavily in particular goals that had more specific beginnings and endings, of which its persistent lobbying for the creation of a trafficable trans-Nullarbor route that eventually resulted in the creation, and then finally the sealing, of the Eyre Highway, is an outstanding example. As a campaign, this stretched from at least 1923 to 1976. Other changes, while similarly enduring, have had less-easily defined beginnings and endings.

Since the 1980s, the Club has sought to reduce the impact of motoring on the environment, especially vehicle emissions, and actively encouraged the development of alternative forms of mobility from cycling and public transport to hydrogen cell and electric powered vehicles. Across most of its existence the Club has also had to deal with changing technologies in vehicle design and operation, road design and construction, and in the conduct of its own operations with the development of, for instance, online payment systems.

The RAC today has grown, through these and other pathways, to be the only organisation of its kind in Western Australia. It has created enormous social capital through its work with its members and with State transport agencies and its support for numerous community groups ranging across emergency services, health care, sporting and cultural activities and many more. Over the last decade the RAC WA has emphasised the concept of mobility in all its iterations rather than the narrower idea of motorists and sought to be active in areas such as urban design, road planning, alternative fuels and domestic tourism.

Social purposes have long been at the heart of RAC operations, from the first road signs it erected in 1908 to war-time ambulances, operating theatres and fundraising, to supporting environmental groups such as Men Of The Trees and Bush Heritage Australia and supporting emergency services such as the RAC Rescue helicopters. These activities and many more have positioned the RAC as a key player in promoting social co-operation, connectivity and social cohesion, especially in times of great change.

In 2020, Western Australian society was dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and once again the RAC was actively seeking to support its members, advance new ideas about post-COVID society, and through its most recent publication, *Horizons Special WA Travel Edition*, empower its members and the broader community to find both security in, and contribute to the recovery. This aimed to preserve a distinctive Western Australia that the RAC had over 115 years helped to imagine and shape and indeed bring into being. As RAC president Jacqueline Ronchi says in the *Travel Edition*,

There has never been a better time to embrace the wonders of Western Australia.

CHAPTER 1: THE EXCITEMENT BUILDS - AUTOMOBILISM | 1896-1904

‘Judging from the success which attended the recent trial in England of motor cars, it appears that we are now within measurable distance of an era of horseless carriages. It is, at any rate, pretty certain that this new type of transport has emerged from the stage of experiment to that of practicability, and there is equally little doubt about the fact that at no distant date the cars are destined to play a very important part in the carriage of both passengers and goods’ (Editorial, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 21 November 1896: 2).

BEFORE THE CLUB: THE SELF-PROPELLED VEHICLE EMERGES

The *Kalgoorlie Miner’s* editorial of November 1896 prophesying the imminent arrival of the motor car followed the publication of several articles earlier that year in Goldfields and Perth newspapers on the rapid development of motor cars or automobiles in England, Germany and France (“Gossip”, 1896; “Our Letter”, 1896; “The Motor Car”, 1896).

It would be a few more years before any of the new vehicles began touring Western Australian roads, but the possibilities were already being canvassed. The *Miner’s* editor, John Kirwan, seemed well-informed of overseas developments. November 14 was a significant date, he noted, as a new law recently passed by the British parliament had legalised driving motor cars on public roads after several motor firms had been fined in local courts for such behaviour. ¹

The date was marked by a parade of 30 automobiles through London and then a 76-kilometre run to Brighton. One of the cars occasionally ran at a rate of 25 miles per hour (40 km/h), and the Duke of Winchelsea pronounced the “foundation of a great national industry”. Amid the excitement there were also the detractors, with their complaints about the machines being ugly, clumsy and noisy, and their petroleum fuel emitting a sickly smell. However, Kirwan believed these problems would soon be overcome by the discovery of an economic and light means of storing electricity. Already, an omnibus service, powered entirely by electric vehicles, had commenced service in the Imperial capital.

At the same time similar developments were taking place in France, where 32 machines took part in a 775-kilometre run from Paris to Marseilles, there was strong public interest in a display of motor cars at the Palais de l’Industrie, and the ‘Paris Auto-mobile Club’ had recently been founded by Baron de Zulen, inventor of several motor cars. ² Kirwan concluded optimistically that motor carriages would become common on English roads, and “their evolution, considering the amount of inventive genius which will be brought to bear on their improvement, should be fairly rapid”.

¹ The Locomotives on Highways Act 1896 (60 & 61 Vict, c36), covering the whole United Kingdom, defined a new category of vehicle, a ‘light locomotive’ of under 3 tons unladen weight, and set a speed limit for them of 14 miles per hour (23 km/h). This was replaced within a few years by the Motor Car Act 1903 (3 Edw 7, c36) that introduced motor vehicle registration by local authorities, driver licensing, required cars to have brakes, and raised the speed limit to 20 miles per hour (32 km/h) on public highways.

² The Club is now L’Automobile Club de France (ACF), established on 12 November 1895 as a men’s club that organised and regulated motor sports, and established the French Grand Prix in 1921.

With the benefit of hindsight, Kirwan's editorial was farsighted. The development of motor vehicles did proceed rapidly and attracted many inventive young people to work with constantly changing new technologies. Motor vehicle manufacturing did become a mark of a nation's industrial capacity. Patronage by people in high office or title did become mark of the early motor industry. It was by no means assured at this early stage that petroleum combustion engines would be the principal means of motor power, with many observers assuming they would be rapidly replaced by electric motors.

Exhibitions, runs, touring and motor sports quickly became popular, and Baron de Zulen's foundation of an automobile club in Paris provided a model for intending motorists that would be widely emulated, although usually without being restricted to men. While some of these factors would wax and wane over the years, the central role of a member-based car owners and drivers' association would remain a constant and parallel development in the evolution of motoring.

The press continued to carry an increasing volume of stories about motor cars and other horseless vehicles such as bicycles. On the question of fuel, renowned American inventor Thomas Edison was often quoted saying that electricity will be the cheapest and best fuel, that the most successful automobiles being made were electric powered, and that new technologies would soon ensure that battery storage would be sufficiently developed for heavier vehicles such as buses and wagons ("News and Notes", 1897). Another expert added that, just as electric motors would supersede horse cars, so better road paving would mean the end of rails and trains ("The Conjuror's Wand", 1898).

Motor vehicle champions did not have it all their own way, and many were challenged at this time by bicycles as alternatives to horsepower. There was friendly competition between their exponents, and many of the developments in electric motors grew out of inventions for electric bicycle motors. Press reporting often treated cycling and motoring as simply two variants on a desirable horse-free form of mobility, and 'automobilists' and 'wheelmen' appeared in competitive events staged at the same time (The Scorcher, 1899a). By 1899, press reporting on motor cars had already moved from a few editorials and general news items to increasingly regular and more detailed reports in the sports columns.

The last year of the nineteenth century was also when it was becoming clear that motoring was being taken up by women as well as men. Perth's satirical *Clare's Weekly* reported that

"... on one matter at least, Paris is fifty years in advance of London ... every moudaine after her morning ride in the Bois de Boulogne returns thither in her automobile driven or rather engineered by herself. When driving a motor car, a simple tailor-made gown is not only considered the best taste, but becomes in a sense the only possible wear, for the amusement involves dust and grime unimaginable by those who have not had the experience. ... The Queen Regent of Spain has a horseless Victoria, and motor dogcarts have been ordered by two Russian Archduchesses"³ ("Vanity Fair", 1899).

³ *Moudaine* refers to a worldly woman with experience of life. A Victoria was a fashionable and elegant open carriage modelled on a phaeton.

Figure 1: 1899 newspaper decal for 'The Scorcher'

A key sports journalist central to boosting local knowledge of and excitement about the motor car long before it arrived in Western Australia.



CYCLOGRAMS.

(BY "THE SCORCHER.")

Source: Sunday Times, 17 September 1899.

A more prosaic use of the motor car was reported in the first 'motor car marriage' from Paris, where an electric powered motor coupé, "festooned with cut flowers within and without", carried away a newlywed bride and groom from the church ("The First", 1899).

The rapid growth in motor car numbers, from 'a dozen' in 1897 to over 3,260 motor cars and over 10,000 motorcycles, in France by 1899, only hinted at the growth in England, claimed the *Coolgardie Pioneer* in July 1899. Although there were no imported motor carriages in Australia, several colonial-made motors had been created and were running with some success, and the editor predicted that the growing interest in motoring would see a fair number on colonial roads in the coming summer ("Cycling", 1899a). The number of motorcycles also points to the transitional role they played between bicycles and cars. The eclipsing of electric motors was hinted at in the estimate that 'practically all' of the French-made motors were powered by gasoline and kerosene engines ("The Reign", 1899).

Perth's *Sunday Times* cycling reporter, 'The Scorcher', outlined in September 1899 the reason no automobiles had yet made it to Australia:

"All the big French and English factories are overwhelmed with orders for thousands of cars of all descriptions, and they therefore have no time to attend to their interests in Australia ... [but] Mr EW Rudd [in Melbourne] has secured the agency for Pennington motor cars ... [and] the Dunlop Tyre Company are now making arrangements for manufacturing and supplying motor tyres for colonial use" (The Scorcher, 1899b).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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The increasing speed of motor cars was emphasised in reports of ‘runs’ and time trials, with a French trial won by a 16 horse-power motor car that covered 1,423 miles (2,290 kilometres) in 44 hours 44 minutes, an average of 31.7 miles per hour (51 km/h) (“Motor Car Race”, 1899). Electric power still seemed promising, with Thomas Edison inventing an electric powered tricycle that could run for 150 miles (242 kilometres) without recharging, was noiseless, light, and could be handled by a child (“Edison’s Motor Car”, 1899). As speed increased, a separation between cars and bicycles was being predicted. The *Coolgardie Miner* wrote that “there is not the slightest doubt but that the day of the universal motor car is fast approaching”, and with it would come proper road construction and better roads that would benefit the ordinary cyclist as much as the automobilist, a term that embraced all forms of ‘self-propelled’ (or horseless) vehicles (“Cycling”, 1899b).

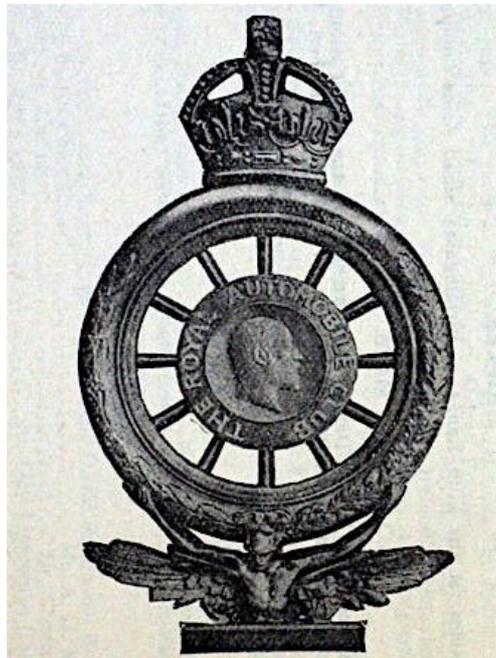
With the turn of the new century, the desire for motor cars was stoked ever higher in Western Australia. In June 1900 the *Kalgoorlie Miner* carried a long feature article by ‘An Amateur’ describing a motor car tour taken in London by an apparently wary passenger (“Carriage of the Future”, 1900). “Another Frenchified bauble” was his initial view of the car, but as it thudded and lurched through the city streets, adroitly manoeuvring around horses and pedestrians, his admiration begins to grow (p. 7). Eventually, the car leaves the city and he finds himself “flying down a long tree-bordered hill as if on a toboggan” before settling into an easy pace of 20 miles per hour (32 km/h) (p. 7). The throbbing of the engine, the vibrating of the carriage, the smells of the fuel all disappear, and towns and villages fly past in a swift panorama. After 50 miles, they turn homeward and as evening comes on are guided by powerful acetylene lamps. They “tear past” darkening hedges and houses and barking dogs, eventually slowing down as they come into the lights of suburban London and finally reach their destination. Now, exhilarated, he is won over by the car and as he takes a (horse-drawn) hansom cab to the railway station, he suddenly realises how absurdly slow and unmanageable is the horse powered vehicle. The story is a remarkable piece of marketing, with its emphasis on speed and modernity. For many Western Australians, An Amateur’s experience (and conversion) would be repeated over and over again in the next few years.

Perhaps the first sign that this was now in sight was an announcement that the inaugural Governor General of Australia, Lord Hopetoun, would be bringing with him two motor cars, which would probably see the automobile movement “spread rapidly in the Eastern colonies” (“Cycling”, 1900, p. 1). Then it was announced that the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, coming to Australia to open the first Commonwealth parliament, would be bringing “an up-to-date motor car”, which would see motoring boom across Australia (“Cycling”, 1901, p. 7). The Duke’s father King Edward VII, when still the Prince of Wales, had been taken for a drive in February 1896 by Evelyn Ellis, Baron Howard de Walden, in a Daimler-engineered car Ellis had brought from France. The Prince, although initially frightened by the speed, was impressed and became an enthusiast and patron of Britain’s first motor show (Montagu & Burgess-Wise, 1995). Ellis’ friend Harry Lawson formally floated the Daimler Motor Company Limited the day after the Prince’s ride, and in 1897 founded the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland. The club became the governing body for motor sports across the United Kingdom, and in 1907 Edward VII bestowed the ‘Royal’ honorific on the club and authorised the use of his profile portrait in the Club’s badge (RAC UK, 2025).



Figure 2: Bonnet badge of the RAC (GB&I), pictured in 1917,

Showing Mercury holding a wreathed car wheel within a wreath of laurel and oak leaves and surmounted by a crown with the royal profile.



Sources: Graces Guide, CC BY-SA 4. 0

The newly royal club dropped the 'Great Britain and Ireland' part of its name at this time and quickly became known as 'The RAC'. These royal and vice-royal associations with motoring brought the sport and motoring technology a certain cache and social acceptance, especially among the young.

The predominance of press reporting on automobilism at this time was on the Goldfields, rather than Perth, in districts that were awash with cash for discretionary spending. Motoring was an activity that would need some money for the aspirational bicyclist to graduate motoring. However, change was in the air. A *Kalgoorlie Miner* editorial in mid-1902 noted that while

"...the motor car ... is still mainly the plaything of the rich who use it for what Mr Harmsworth has happily called 'land yachting', it is on the verge of becoming as important and epoch-making a factor in general life as the railway and the steamship have become ..." ("The Future", 1902).⁴

⁴ Harmsworth was a newspaper magnate in Britain specialising in the sensational tabloid press, 'Boys Own' publications, a champion of Rolls Royce, and a promoter of Group Settlement in Western Australia in the 1920s after he was created Viscount Northcliffe. He wrote one of the earliest motoring books, the profusely illustrated *Motors and Motor Driving*, published by Longmans Green & Co. , London and Bombay in 1902, with numerous editions in later years. The book was widely available in WA from September 1904 through ES Wigg & Sons stores in Perth and Kalgoorlie for 11 shillings + 1 shilling postage

THE AUTOMOBILE FINALLY LANDS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In a long letter to the *West Australian* in mid-1903, Mr PW Armstrong of Perth, who 'kept himself well posted on the latest automobile news', claimed that a motor bus was being built in England for export to Perth ("Motor Car Services", 1903, p. 8). The 'well-posted' Percy Armstrong owned and operated Armstrong Cycle Agency in Hay Street Perth, and was one of the earliest, if not the first, motor car dealers in the Western Australia ("The Motor in This State", 1949). In early 1900 he imported a 'motor pacer' (an engine-powered tandem bicycle) with a 1-cylinder 2¼ horsepower petrol motor by De Dion & Buton with Dunlop tyres ("Cycling Notes", 1900). This was the third motorised automobile imported into Western Australia and caused something of a sensation when placed on public display in Armstrong's depot.

A motorised tricycle had been imported in 1898 by Monsieur Armand Bargigli who was championing his own plan for supplying water to the Goldfields in opposition to the CY O'Connor scheme. Bargigli and his companion Mademoiselle Serpolette apparently intended to show its potential by motoring from Perth to the Goldfields ("The Motor in This State", 1949).⁵ However, the road (or track) was too rough, and the machine was abandoned when they departed the colony (Parker & Edmonds, 2009). It turned up at an auction in Perth several years later when "the big toy", as it was called, along with 18 gallons of petrol (68 litres), fetched £9 10s (AU\$1,480) ("General News", 1900).

This was followed in 1899 by the importation of by Mr WG Brookman of a 'motor carriage' that could not immediately be operated due to difficulty in obtained proper motor oil ("The Motor in This State", 1949, p. 22; "Cycling Notes", 1899). The vehicle was also French, made by Belavette Freres of Paris, with solid rubber tyres and could apparently seat eight people ("Motor Car for Perth", 1900; "The Motor in This State", 1949). At the first attempt to start the motor it caught fire and was apparently not tried again. The motor, detached from the carriage work, was later used to operate a timber sawing machine.

Armstrong's motorised tandem was the first working automobile to be seen in Perth, and in 1901 he imported the first vehicle that we would now understand as a motor car, an 8 horsepower, 1 cylinder De Dion ("The Motor in This State", 1949). Armstrong Cycle Agency then began advertising that it would take orders and arrange for the importation of "all the best motor cars and motorcycles on the English and French markets".⁶ Armstrong had a string of agencies throughout Western Australia, especially on the Goldfields, and this brought the possibilities of car ownership within the range of many people. Armstrong spent much of 1901 on an extensive tour of Britain, continental Europe and North America visiting automobile factories, studying the motor industry and the possibilities for its local application.

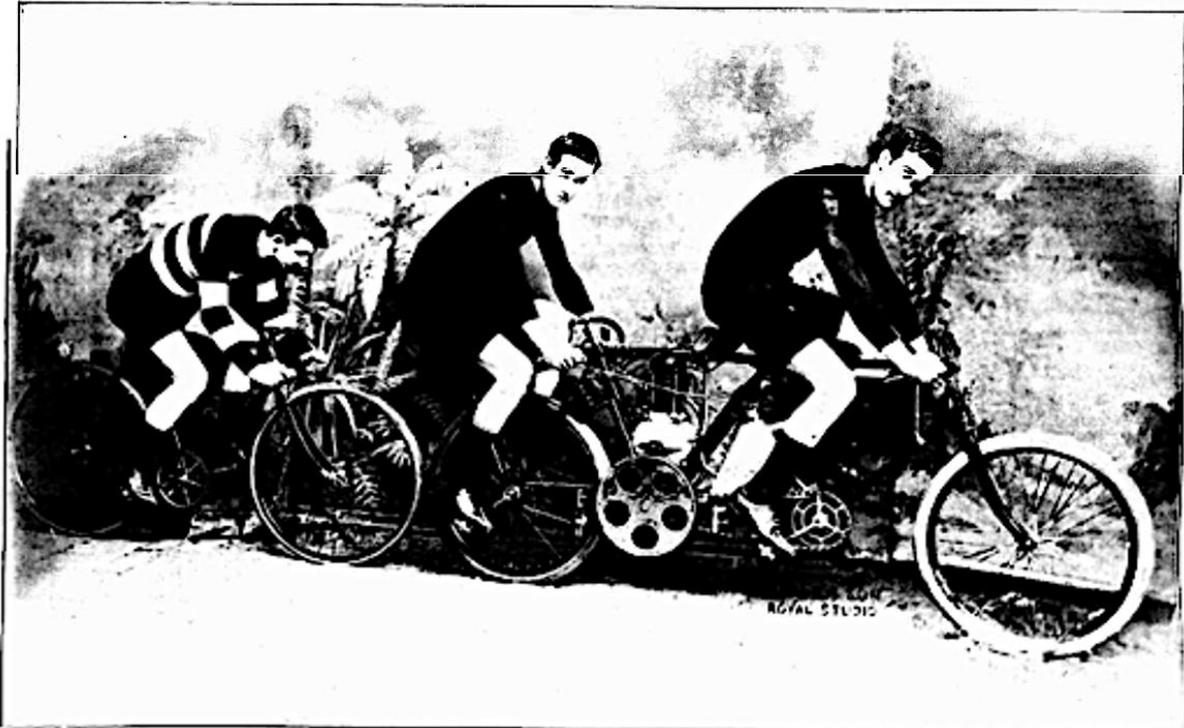
⁵ For particular gossipy analyses of Bargigli's scheme, see "The Censor". (1899, Jan 28). *Clare's Weekly*, p. 3 and "A Mingled Yarn". (1822, Jan 15). *Kalgoorlie Sun*, p. 2.

⁶ See advertising in, for example, *Coolgardie Miner* (1901, Mar 11), p. 2; *Albany Advertiser* (1901, Mar 12) p. 4; *Mount Magnet Miner* (1901, Mar 16), p. 2; *Malcolm Chronicle* (1901, Mar 16), p. 2.



Figure 3: Armstrong's motor tandem 1900

Showing riders Tom and Alec Jewell and 'wheelman' Charlie Morrison who paced the tandem as it covered one mile in 1 minute 30 seconds at Fremantle.



Source: Western Mail, 14 April 1900, p. 29.

Among his findings were the need for good macadamised roads, especially in sandy districts (and because of this he considered a Kalgoorlie-Esperance motor bus service being promoted by Kirwan to be impractical due to the sandy nature of the Esperance track), the need for practical experience in running and repairing motor cars (as Mr Brockman had discovered), the difficulties of applying electricity to motors on a sufficient scale compared to petrol, a need for government policy to encourage both manufacturing and using cars (as it did in France), and the simplification of road and traffic regulations.

The Americans, he said, were more focused on developing steam powered cars than gasoline or electric, but their need for pure clean water put them at a disadvantage. The cost of a motor car was still more than a 'poor man' could afford, and Armstrong did not think this would change "at least so far as the better makes are concerned" ("Motor Car Service", 1902, p. 6). He estimated that his own 8 horsepower petrol car that could carry 6 people, in which he toured Britain and Europe, would cost £450 (AU\$66,000) to land at Fremantle ("Motor Car Service", 1902). Armstrong did indeed land his De Dion in Western Australia and it was soon seen on streets around Perth ("Cycling", 1902; "The Motor in This State", 1949). This was the first successful and enduring use of a motor car in Western Australia.

The issues identified by Percy Armstrong not only made him the best-informed automobilist in the State, and its first real motor car owner and driver, and motor car importer and dealer, but many were also remarkably prescient and would echo through the work of the RAC WA in the years ahead. It is no surprise that he was a founding member of the Club just two years later in 1905.

The years from 1903 to 1905 witnessed a surge in the marketing, importing and driving of motor cars. Falling prices and increasing speed were two important factors in this rapid growth. The *Daily News* carried a lengthy article titled 'Can I Afford an Automobile?' in mid-1903, concluding that a vehicle could be bought for between £130 and £450, and would cost about £75 a year to run (AU\$19,500 to \$67,000, and \$11,700 per year, respectively), possibly less with careful and intelligent management ("Can I Afford", 1903). This was already less than Armstrong had forecast only a year before. The increasing speed of motoring was also emphasised.

The 1903 Gordon Bennett Race in Ireland, already a popular motor racing fixture on the European calendar, had seen speeds of 80 miles per hour (128 km/h) attained by German drivers ("Automobile Carnival", 1903).⁷ In England, the Hon Charles Stewart Rolls covered a kilometre, from a flying start, in 27 seconds, also accomplishing 80 miles per hour, in a torpedo-shaped 30 horse power Mors; in France Henri Fournier covered a mile in 51 seconds at 70 miles per hour (112 km/h) in a 40 horse power gasoline automobile, and had earlier won a Paris to Berlin race covering 740 miles (1,190 km) in 17 hours.

Miss Vera Butler was the first Englishwoman to drive from London to Paris, motoring in a 6 horsepower Panhard, covering the Le Havre to Paris route in just a day. She had also driven her motor car from Grenoble through the Chartreuse Mountains, and over a 1,200-metre-high mountain peak covered in deep snow ("Eighty Miles", 1903).⁸ Such stories, littered with superlative descriptions of speed and exhilaration, began to fill the popular press, and also began to move beyond the sporting pages and into women's columns and royal reporting.

As the stories increased, they also became more varied, with deaths from road crashes, especially in races and time trials, arrests for speeding and reckless driving, and motor cars being used by criminals. One example was a report of tobacco smugglers driving a car at 60 miles per hour (96 km/h), with its registration plates covered in sacking, through a French border customs post and vanishing before the customs officers realised what had happened ("Motor Cars and Smuggling", 1903). Such notoriety probably added to the attractions of the motor car, especially for the younger readers of newspapers such as Perth's *Daily News* that carried many such accounts.

⁷ The Gordon Bennett race was named for its eponymous promoter, an American newspaper editor in Paris, and had begun in 1900 in France. It was the first international motor race, with national teams, and a forerunner of Grand Prix racing: Gordon Bennett Irish Classic Run, <https://www.gordonbennettclassic.ie/history/>, accessed 3 March 2020

⁸ Rolls later founded Rolls Royce with Henry Royce. For more on Vera Butler and other early female motorists in Britain see O'Connell, S. (1998). *The Car and British Society: Class, gender and motoring 1896-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.



Figure 4: An Armstrong advertisement from 1905

Showing marketing patriotically named British fast and affordable motorcycles and motor cars and indicating the geographical spread of Armstrong's agencies in the Northeastern Goldfields.

Gee Whizz! Look at This!

Model A. Armstrong (late Imperial Rover), £23
Model B. £18 - Model C. £14
Coaster Hubs fitted to any machine, 10s. extra
B.S.A. machines to order at £18 10s.
Motor Cars for Goldfields work from £150

ARMSTRONG
CYCLE & MOTOR AGENCY, MENZIES.

Write for Price List.

MORGANS AGENT—
G. GREENWAY.

KOOKYNIE AGENT—
R. J. REA.

LEONORA AGENT—
A. H. COURT.

MALCOLM AGENT—
A. P. DIMITRIO.

Source: Kookynie Press 12 August 1905

Nevertheless, the early car buyers, many of them buying through or with some assistance from Percy Armstrong, tended to be among Perth's wealthier classes, as is evident from the attendance at a meeting called in 1905 to form a club for Westralian automobilists. By the time they met in a private residence in the growing new seaside suburb of Cottesloe the general outline of their concerns and needs as motor car owners and drivers had already become evident over the preceding decade, as had French and British models for organising themselves into a club to advance their common interests.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING A CLUB - GIVING A VOICE TO MOTORISTS | 1905-1928

“The Royal Automobile Club made history today. In the presence of a large crowd of onlookers, who passed all sorts of uncomplimentary remarks about the Government and the City Council, Patrolmen B. L. Stockbridge, F. Baldwin, and R. R. Dorrington, under the direction of Mr. L. R. Butt, president of the club, engaged in a few hours' work at street mending ... Mr. L. R. Butt said the attitude of the City Council and the Tramway Department created a stage for comic opera” (Direct Action | Motorists as Road Repairers | Comic Opera Situation, Daily News, 27 September 1928).

FOUNDING A CLUB

In January 1905 a circular was distributed to the owners of motor cars in Perth and its suburbs inviting them to a meeting to form a club to “further the interests of the sport, for social purposes, to endeavour to improve the state of the roads, and to discuss other matters of interest to chauffeurs [*sic*, i.e. drivers]” (“Proposed”, 1905a, p. 11). The circular had been issued by “a number of prominent motor-car owners” and would be held at the residence of Mr and Mrs Strelitz in Cottesloe.

Some fifty ‘ladies and gentlemen’, arriving in more than 24 cars and several motorcycles, attended the Strelitz’s residence on Saturday 28 January 1905 (“Proposed”, 1905b). The mining company director Alfred Morgans chaired the meeting, and a motion to form the Automobile Club of Western Australia was adopted unanimously (Bolton, 1986). A provisional committee was appointed to draw up rules, and the day concluded with a procession of cars and motor bikes from Cottesloe to the City. The objectives of the Club were:

1. The promotion of a social organisation and club composed mainly of persons owning self-propelled vehicles or motorcycles.
2. To afford a means of recording the experiences of members and others using motorcars and motorcycles.
3. To promote investigation in their development.
4. To co-operate in securing rational legislation and the formation of proper rules and regulations governing the use of motorcars and motorcycles in cities, towns, and country districts.
5. To maintain the lawful rights and privileges and protect the interests of owners and users of all forms of self-propelled vehicles whenever and wherever such interests, rights, and privileges are menaced.
6. To promote and encourage the improvement, construction, and maintenance of roads and highways and the development generally in the State of motoring.
7. And to maintain a club devoted to the interests and advancement of automobilism (“Motoring”. 1905a).

The annual subscription was set at £3 3s (\$480), and £1 1s (\$160) for ladies and for country members living further than 15 miles (24 kms) from Perth.⁹ The Governor, Admiral Sir Frederick Bedford, was elected as patron with Alfred Morgans president, Richard Strelitz and Dr Ormsby Burkitt vice-presidents, and property developer Hessay Mosey treasurer (“News and Notes”, 1905; “Mainly About People”, 1905). Within a week Alfred Mather had been appointed secretary, and a Club room had been obtained in Perth (“Advertising”, 1905; Louch, 1964).

The Club committee immediately focused on a major concern to members:

*“... in view for future discussion, the question of bringing about an improvement in the condition of country roads to enable members to take week-end trips into rural districts. The attention of roads boards authorities will be drawn to the fact that well-kept roads will provide a great incentive in attracting visitors to the various country centres” (“Automobile Club of WA”, 1905a, p. 5).*¹⁰

On 1 July 1905, the Club’s first ‘run’ was held, with a fleet of 34 motor cars being driven from Government House via Kings Park to the Strelitz residence and back again to an afternoon tea at the Palace Hotel. The lead car was driven by Alfred Morgans accompanied by Sir Frederick Bedford, followed by Richard and Bebe Strelitz, with Miss Bedford and the Governor’s ADC Captain Sketchley. They were all ‘suitably entertained’ at the Strelitz’s, where the seven-year-old Miss Olga Strelitz presented a little model car to Miss Bedford (“Motor Matters”, 1905; “The Automobile Club of WA”, 1905b). Official photographs were taken of the run before it left Government House (Figure 5).

In August the Club ventured into the hills with a trip to Mundaring Weir, taking an hour and a half to reach Jacoby’s Weir Hotel. Commentary on road conditions was a feature of reporting on the run. While generally in a ‘fair condition’, steel-rimmed cart wheel ruts made for rough going in places, as did railway crossings, and a comparison between sections of the road managed by the Greenmount and Swan roads boards revealed the former to be in “splendid order” and the latter “in a very bad state of repair” (“Motoring”, 1905b, p. 8). Rumours that a road would be made from Kalamunda to the Weir were supported as it would provide fine views for motorists to the city.

In 1910 a club badge was adopted, and James Linton of Perth Technical School was commissioned to make a metal specimen (see Figure 6), after which metal badges were manufactured and made available from August Knapp’s optician’s practice in Barrack Street for 7s 6d (\$52) (ACWA, 1911).¹¹

⁹ The subscription initially proposed was a higher four guineas (\$640) with a four-guinea joining fee.

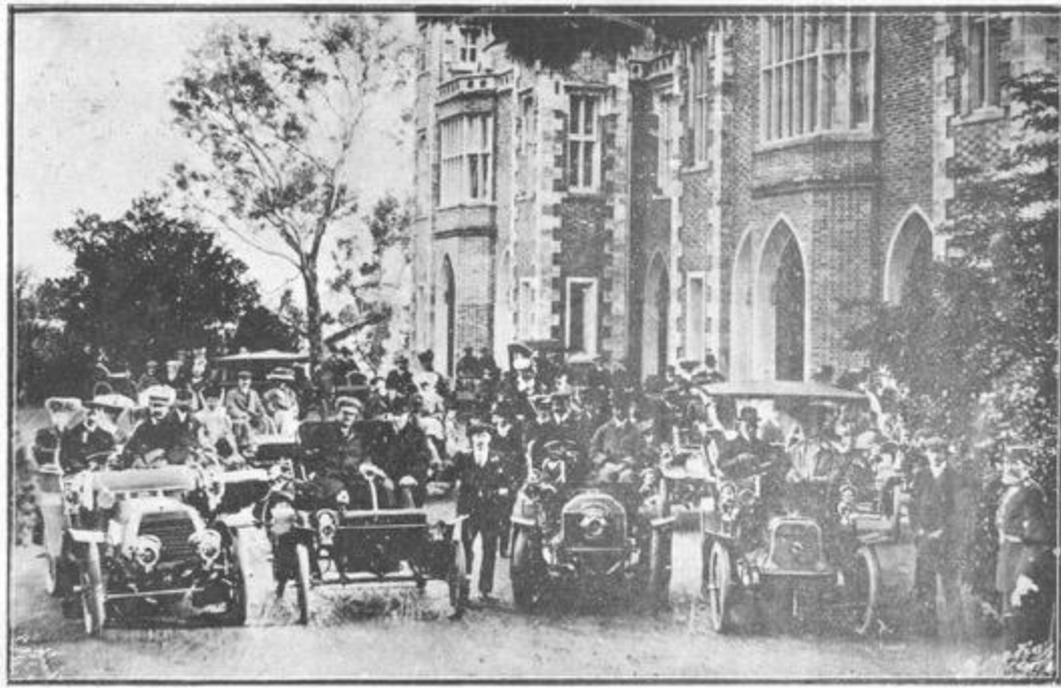
¹⁰ Roads boards were responsible for local country roads and are the forerunner of the shire councils established in 1961.

¹¹ For more on James Linton, see Dorothy Erickson, *Inspired by Light and Land: Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1829-1969*, WA Museum, Welshpool 2015



Figure 5: The inaugural run of the Automobile Club of Western Australia 1905

Showing the RAC Club members preparing to depart from Government House Perth on 5 July 1905. photo by Greenham & Evans of Barrack Street



Source: Western Mail 8 July 1905: 44 and RAC Archives.

Figure 6: The original club badge design with a black swan



Source: RAC Archives

The Club's annual report from 1910-1911 gives a clear indication of how much it had evolved since 1905. Membership stood at 103, which was thought to be consistent with growing motor ownership, meaning the number of motor vehicles had more than quadrupled since 1905. The ACWA had affiliated with the RAC in London, with reciprocal membership benefits. It was taking the lead in seeking to have Australia adopt the International Convention on Motor Traffic adopted throughout Europe in 1909.

CREATING THE TRAVELLER'S MAP

The 'Report on Roads' section of the 1910-1911 report carried detailed descriptions of roads and their problems. This was now a key focus of the Club. The Club president Robert Robinson described the Club's principal activities as being directed towards having country roads made motor worthy, tarring town streets, and supporting roads boards in erecting sign boards to provide directions for motorists ("WA Automobile Club", 1910).

The Club had first become involved in erecting road signs in June 1908 when it installed 'warning signs' on the Fremantle Road (now Stirling Highway) entrances to Claremont to deter speeding drivers ("Motoring", 1908a). A week later, in preparation for a run to the Hills, it erected a "to Kalamunda" sign on the Kalamunda Road turn-off from Guildford Road ("Motoring", 1908b). The Club also began installing triangular warning signs in suburban streets, painted either red for a steep hill, bad turn or dangerous intersection needing cautious driving, or white to indicate a good road.

The triangle signs were apparently in place on the road to Armadale a few weeks later and followed the Automobile Association's designs in England ("Motoring", 1908c; "Motoring", 1908d). By the end of 1908 the club was offering to supply these and other 'self-explanatory' road signs to 'outlying municipalities' and had authorised its secretary to erect the signs wherever he thought advisable ("Motoring", 1908e; "Motoring", 1908f).

These warning signs and 'direction boards' had begun in an attempt to placate municipal councils threatening to impede or even ban motor cars from their roads because of dangerous driving. Their utility in keeping club members on the correct road during runs was quickly realised and were the beginning of a long involvement by the Club in signposting roads. No need for road signs had been perceived before fast-moving automobiles appeared on the roads, but right from the beginning these were popular with the general public:

"The club's direction signs were also in evidence at all turnings. It seems that motorists are in this way doing good work on the roads, not only for themselves, but for all classes of vehicular traffic" ("Motoring", 1908g).

In this first year of sign posting, the Club spent £12 0s 6d (\$1,720) on signs, its largest single item of expenditure, and another £3 3s (\$450) on maps and plans (ACWA, 1909).

Figure 7: The ACWA Ravensthorpe directional sign, circa 1910s



Source: RAC Archives

The preparation of road maps also arose from the need to guide members on runs in the country. A Roads and Touring Committee formed in June 1908 had the task of “furnishing road maps of the various districts” as well as making arrangements with hotels for petrol sales and garage accommodation (“Motoring”, 1908h, p. 14). At the same time, a Volunteer Automobile Corps was formed within the Army, in which officers had to have an efficient automobile, certified as such by the ACWA, and pass an exam in map reading and furnishing road reports (“Cycling”, 1908).

The problems with existing maps, not designed to show features required by motorists, lead the Club in December 1910 to appoint a sub-committee to investigate preparing special road maps,

“... so that motorists going into the various districts might have an idea of the distances and condition of the roads at various stages” (“Motoring”, 1910, p. 9).

This took some time, with the compilation of a road map of the State still in progress in early 1912 (“Motoring”, 1912a). Finally, on 21 June 1912, the sub-committee presented its complete map, printed on linen, to the committee. A vote of thanks was extended to August Knapp for its preparation, and it was announced that copies could be purchased for 2s 6d (\$15) (“Motoring”, 1912b).

The 1910-1911 Annual Report identified an Avon Valley focus on road signs in the Northam, Goomalling, Newcastle (Toodyay) and York districts, but its attention to roads was much wider in identifying poor conditions needing repair on the Perth-Albany, Perth-Busselton and Perth-Northam roads as well as roads in the country areas around Perth. Many of these roads were listed because of their tourist potential, such as the Wanneroo Road to Yanchep Caves and the “beautiful circular drive” to Mundaring Weir, but also because of their importance to farmers and market gardeners. The Under Secretary for Public Works, in response to the Club’s lobbying, advised it that some £6,100 had recently been spent or was budgeted for ‘tourist roads’, such as the Roleystone to Kalamunda via Canning Mills road which would form one of the,

“... best tourist roads from a scenic point of view ... giving a splendid scenic view of the adjoining country from which the sea coast, Rottneest, Garden Island and Carnac can be seen on clear days”.¹²

This is a tribute to the Club’s capacity for advocacy, and also its significant role in the development of a tourism industry.

The Goldfields Automobile Club (GAC) formed in 1907 as a separate organisation (“Motoring”, 1907). ACWA believed it was in the interests of motorists generally for the two clubs to work together (“Motoring Notes”, 1907). The GAC organised runs around Kalgoorlie and asked Kalgoorlie Municipal Council (unsuccessfully) to increase the speed limits for cars on town streets. In September 1908 the GAC president, Dr Frank Sawell, drove his new car from Perth to Kalgoorlie (probably the first person to do so), and proposed an annual race be instituted between the two cities (“Goldfields”, 1908). However, after this the GAC seemed to increasingly focus on motorcycles and motorcycle racing and gradually receded from the motor car world.¹³

THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1919

The outbreak of the Great War in the late winter of 1914 marked the end of the Club’s foundation period. By early 1915 the road signs work was progressing with major new enamelled directional signs at Armadale and Midland Junction, and the treasurer August Knapp was proceeding with revisions to the South West road map. Knapp thanked the engineers in the Water Supply & Sewerage Department who provided much of the technical information and data needed for the maps. However, the war was already a key feature of the Club’s outreach to the community, and the annual report for 1915 reported:

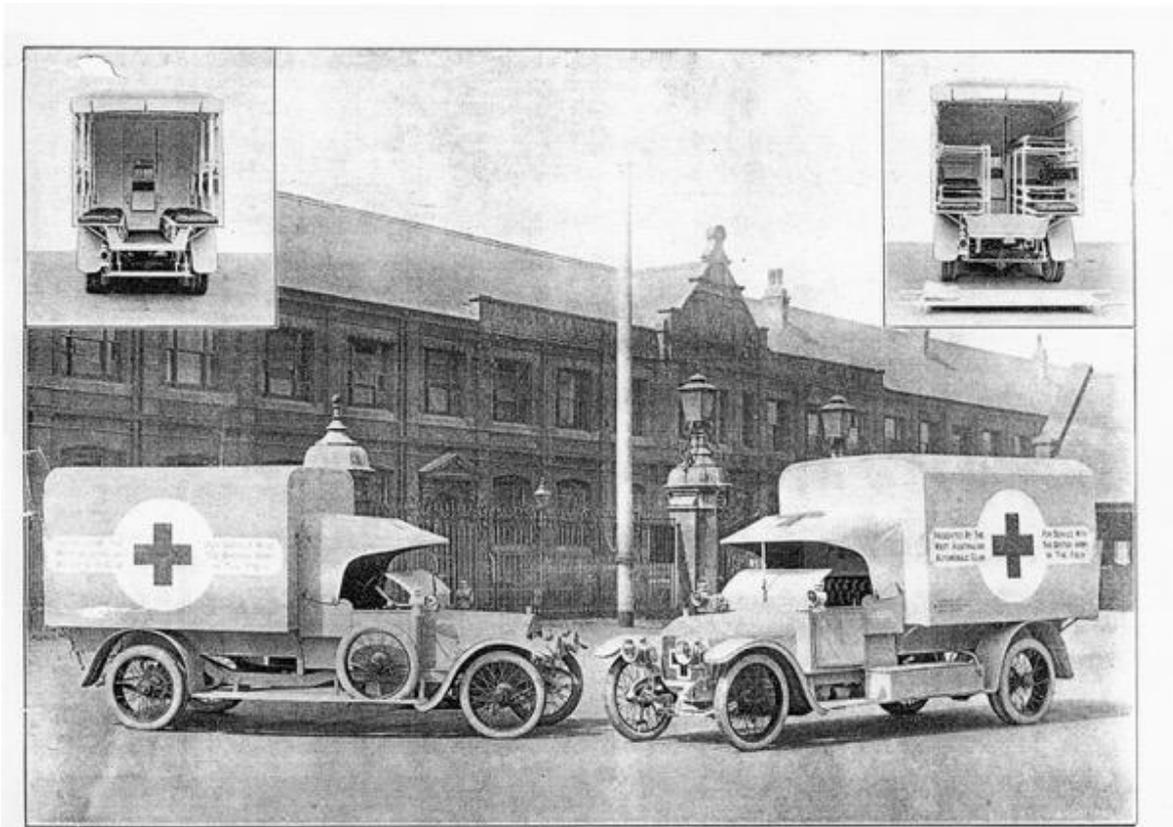
“The most outstanding feature of the year’s work has been our contribution of two motor ambulances for the use of our forces in the field” (ACWA, 1915, p. 7).

A special meeting of members in February had decided to fund the purchase of two ambulances, and £200 had been raised at the meeting for this purpose. An appeal was launched in the press, and within five weeks £1,000 had been raised. The funds were then cabled to the War Office in London to purchase ambulances suited to the conditions in northern France.

¹² The value is equivalent to \$843,000

¹³ The history of the GAC is not entirely clear but see “Waratah Motor Spirit”. (1926, Mar 12). *The Leader*, p. 3.

Figure 8: Wolseley military ambulances in London, funded by ACWA members and public fund raising



Source: RAC Archives

The War Office thanked the Club and advised that the ambulances would be ‘suitable inscribed’ (sic) with,

“Presented by the West Australian Automobile Club for service with the British Army in the Field” (ACWA, 1915, p. 8).

The war arrived in Western Australia a few weeks later when the Australian hospital ship *HMAT Kyarra* moored in Fremantle (“Wounded”, 1915). The *Kyarra* was carrying 400 military personnel, including 40 wounded from the Dardanelles. The Western Australian contingent of 26 included one nursing sister. The ACWA’s patron, Governor Sir Harry Barron, greeted the vessel, and a convoy of motor cars driven by ACWA members conveyed the returnees, after their clothing had all been fumigated, from the wharf to No 8 Australian General Hospital in the old Immigration Depot in South Terrace, Fremantle.¹⁴ Five were wounded, although able to walk, and the others were no longer medically fit for service.

¹⁴ For a brief account of the hospital, see Lloyd-Jones, M. & Gare, D. (2014). *When War Came to Fremantle, 1899 to 1945* (pp. 38-41). Fremantle Press: Fremantle.

The Red Cross had prepared the hospital, and the ACWA worked with them throughout the war. The ACWA also initially operated as a depot from its secretary's office in McNeil's Chambers in Barrack Street, Perth for collecting 'luxuries' to give to the returnees continuing on the east coast (sweets, fruit, Eastern States newspapers and cigarettes). The Red Cross came to take on this role, while the ACWA would focus for the rest of the war on its strength: using its members and their motor vehicles to provide transport and support for returning soldiers.

This would be extended, such as the huge Western Australia Day appeal a few months later mentored by Lady Barron and organised by the Red Cross that raised over £50,000 for the war effort. An anonymous ACWA member donated a six-cylinder, five-seater Clement Talbot motor car with a Charlesworth body valued at £450 (\$47,000) to be raffled through an ACWA art union, and £1,100 (\$115,000) was raised ("Western Australia Day", 1915).¹⁵

The Club took on a more permanent form, becoming an incorporated association in 1916 and conferring its first life membership on its intrepid treasurer and cartographer August Knapp ("The Motorist", 1916; "Advertising", 1916; "Mainly About People", 1916). With incorporation came a simplified set of objectives for the Club, firmly centred on the motorist-member:

"To promote a Club and facilities and benefits for motorists and otherwise protect and further the interests of motorists" ("Advertising", 1916, p. 1).

Throughout the war the Club continued its signposting program, with a constant and increasing flow of requests from municipalities and roads boards for the provision of directional and warning signs for roads as well as numbered mile posts for country roads. The Club designed and produced the signs which were given to the local governments who erected them and took responsibility for their ongoing maintenance.

The production of signs and mile posts also aided in the continuing preparation and updating of the Club's road maps, with more accurate mileages and increasing amounts of information for travellers on road conditions. Marking the existence of sand patches that were difficult for motor cars to traverse was a particular emphasis, and the range of maps was extended into remote districts in the north of the State. Coupled with these programs was the commencement in 1916 of a rating guide to country hotels and accommodation, modelled on a similar RAC guide in Britain ("Motoring", 1916). These were very successful and popular programs that continued long after the war, and through them the Club literally invented the traveller's map of Western Australia.

The ACWA's patriotic duty was apparent in its main public activity after the *Kyarra* landings, the transporting of wounded soldiers from ships to military hospitals in Fremantle and Albany, and weekend drives of recovering soldiers and nurses on country roads around Perth as a 'tonic'. Whenever a hospital ship was expected to arrive, the call went out to members to assemble with their cars at the wharf ready for the ship's arrival.

¹⁵ An arts union was a type of lottery. The overall appeal raised the equivalent of \$5.2 million ("Automobile Club's Arts Union", 1915).

By late 1917 a system had come into effect whereby members living some distance from Fremantle could instead donate funds (usually 10 shillings or equivalent of \$50) with which the ACWA would hire motor taxis to undertake the role ("Motoring", 1917a; "The Motorist", 1918). It also began inviting non-members with cars to participate in this patriotic act.

The ACWA continued its community work all through the war. Throughout this period there was an ongoing debate as to whether the State or local governments should be regulating motor drivers and motoring generally. Perth City Council, in particular, was developing a body of regulations covering matters such as speed limits, street parking, vehicle registration and driver licensing, and the problems of glare from headlights which the council attempted to regulate by requiring 'dipping' mechanisms. Generally, the ACWA engaged with the council in developing these regulations (and dipping technologies) and supported the outcomes, which in turn became models for other municipalities and roads boards. The ACWA's own knowledge of modern motoring regulation was, in turn, derived to a large extent from consultations with the RAC in London ("Motoring", 1916).

Over time a set of road rules was being organically developed, and the ACWA became the reliable and authoritative body for motoring knowledge and the voice of motor drivers and owners ("Motoring", 1917b). This authority was reinforced by its signs and mile posts program for local governments. The ACWA also advised all the local governments on the adoption of unique locality codes to be used on the registration tablets, or number plates, of the motor vehicles they registered. This system was finalised in 1916 when the Collie and Coolgardie municipalities finally agreed, with ACWA mediation, on the number plate letters CM and CMC respectively ("The Automobile Club", 1916).

The ACWA also had the ear of its former president Robert Robinson KC, State Attorney General between July 1916 and May 1919, who it quietly lobbied throughout the later years of the war for the State to take over some of these functions, in particular driver licensing which it believed needed to be tied to a standardised state-wide test for motoring skills and road knowledge.

The war finally ended in late 1918, and the Club emerged into the new post-war world as the leading public voice for motorists, an accepted lobbyist to State and local governments, and commercial motor companies, on all matters concerning motoring, and as the authority in the road signing and mapping that would in turn create road-based tourism industries in country towns and districts.

TAKING STOCK AND BUILDING MEMBERSHIP

The annual report for 1918-1919 makes clear just how much the Club had grown in four years. Membership stood at 480, compared with 195 in 1914, a 146 per cent increase (ACWA, 1919). Members had transported over 7,000 soldiers from 61 ships to the hospital in Fremantle, driving 461 cars making 1,840 journeys. The service was valued at £368. It was estimated there remained 13,000 men waiting to return to Western Australia, and each member-driver could expect to make five or six more journeys. In addition, drivers had taken soldiers and nurses on numerous outings to the Zoo and other sights around Perth, with 228 cars conveying over 900 invalid soldiers. The Club had also provided regular outings for patients in the children's hospital, and staff and residents of orphanages.

The annual report also, “with pardonable pride” listed the 29 ACWA members who had served during the war, fortunately with no deaths (ACWA, 1919, p. 17-18). These included 13 medical doctors, General Sir John Talbot Hobbs, Brigadier General Evan Wisdom, town planner Harold Boas and the Honourable Dr Athelstan Saw (later Chancellor of the University of Western Australia).

The road signs program had continued throughout the war. A total of 354 signs were erected in 1918 alone, mostly in the new wheatbelt districts, as well as danger signs and six school signs. It also supplied stencils for painting new signs in Carnarvon, and concluded “there is, perhaps, not a main road that does not exhibit some of the Club’s signs” (ACWA, 1919, p. 21-22). Signing crossroads was marked as an area for future work, and advice was invited from members on new sign locations. New map work focused on the North West, with a map compiled by Knapp published by and sold to the public through the Lands Department.

The end of the war allowed the resumption of motor sports, and motor events at the Royal Show. Things were returning to normal. The Club finished the year with a surplus of £467 1s 3d (\$37,582), compared with its 1914 surplus of £249 17s 10d (\$29,996). The only blot was the collapse of the Pingelly, Moora and Bridgetown branches, which was attributed to the “energetic policy” of head office in providing road signs and attending to all motorists’ matters, leaving little for the branches “outside the social aspect”.

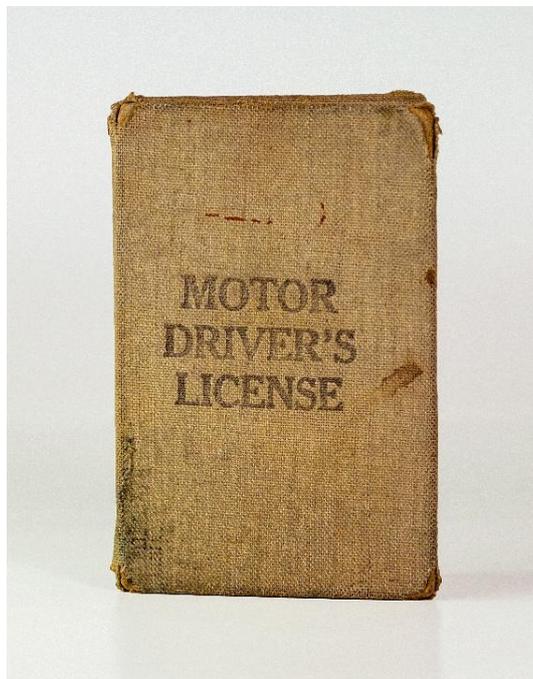
THE FIRST TRAFFIC ACT 1919

With the war now behind it, and both membership and motoring growing rapidly, the ACWA could focus on bringing the motorists’ voice to the pressing issue of traffic regulation. The main issues revolved around whether the control of vehicle and driver licensing should rest at the local or State level, especially as Perth City Council raised the lion’s share of revenue from motor vehicle registrations but little was raised by country roads boards although their roads were frequently travelled by vehicles registered in Perth. A more uniform approach was needed to regulation that did not leave motorists at the mercy of municipal officials and local magistrates making widely varying interpretations of existing rules. A related issue was whether drivers’ licences should require a driver to have a demonstrated proficiency in driving a motor vehicle.

The Club had been quietly lobbying the Attorney General to revive a Traffic Bill that had been drafted in 1913 but then laid aside because of the war. The Bill was introduced to State Parliament in August 1919 (“Regulation”, 1919). The Club considered the Bill at its September 1919 meeting and argued that the police rather than local authorities should manage the entire traffic system, otherwise ‘inconsistencies’ such as different municipalities setting a different minimum age for licenses would arise (“The WA Automobile Club”, 1919).

The ACWA, which had lobbied for the Bill, became concerned as it progressed through parliament that traffic control would remain entirely with local governments when it believed “The police were the only competent officers to control traffic in the interests of public safety” (“WA Auto Club”, 1919, p. 8). Despite briefing MPs on the Club’s view, it was not successful in overcoming the metropolitan-country division of authority in traffic regulation. Eventually, the Bill was amended in the Legislative Council to provide for police control in the metropolitan area and municipal control in the country (“The Traffic Bill”, 1919).

Figure 9: WA motor driver's licence from 1936



Source: RAC Archives

The 'country interest' in parliament ensured that police control was confined to the metropolis, which was the main location of motor car ownership at the time. Despite much bluster and public debate, the Bill passed the parliament as the *Traffic Act 1919* and came into effect on 31 December 1919.¹⁶

The key provisions of the Act, as reported in the press, were that the State would be the vehicle licensing authority in the metropolitan area and local governments elsewhere, number plates would be compulsory on the front and back of vehicles, with different colour schemes for private cars, carriers and passenger vehicles, and fire brigade vehicles (confirming a scheme introduced in 1911), drivers licences would be compulsory, with a minimum age of 18, issued by the police, and could be lost or suspended for breaches of the Act, lights would be required on vehicles, white at the front and red at the back, speed limits could be set by regulation, and maximum rates for hiring taxis were set.

ACWA had lobbied hard for such provisions, and despite country licensing remaining with local governments, it had brought about order and a significant improvement in road safety for all motorists and their cars. Some other important sections provided that all drivers' licenses expired on the 30 June each year and had to be renewed. Reckless driving and driving under the influence of alcohol became offences with a hefty £20 - £50 fine.

¹⁶ 10° Geo V, 48, An Act to consolidate and amend the Law relating to the Licensing and Use of Vehicles and the Regulation of Traffic, and for other incidental purposes, No 60 of 1919, royal assent 10 December 1919.

Driving or otherwise using a vehicle, or interfering with a vehicle mechanism or parts, without the owner's permission became an offence subject to a £50 fine or three months imprisonment with hard labour. For the first time, car theft became illegal.

Although it was not the perfect mechanism sought by the ACWA, the Club had nevertheless played a significant role in bringing about Western Australia's first Traffic Act. There is a sense of which the making of the Act was a concluding chapter to war. Now, a new decade beckoned, and with it release from old conflicts as attention turned to building a new world.

THE WONDERS OF TOURING

The ACWA had been interested in touring since its formation and visiting scenic spots had been a feature of its runs. However, with the end of the war and increasing numbers of motorists, scenic drives were coming within the purview of non-members as well. The signposting, mileage posts and increasingly informative maps were facilitating this interest and the ACWA began to move from passively identifying scenic locations to actively creating them. Its first notable move in this direction was lobbying the State Minister for Lands to "set aside a portion of the forest country between Nannup and Warren as a national park to preserve the karri trees which are not surpassed in any other portion of the State" ("Auto Club", 1920, p. 2; "Motoring", 1920, p. 9). This would be for the benefit of both motorists and the public generally, and after allowing for land already set aside for soldier settlement schemes, the park was to be gazetted. This was the first time the Club had played such a role.

ACWA members Cecil Dent and Byron Brook continued to signpost the roads around Nornalup and Walpole as well as the Nannup-Augusta Road, and August Knapp campaigned for better management of the Nannup-Warren House national park ("Motor and Motor Cycling", 1921). Generally, the Club made and provided signs to local roads boards to erect and maintain, but in some cases such as these 'national park roads' it installed them itself. As they did, motor tourism began to develop in the area. In the late summer of 1922, over 40 motor vehicles with 220 people had visited Nornalup and the Frankland River where "all have been greatly impressed with the scenic beauty and charm of the district" ("News and Notes", 1922, p. 6).

These were the attractions that the Government Tourist Bureau was happy to promote, and the motor car was central to this new tourism industry. The Club was being seen to be actively involved with developing destinations for the rapidly expanding number of motorists and club members. The Club also generated motoring interest in visiting the Yallingup and Margaret River caves, and in 1921 began campaigning again for a better road to the Yanchep Caves so that its natural beauties would become as famous as the other caves ("The Royal Automobile Club", 1922).

In March 1922 the ACWA was advised by its patron, Governor Sir Francis Newdegate, that King George V "had been graciously pleased to approve of the prefix 'Royal' for the Automobile Club of Western Australia" ("News and Notes", 1922, p. 6). This was royal acknowledgement of the Club's role during the Great War and was the corporate equivalent of a personal honour such as a knighthood. The Club immediately began to use its new name of the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia or the RAC for short.

Figure 10: Reliability trial, circa 1926, between Manjimup and Nornalup



Source: RAC Archives

The RAC's annual report for 1924/1925 provides a snapshot of the Club on its twentieth anniversary ("Committee", 1925). Membership was still increasing, although tapering off after a peak with the royal honour, and stood at 1,717, of whom 81 per cent resided in the metropolitan area. Finances were in good order with a £711 surplus and revenues were increasing. Its activities, said the president, show a continuing focus on touring which would encourage new members to join "as it is only right that the whole of the motoring community should associate themselves with a Club that is at all times working for their benefit" (p. 16-17).

These were continuing revision and reprinting of RAC maps for the 'motor season' (from spring to autumn), including a new edition of the 'book of maps' that would be detailed enough to include metropolitan area streets and an index of street names. There was also the ongoing supply of directional road signs, of which 409 had been provided during the year including 39 to the Group Settlements in the South West. The new wheatbelt was still a focus for road signs, but roads in the North West were increasingly being signed as well. The lack of clearly defined roads in the Pilbara also lead to a new system of red disk markers attached to poles to indicate the route between towns, and major roads between Mullewa and Broome were marked with 150 disks during the year.



Figure 11: Erecting signs in the country required some ingenuity

Note the RAC badge on each sign.

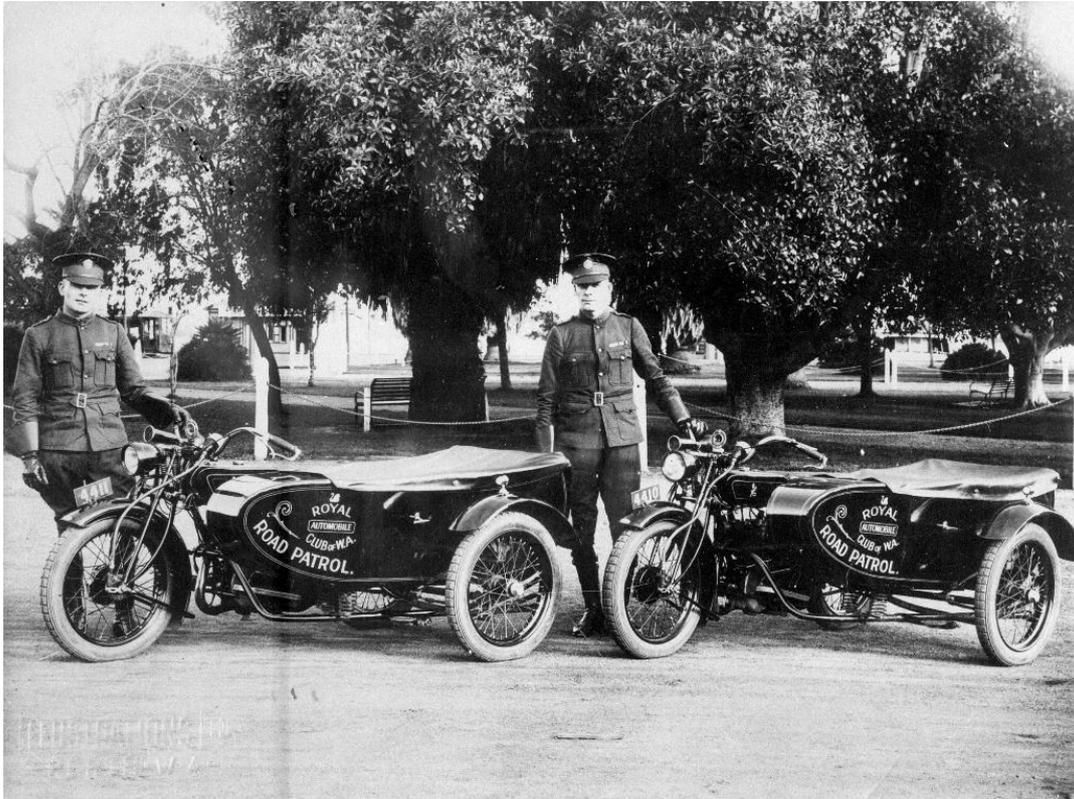


The "Tree of Knowledge."

Source: (Sunday Times, 21 October 1923: 11).

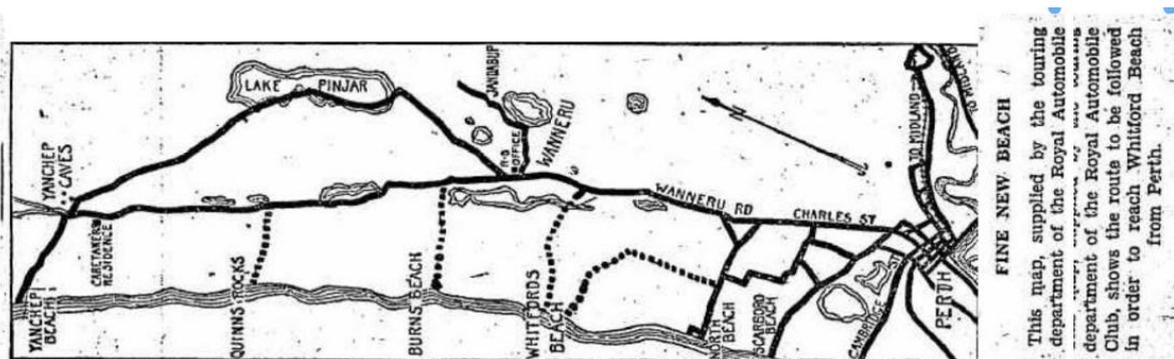
The RAC was also voicing its support for the Good Roads Association campaign to have a central board, free of political influence, created for main roads across the State, with all roads to be designed by competent engineers. Two new areas showed the growing need to provide support services for motorists. One was lobbying for public telephones along main roads, with the first success being a phone installed at The Lakes on the York Road. The other concerned car parking in the City, where the RAC unsuccessfully sought to have the City Council create 45° angle parking along St Georges Terrace and ban parking in the centre of the street, rather than the City's preference of making a large car park on The Esplanade.

Figure 12: The original road patrolmen on their first day, May 1926



Source: RAC Archives

Figure 13: An example of the local maps provided by the RAC Touring Department



Source: (Daily News, 2 October 1928: 9)

The annual report reveals a Club that was secure in its rising reputation, financially sound and comfortable with championing the interests of its members and indeed all motorists. It also now had the confidence to look across the borders, and in 1925 the RAC became a founding member of the first national automobile body, the Commonwealth Association of Automobile Organisations (CAAO). Interstate motor touring was relatively unknown in Western Australia, with no formed roads actually crossing or even near its State borders. Western Australian travellers to the east instead had to send their car either by ship or after 1917 by rail or hire a car at their destination.

The CAAO formally came into being in February 1925, and the RAC committee that month set up a sub-committee to look at various interstate motoring issues (“Royal Automobile Club”, 1925a). It considered advice from the Surveyor-General that, while he could have a route from Norseman to Eucla shown on plans and marked on the ground, there was no prospect of an actual survey of the road being made at this time. By the end of the year the RAC view was that the CAAO’s main purpose would be to exert influence at the Federal level that would contribute to the interests of all motorists (“Royal Automobile Club”, 1925b).

A more momentous decision by the RAC in 1926 commenced in a very low-key manner. The April committee meeting considered a report from the new secretary, Oscar Zehnder, which outlined a scheme for employing ‘road scouts’ to assist motorists. The key points in the scheme were that the scouts would be “skilled mechanics possessing personality” who would patrol advertised routes and render assistance to all motorists, not just members, requiring aid for their cars or information on road conditions. They would also help control car parking areas, principally to deter theft, provide advice on traffic laws and warn drivers if they were breaking speed limits. They would also gather intelligence about motorists and road conditions. The scouts would be RAC employees and would not be permitted to accept gratuities. There would be telephones “located at accessible points” from which the scouts could be summoned by motorists needing assistance. The scheme was fully endorsed by the committee and its inauguration approved (“Royal Automobile Club”, 1926a).

By May 1926, two men had been recruited as road patrols as the scouts were termed, and equipped with a khaki uniform with blue facings, as well as a motorcycle with tools, first aid kit, spare can of petrol and other equipment (“Monthly Meeting”, 1926). The two patrols were No 1 H Mason and No 2 Leslie Stockbridge, and most of the press provided complementary reports on this new service from the RAC, “probably one of the most important of its undertakings” (“Patrolling the Roads”, 1926). The first patrols commenced on Sunday 23 May 1926 on the Perth-Kalamunda Road and the Perth-Upper Swan-Bullsbrook road. By 1932, resident road patrols were operating from Perth (Adelaide Terrace) as well as Northam and Kalgoorlie, and the following year a resident patrol was stationed at Bunbury (“Past and Future”, 1932; “Northam Happenings”, 1930; “Off for the Holidays”, 1933).

The value of the road patrol service was clearly demonstrated at the annual general meeting for 1926, by which time the patrol service had been in operation for five months. The patrols had assisted 254 motorists, and there had been another jump in membership by 887 new members, taking the total to 2,494. The annual surplus had risen from £832 to £1,112 (\$67,000 and \$90,500 respectively) – the first time it had exceeded £1,000, and spacious new premises with plenty of

car parking had been purchased in Adelaide Terrace for £5,000 (\$407,000) (“Royal Automobile Club”, 1926b).

The patrols also helped the Club bring some good-natured humour to its ongoing campaign for improvements to city streets when, in 1928, the Club president Lewis Butt supervised four patrols repairing a pot hole along the tram tracks in William Street (“Direct Action”, 1928). Numerous complaints to the City Council and the Tramways Department had gone unanswered, so press reporters were on hand to witness the repairs along with wise-cracking bystanders. Butt cheekily described the buck-passing by authorities as a Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera and successfully made his point that all motorists benefitted when the Club took such actions.

On Oscar Zehnder’s return from the CAAO conference in 1928, where he saw the touring departments of the automobile clubs in the east, he persuaded the committee of the need for such a department here (“Royal Automobile Club”, 1928). The Touring & Information Bureau was established in March 1928 as integral to the RAC’s principle of “service to motorists”. The main operations of the bureau would be preparing more detailed local road maps that could be linked for longer touring, and that would be regularly updated with information on road conditions, hotels and garages along the route (and whether they conformed to RAC standards). Making and installing road signs and mile posts would also be dealt with by the bureau. It could arrange itineraries for intending tourists and would be a regular “Thomas Cooks”.¹⁷

Key to the bureau’s success would be a sound knowledge of road conditions, and patrol No 1, Mr H Mason, who had traversed 48,000 kilometres of the state’s roads in 18 months, was appointed head of the bureau. The *Sunday Times* gave the new bureau plenty of publicity and printed in its pages a Route Requisition Form that the tourist could send to the Bureau to develop an itinerary after selecting either a direct, picturesque or circular route (“Touring Advice”, 1928).

On the eve of the Great Depression, the RAC had become a firmly established organisation and the widely recognised voice of motorists. It was the authoritative source of information in Western Australia on all matters motoring, including the motorist’s perspective on the state of the roads. Membership was on the verge of crossing the 10,000-mark, accounting for nearly half of the 24,200 motor car registrations in the State (“Motor Vehicles”, 1929). In fact, membership had increased fourteen-fold since the end of the war while numbers of motor cars had increased five-fold.

Car ownership had increased in leaps and bounds, while RAC membership had expanded beyond every expectation. The Club had been royally-honoured, it had a spacious and permanent headquarters in Adelaide Terrace, it was leading the creation of a tourism industry based upon motoring, it was the definitive source of accurate road maps and directional and other roadside signs, it had publicly championed all motorists through actions such as the ‘pot hole comedy’, it was the State’s only representative on the national motoring body, and it was affiliated with many prestigious counterparts overseas. As *the* voice of motorists in Western Australia, the RAC was now a firmly established part of the Western Australian community.

¹⁷ Thomas Cook was a well-known travel agency at the time.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING DO - DEPRESSION AND WAR | 1929-1948

“Service is the keynote of activity in every department of the Royal Automobile Club and practical advice, and assistance is always obtainable” (Patrol Ron Stockbridge, speaking in Carnarvon, Northern Times, 10 March 1937: 2).

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS 1929

The year 1929 dawned with the promise of great patriotic excitement as Western Australia celebrated its centenary. The WA Motor Cycling Association approached the RAC to take a leading role in a centenary ‘speed carnival’ it was organising in the Goldfields (“Motoring”, 1929). The carnival was to be held in the dry claypan of Lake Perkolilli, north of Kalgoorlie, and the Club agreed to organise the car racing events and provide the officials and prize monies while the Association handled the motorcycle events (Cocks, 2019). The carnival was held on 1 September 1929, with a crowd of several thousand arriving in over 500 cars. It was a day of high excitement with “very high speeds and several sensational incidents” (“Perkolilli”, 1929, p. 16).

The RAC held a number of low-key events during 1929, such as a competition to name the best night-time parking spot in the city, as parking spaces were “woefully restricted and still further interrupted by certain ‘Don’t park here’ signs in front of shops, hotels and theatres”, and another for suggestions to relieve traffic congestion in the city, especially as “things are getting into a hopeless muddle in the peak periods” (“Pertinent Paragraphs”, 1929, p. 6; “The Way”, 1929, p. 3). Although not centenary events as such, the competitions indicate the growing extent of car ownership in the city in its 100th year with parking problems for those out for a night in town and growing ‘peak period’ congestion caused by motorists driving to and from work. The competitions also point to a broadening base of car ownership and RAC membership.

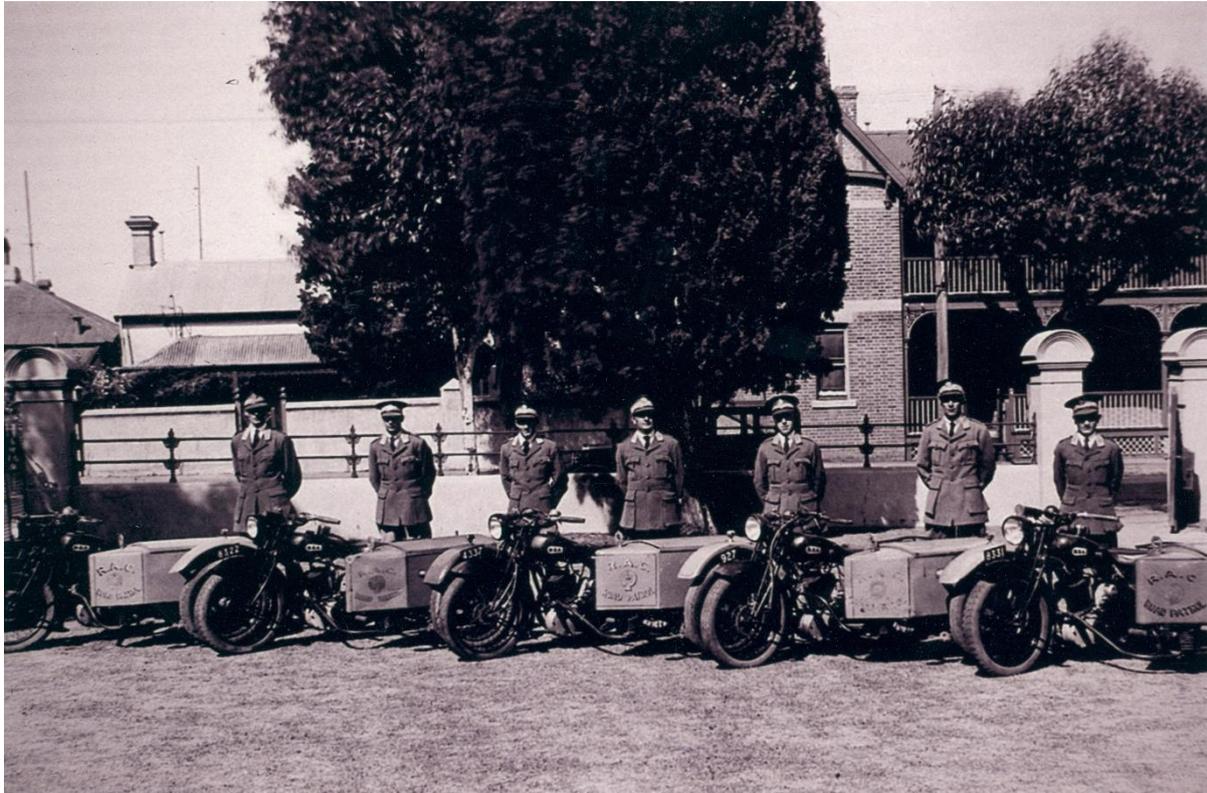
These more mundane worries of city car parking and congestion heralded the real focus for the RAC in the coming years. This was bought to the fore in October 1929 at the Royal Show when the RAC president, Louis Butt, spoke at the official opening of the Centenary Motor Show at the showgrounds. He was highly critical of the Federal tariffs on imported motor cars, which he claimed were up to 70 per cent, and which he said seemed to be aimed to,

“make the car once again a luxury only to be afforded by the idle rich. The Royal Automobile Club wishes to see everyone with a car. It was much better to see men using motor cars to give pleasure to their families than going to races or wasting money in other ways. A halt must be called in the imposition of duties.” (“The Motor Hall”, 1929, p. 20).

The RAC’s desire to see ‘everyone with a car’ is reflected in other activities during 1929. One was its opposition to ‘car watching’, a practice that had developed in city streets, especially in the evening, whereby upon a driver parking their car in the street they were approached by a ‘watcher’ who offered to watch their car and deter thieves for a small fee (usually one shilling, or equivalent of \$4).¹⁸ The RAC’s campaign against car watching persisted throughout the 1930s before it was finally outlawed.

¹⁸ The practice is described in “The Car Watching Question”. (1929, June 9). *Truth*, p. 14.

Figure 14: RAC's metropolitan road patrol fleet, circa 1932



Source: RAC Archives

With expanding car ownership, the capacity for cars to be maintained by the home mechanics was also becoming an issue. The RAC took a four-pronged approach to this through the establishment of a Technical Department, involvement in debates around setting standards for commercial mechanical repairs, expansion of the road patrols in the metropolitan, Avon Valley and Goldfields regions, and the foundation of a member magazine named, appropriately, *The Road Patrol*.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The other key factor at work by the end of 1930 was the impact of the Depression. The president of the WA Chamber of Automotive Industries reported at the end of the year that car sales were in serious decline due to increasing customs duties on cars, parts and petrol plus increased sales taxes, and consumer's declining purchasing power due to dramatically falling overseas prices for the State's wheat and wool exports ("The Motor World", 1930). This had resulted in eight motor dealerships closing or going into receivership in 1930 alone.

The impact of the Depression on motor car ownership can be seen in official figures for imports of cars and petrol into Western Australia.¹⁹ The value of motor vehicle imports crashed from

¹⁹ See Government Printer (1931). "Part IV, Table 5; 'Imports 1931-31, Motor Cars'." In Statistical Register of Western Australia for 1929-30, p. 55; Statistical Register 1930-31 p. 49-50; Statistical Register 1931-32, p. 47;

£765,496 in 1929/30 to £59,905 in 1931/32 before starting to slowly increase. This was partly due to the high Federal tariffs introduced under the Scullin Labor government, and a consequent increase in car making in eastern Australia. The value of vehicle imports in 1938/39 at £809,299 had returned to roughly on par with 1929/30, but just over half the cars were now imported from the eastern States, where mainly British or American brands were assembled from imported components. In overall numbers, total motor car registrations in 1938 were 18,654, an increase on the 14,666 registered in 1930 but a relatively small increase compared to the growth of the 1920s (“Cars in State”, 1930; “1320 More Cars”, 1939). The small increase in registrations also underlines lower growth in new car sales due to the development of a market in second-hand cars.²⁰

The decline in consumer spending in Western Australia is also evident in the value of motor fuel imports, falling from £902,743 in 1929 to £59,905 in 1931/32 before slowly starting to increase. There was no fuel refining capacity in Australia, and the source of fuels changed over this time from the United States to the relatively lower-cost Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia). However, by 1938/39, on the eve of World War Two, fuel imports were still only worth £444,310 or less than half the value of 1929/30, with three-quarters from the Netherlands East Indies and Bahrein (now Bahrain) and Persia (now Iran) slowly increasing their share. The volume of fuel imports had declined even more dramatically, from 29 million litres in 1930-31 to just 7 million litres in 1938/39. Although the value and volume of imported fuels declined across the 1930s, the bowser price hardly changed. For example, in 1930 the price ranged from 2/1 to 2/6 per gallon, in 1939 it was from 1/11 to 2/- per gallon (in 2020 values, 194c - 233c/litre in 1930 and 190c - 198c/litre in 1939).²¹

These figures convey a sense of the impact the Depression had on motoring. Car sales dramatically declined, and when they did slowly increase it was through buying second-hand cars and models assembled in the Eastern States rather direct imports from overseas. Fuel was expensive and remained expensive. For the RAC, members needed less information on new cars, and more support with keeping the cars they had going, technical advice on car maintenance and guidance in selecting second-hand cars and parts to buy. They also needed the RAC to keep up the pressure on fuel dealers to reduce their petrol prices. This was a trend that would continue for the next two decades and is reflected in the growth of a network of contract service stations.

CONTRACT SERVICE STATIONS

Early in 1932 the RAC, having extended the road patrol service to Northam, Kalgoorlie and Bunbury to operate within a 48-kilometre radius of each town, came to the view that it would be difficult to extend the service further without having many gaps between the major towns. It

Statistical Register, 1932-33, p. 49; Government Printer. (1931). “Part IV, Table 5, ‘Imports 1929-30, Oils.’” In Statistical Register of Western Australia for 1929-30, p. 36; Statistical Register 1930-31, p. 33; Statistical Register 1931-32, p. 31; Statistical Register 1932-33, p. 31; Statistical Register 1938-39, p. 47.

²⁰ See for example “Demand for Used Cars Should Continue | Flourishing Branch of Industry | Many Cars Change Hands”. (1934, Jul 24). *Daily News*, p. 8; “New or Secondhand | Arguments on Both Sides | Buyer Must Decide”. (1936, Mar 25). *Kalgoorlie Miner*, p. 3; “Buying a Used Car | Lessening the Risk | Some Interesting Hints”. (1936, Oct 22). *Geraldton Guardian*, p. 5.

²¹ For prices, see “Petrol Prices”. (1930, Jul 17). *West Australian*, p. 12; “Rises in Petrol Tax”. (1939, Nov 12). *Sunday Times*, p. 17.

The trial network of contract service stations was in place by March, consisting of garages in Pinjarra, Harvey, Bunbury, Busselton, Margaret River and Augusta operating services within a 40-kilometre radius, with Rural Motors in Bunbury the first to start operating (“Contract Service Stations”, 1932). By the end of 1932, the trial was considered to be a success, and a second network of service stations was being contracted on the Albany Road. The annual report boasted that “The service on the South-West now enabled members to travel from Perth to Augusta, a distance of 225 miles [380 kilometres] under the protection of the road service system” (“Annual Meeting”, 1932, p. 15). Similarly, the certification of mechanics had commenced, and although the government had not yet agreed to make this compulsory, the Club continued to lobby for this in the interests of motorists.

The importance of these two services to members was reinforced by the impact of the Depression. Membership declined by 9.2 per cent from 1931 to 1932 which the president attributed to members not being able to afford the annual subscription, or selling or ‘laying up’ their car, and the high costs of buying new cars and of car maintenance (“Annual Meeting”, 1932, p. 15). Despite the decline in revenue, the Club had been able to maintain all its services, and in some cases such as the contract service stations, extend them.

The RAC’s consideration of the increasing range of services needed by its members also led it to join with the Town Planning Association and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects to sponsor a competition for the best motor garage design in the metropolitan area, taking account of both its appearance and the traffic arrangements for its use (“Town Planning”, 1932). Converting old black smithies shops or stables to motor garages by adding some bowsers out the front on the street kerb was no longer enough to meet the increasingly complicated needs of both motorists and motor mechanics, and traffic regulators.

The Albany Road service stations were operating by April 1933, and by May 1933 a third network was operating in the North Midlands centred on Geraldton (“Easter Tours”, 1933; “Winter”, 1933). Due to a spate of unnecessary callouts, the system was also changed to require the motorist to pay the service station and then receive a refund from the RAC. By mid-1935 there were 61 contract service stations in operation after the RAC secretary had completed a tour of the Eastern and Murchison goldfields and contracted various stations along his route (“Road Assistance”, 1935).

The mechanic’s registration program was also going strong, with 17 mechanics and one foreman certified that year, and negotiations continuing with the government to reconstitute the scheme on a broader basis “for the creation of a better standard of mechanical efficiency” (“Motoring”, 1935, p. 5). The contract service station scheme grew over the next decade and by 1948 there were 135 accredited stations operating across the State (“President’s Annual Report”, 1948). In fact, the contract service station scheme was seen as highly desirable by country towns with any pretensions to distinction. In 1949 Albany Town Council, responding to the RAC’s refusal to station a road patrol in the town because it was already the site of three contract service stations, “pointed out that Bunbury had both contract service stations and a road patrol” (“Albany”, 1949, p. 8).

The mechanic's testing and registration program, however, after being initiated by the RAC, was in 1936 replaced by a more comprehensive scheme. The Club invited the WA Service Station Association and the Chamber of Automotive Industries to confer and develop a stronger basis for the scheme ("Motorists Should Guard", 1935). This was achieved in 1938 when the Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers (IAME) formed a branch in Perth and commenced holding both theoretical and practical examinations for motor mechanics. The RAC's technical advisor agreed to be a member of the IAME Board of Examiners, and in September 1938 the Club donated the testing equipment it had used for its examinations to the IAME ("RAC of WA", 1939). This is an example of how the RAC, in seeking to increase the reliability of services available to its members and to all motorists, commenced a service, in the face of some opposition from service station owners, that stimulated the formation of a professional association for motor mechanics who could then regulate and develop standards that would increasingly benefit motorists without the RAC having to play that role.

Figure 16: Drivers, members and well-wishers gather in the RAC yard in Adelaide Terrace to farewell the trans-Nullarbor Melbourne Centenary Tour in 1934



Source: RAC Archives

Another centenary was marked in 1934 for the founding of Melbourne, and the RAC decided to sponsor a trans-Nullarbor motor vehicle crossing. The Club's Touring Officer Gordon Deane and Head Patrol Mr R Lockwood made a preliminary crossing, marking the route (one via Balladonia, the other following the Trans-Australian railway line) and identifying hazards. These included long distances between petrol outlets, flooding, hidden dust-filled depressions called dongas, and a lack of game to shoot for food ("Overland", 1935; "RAC", 1934a; "RAC", 1934b; "The Full Story", 1935).

This brought into prominence the lack of any formed road across the Nullarbor, a problem to which the RAC had already responded by establishing a shipping service for sending cars by ship to Eastern States destinations. The 8,500-kilometre trans-Nullarbor centenary crossing as a round trip took nearly six weeks of travelling rough, unsigned bush tracks and numerous breakdowns and roadside repairs. Although a great adventure, the Nullarbor crossing reinforced for many motorists a preference for shipping their cars to the east.

In 1929 the RAC's Touring Bureau calculated the costs of shipping cars to the east, with boat costing around £16 and the train £50 (\$1,300 and \$4,000 respectively) ("Shipment", 1929). The costs meant rail shipment remained rare, and sea transport dominated. The RAC shipping service frequently campaigned for a better deal for members shipping cars. In 1935, it lobbied Fremantle Harbour Trust to reduce excessive (compared to other states) wharfage charges for vehicles, and sought to introduce a scheme whereby it would guarantee a bond in lieu of a large cash deposit that overseas tourists had to pay to the Customs Department for bringing their car into Australia, and which was frequently forfeited if they stayed longer than six months ("Assisting", 1935).

The shipping service allowed members to leave their car with the RAC in Perth and collect it at their destination, rather than deal with preparing and manoeuvring it on and off the ship. By 1938 the RAC had to open an office and appoint a Port Officer at Victoria Quay in Fremantle to handle the business ("Shipping", 1939). During that year, the RAC dealt with shipping 137 cars inwards and 166 outwards on behalf of members, but this came to an abrupt halt with the outbreak of war in 1939.

WAR SERVICE

Months before World War Two broke out in Europe, the RAC had gained the support of the Australian Automobile Association (as the CAAO was now called) for a call to the Federal government to take control of the route between Kalgoorlie and Ceduna "with the ultimate objective of constructing between those towns a National Highway" ("Defence", 1939, p. 6). The RAC cited fears that in an invasion 'it is highly probable' enemy forces would be landed at Eucla to cut the transcontinental railway, so a good road was needed for the rapid transport of troops to the scene. A highway would not only be vital to defence in war time, but an asset in peace.

However, of more immediate concern to the RAC was the availability of petrol ("Editorial", 1939). In 1940 a number of suggestions were put to the Federal government as alternatives to proposed petrol rationing: limit speeds to 50 km/h in urban areas and 80 km/h in the country, limit service station trading hours, halt the installation of new petrol bowsers, stop retail sales from fuel depots, install gas producer units on commercial vehicles, limit sales of petrol in drums to primary producers and manufacturers, increase the production of power alcohol to dilute petrol, make petrol hoarding illegal and prohibit the use of petrol for cleaning engines and machinery, and stop all motor racing and competitions ("RAC Not Surprised", 1940).

However, petrol rationing commenced in June 1940, with private cars allowed between nine and 20 litres a week depending on their car's horsepower. The RAC's Technical Department produced guides and advice on how to calculate the likely petrol needs of different brands and models ("Petrol Ration", 1940).



A 7.8 horsepower Baby Austin should be able to travel 70 kilometres on nine litres of petrol, while a 30.6 horsepower Buick 8 would travel 29 kilometres on 20 litres, although these calculations depended on road and motor conditions and a driver's ability. Clearly, motoring would be seriously reduced for the duration of the war. The RAC protested the whole 'severe and miserable' rationing scheme, and the exclusion of any motoring representatives from the Federal Liquid Fuel Control Board which oversaw rationing ("Automobile Club Protests", 1940, p. 16).

Figure 17: A petrol ration ticket



Source: RAC Archives

The RAC lobbied the State government for some compensations such as reducing licensing fees, especially for vehicles equipped with gas producers. Despite these and other protests, by late 1940 the RAC had accepted that rationing was going to stay, and in October the State Liquid Fuel Control Board accepted an application from the RAC for it to issue ration tickets or coupons as a service to members ("Petrol Rationing", 1940). Despite bans on hoarding, motorists began to do just that, and the RAC forecast traffic volumes to be as great around Christmas 1940 as in 1939, although the declining road crash and fatality figures since the introduction of rationing were welcomed ("A Poor Bet", 1940).

Within days of Japan entering the war in December 1941, concerns were being expressed in Western Australia about the reliance on fuel imports from the Netherlands East Indies, and the likelihood of Japan targeting them for their own use ("Editorial", 1941; Daily News, 1941). The link between the loss of fuel supplies after February 1942, when Japan occupied the Indies, and the tightening of rationing and an emphasis on gas burners as an alternative became clear ("Editorial", 1942; "Gas Producers", 1942).

The RAC continued to issue petrol ration tickets throughout the war, along with the Liquid Fuel Control Board Office in Barrack Street and country post offices. The tickets were issued at first on a monthly basis, then quarterly, and had to be collected in person, resulting in long queues. There were also problems with forged tickets and a black market in stolen tickets with which to contend.

Figure 18: Plaque presented to Hollywood Military Hospital upon opening the RAC Operating Theatre



Source: RAC Archives

The RAC was the only non-government organisation authorised to issue the ration tickets, a clear indication of its standing as the voice of motorists and the community trust in which it was held. It was a very different contribution to the war effort compared to World War One, but one more consistent with a society that found itself almost on the front line, and one in which its members were directly threatened by enemy attack, especially in the northern ports such as Broome and Port Hedland that suffered aerial attacks.

Petrol rationing made it difficult to reinstate the military transports of the Great War, but more direct support for wounded soldiers was provided by the RAC ("Wounded Want Sports News", 1941). Early in 1942 the Club agreed to fund the equipping of an operating theatre in the new Hollywood Military Hospital in Shenton Park, and donated £1,150 ("Military Hospital", 1942). The Lord Mayor of Perth said this would probably be the best-equipped operating theatre in Western Australia, if not Australia, and the Club asked that the new facility be named the 'RAC Theatre'.

The new facility was opened in June 1942, and featured air conditioning, shadowless lighting, emergency lighting that could operate during an air raid, steel window shutters, a reinforced steel ceiling and a bund or embankment to protect it from bombing. The RAC had funded the theatre fit out by taking one shilling out of each member's subscription and placing it in a fund for this

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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purpose and still had £150 on hand at the completion of the project ("New Operating Theatre", 1942). The RAC president was able to report at the end of 1942 that the theatre had been a great boon to medical staff and had no superior in Australia ("Royal Automobile Club", 1942).

THIRD PARTY INSURANCE

"Service is the keynote of activity in every department of the Royal Automobile Club and practical advice and assistance is always obtainable". These were the comforting words spoken by Patrol Ron Stockbridge to a meeting of RAC members in Carnarvon in March 1937 ("Royal Automobile Club", 1937). Stockbridge was touring the North West collecting information to update the road maps for the region.

One of the new services that he spoke about with the local members was the recent formation by the RAC of Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd, through which a comprehensive car insurance policy was available, exclusively to members, at twenty per cent below the usual insurance rates. Club Motor Insurance acted as an agent on behalf of a large group of insurers, with the RAC Insurance Committee acting as arbitrators in any disputes, and its offices located in the RAC's Adelaide Terrace headquarters.

Car insurance and insurance premiums were an issue that had bedevilled car owners since the first cars were landed in Western Australia. In 1925 the RAC had entered into an arrangement with Lloyds Underwriters to provide for members coverage of motor car crash and theft and, among other things, the legal costs of defending third party claims ("Automobile Insurance", 1925). This arrangement was terminated with the formation of Club Motor Insurance. Third party insurance, or coverage for motorists against claims by 'third parties' for death, disability or damage caused by a motorist, was one of the most vexed insurance issues at the time.

The extent of the problem was identified in 1929 in a report from Perth Hospital referred to the RAC ("Motor Accidents", 1929; "Hospital Fees", 1929). The Hospital reported that over a four-month period, 72 motor crash cases had been admitted to the Hospital at a cost of £581, of which only £75 had been recovered in fees. Two of the patients had received permanent disabilities and were now surviving on invalid pensions. The key issue was that most of the crashes involved third parties, such as pedestrians or passengers, and as neither they nor the motorists had any insurance cover it was left to public institutions to bear these costs. The Hospital's view was that motorists should be compelled to insure against such third-party risks.

The main argument against any sort of compulsory third party insurance was that it would encourage bad driving as motorists would have no cause to take care, but the costs to third parties continued to mount, and with the Depression these costs invariably became a cost to the State. In July 1935 Labor Premier Philip Collier stated it was his intention to introduce a bill for compulsory third party insurance for motorists ("Third Party", 1935).

At around the same time similar schemes were being considered in New South Wales, South Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain, and the Australian Automobile Association was lobbying for all states to introduce uniform third-party insurance legislation linked to the annual renewal of motor vehicle registration ("Aiding Motorists", 1936; "Third Party", 1936).

The RAC's view in 1934 was that every motorist should carry third party insurance but at this stage it was wary of making it compulsory as insurance companies might not wish to participate in a compulsory scheme ("Third Party", 1934; "Compulsory", 1935; "Motor Vehicle Insurance", 1935). The debates continued throughout the late 1930s, with a bill modelled on the New Zealand legislation finally passed in the lower house in December 1938 only to be scuttled in the upper house when the parliamentary session was closed. While most members agreed with the principle of compulsory third party insurance, they were irritated at being given only one day to debate the bill, and unable to explore their main concerns that it did not cover damage to property, did not cover passengers, and its scope was generally too limited ("Third Party", 1938).

Following lobbying by the RAC, the WA Chamber of Commerce, hospitals, the police and local government bodies, a revised bill was introduced into State Parliament in 1941, and the RAC gave evidence to a select committee of the Legislative Council ("Editorial", 1940; "Hospital Losses", 1941). The RAC welcomed the new bill, parts of which it considered were in advance of legislation in other states.

However, it objected to two aspects. One was making the State Insurance Office the monopoly provider of the insurance, with the RAC view being that a pool of all insurance providers was a better option, as demonstrated by the success of Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd. No other State had made its insurance agency the monopoly provider. Its related second objection was that the State Insurance Office was controlled by a minister who might seek to use it to raise revenue by levying stamp duties on the premiums and might devolve the operations of the Office to local governments for an "unduly high percentage" of the operating costs ("Car Insurance", 1941, p. 4).

Nevertheless, despite these concerns, the Act was passed and came into effect in May 1944. The RAC commended the new legislation, noting its earlier reservations about a State Insurance Office monopoly had been heard, with changes it had suggested that allowed the minister to approve several insurance companies offering third party policies. The Club was now ready to help members and all motorists navigate the new system ("RAC Commends", 1944). The key matter for motorists was the need to obtain a certificate of insurance from "an insurer approved under the Act" before they tried to renew their vehicle registration. The policy certificate would have to be presented with the licensing papers in order for the vehicle to be registered. As all motor vehicle registration fell due on the same day (1 July), it was imperative that motorists attend to this as soon as possible.

One of the key changes this meant for the RAC was that Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd became one of the approved insurers under the Act, but in order to qualify, it had to issue policies to non-members as well as members ("RAC "Cover" For all", 1934). This expanded the number of potential policy holders, although a total of 66 insurance companies were authorised to provide third party insurance, including the State Insurance Office and Westralian Farmers Ltd Insurance Department ("Motor Vehicle", 1944a). With limited clerical staff in the Adelaide Terrace offices due to the loss of men for wartime service, members were urged to renew policies as quickly as possible as an increased demand was expected. There was a total of more than 50,000 registered vehicles in the State, including commercial trucks, taxis and motorcycles as well as the private motor cars with which the RAC usually dealt.



The approved annual premiums for motor cars were £1/5/ (\$90)- in the metropolitan area and 12/6 (\$45) in the country districts, with some additional premiums in the metropolitan area including £1/15/ (\$130)- for trucks, £3 (\$220) for motor dealer's vehicles, £15 (\$1,100) for buses carrying more than eight passengers and £20 (\$1,500) for taxis and hire cars ("Motor Vehicle", 1944b). By the war's end, compulsory third party insurance for motorists was fully operational, and the RAC had played a key role in shaping the new system for the benefit of all motorists and road users. A little picture of how the system worked can be seen in the accounts of the new Midlands Travelling Infant Health Centre at Miling, the first such centre in the State. In its first few months of operation in late 1946, £564 (\$39,000) was spent on a car for Sister Waddell-Johnson, 19/8 (\$70) on petrol, £12/7/9 (\$890) on RAC car insurance, and 15/8 (\$56) on RAC third party insurance ("Midlands", 1946).

Figure 19: First insurance claim logged with RAC Insurance, June 1947

MOTOR VEHICLE CLAIM No. 1 CLASS No.

Insured: *Johnstone, J. A.* CLASS No.

Policy No. *2123* Current Term *6/6/1947 to 6/6/1948* Date of Accident *6/6/1947*

Make of Vehicle *Windsor 4 Seater* Date of Notice *6/6/1947* Amount *£100*

Registration No. *12652* Premium Paid *12/7/9* Insurer *J. A. Johnson*

Vehicle used for *Car* Entered Class No. Date Insured *7/6/1947*

Amount of Insurance £ *100*

K for K... Adversed
 For C... Sent
 ... Received

Franchise £
 Nature of Claim *Accident*

AMOUNT OF CLAIM PAID

Date Paid	On Account of	Amount	Cheque No.
<i>28-7-47</i>	Damage to Insured Vehicle	<i>24 12 6</i>	<i>125</i>
	" " " " (Theft)		
	Damage to Third Party Vehicle		
	" " " " property		
	Personal Injury Third Party		
	Assessor's Fees—Third Party		
<i>28-7-47</i>	Mechanical	<i>1 16 6</i>	
	Legal Expenses		
	Medical Expenses		
	Accident Benefits		
	TOTAL £		

RECOVERIES

Third Party £
 Salvage £
 £

Less Total Recoveries £

NETT LOSS £ *25 12 6*

Stamp: *WEST AUSTRALIA*

Signature: *C. Anderson*

Source: RAC Archives

However, problems arose with Club Motor Insurance after the war over its taxation status within the RAC, and in May 1947 it was replaced by a new entity, RAC Insurance ("Law Courts", 1947). The new company was clearly promoted to members as a new service, an insurance organisation owned and operated by the members, formed on a mutual basis in which all profits were to be returned to members as either cash bonuses or increased RAC services. It was not to be a profit-making business, and its only equivalent was said to be a co-operative insurance service provided to members by the NRMA in New South Wales. Mr E Menmuir, who had been acting RAC secretary at the time of the third-party insurance bill negotiations, and manager of Club Motor Insurance since its formation, was appointed manager of the new service.

SIGNING THE WAY

Along with these big developments, there was also continuing work throughout the Depression and the war years by which the RAC made an ongoing contribution to the community. The early years of installing directional and other road signs, either directly or through roads boards and municipal councils, became much more professionalised with schemes to standardise road signs, number or name main routes, and extend the types of signs from passive displays of information to actively warning motorists of impending dangers such as moving trains.

Deaths of motorists on level crossing were a growing problem by 1939 when a double fatality on the Napier Street level crossing in Cottesloe prompted the Railways Department to install electric flashing signals to warn drivers of an approaching train ("Crossing Fatalities", 1939). Following an earlier accident on the same crossing, the RAC formed a committee with Main Roads, Police, Town Planning and local government officials to decide on the best form of warning signals and to prioritise which level crossings were the most dangerous. The first of the new electric signals was installed in Maddington, followed by crossings in Rivervale, Bellevue and East Perth. Following the Cottesloe crash, the RAC urged the installation of either electric signals or traffic bridges at all level crossings ("Warning Lights", 1939).

In 1936 the Standards Association of Australia issued an Australian Standard Road Signs Code, although when a conference of State road authorities adopted the Code in 1939 the Federal Minister for External Affairs protested that, because some of the signs continued to use words rather than symbols, Australia would be unable to accede to the 1926 Motor Traffic Convention ("Road Signs", 1936; "Road Signs", 1939). In Western Australia, the new Code would require replacing the numerous directional and warning signs erected under RAC aegis since 1908. Despite the Minister's objections, the RAC was still the key road signs organisation in the State, and it had a specially designed truck built to transport the new signs ("Along Felt Want", 1940).

The truck could carry up to 400 signs, weighing in total 3½ tons, and a wide range of tools and equipment. The first main road to be 're-signed' was the Perth-Northam Road, on which work commenced in October 1940 ("Road Signs", 1940). The RAC, with advice from the Main Roads Department, began work with the program inaugurated in a ceremony on 12 August 1940 by August Knapp, in recognition of his pioneering work in road signage ("Signposting", 1940; "Early Days", 1940; "Here and There", 1940). The RAC Touring Department mapped the locations for all the new signs, which included danger signs, cross road and other intersection signs, school, winding road and railway crossing signs, and direction signs. All signs, apart from direction signs, were fitted with cat's-eye reflectors for night driving.

No sooner had this program got under way than the Netherlands East Indies fell to Japan in February 1942. Fearing imminent invasion of Western Australia, the military authorities asked that all directional signs within 34 kilometres of the coast be removed lest they assist the enemy ("Road Signs Removed", 1942). This included all RAC directional signs and warning signs, advertising signs giving distances to towns, and 'welcome' and 'farewell' signs identifying towns. The 'security belt' was later extended to a 160-kilometre distance from the ocean. At the same time, railway station names were also removed so they would not be visible to enemy air reconnaissance ("Station Names", 1942).

Figure 20: The official launch of the new roadside signs program, Northam-Perth Road 1940

Showing August Knapp (holding signs). In the new language of road signs, the triangle indicating 'warning', with the hazard depicted in the lozenge (a T-junction), both with cat's-eyes for night visibility, and an RAC badge on each sign to indicate its authenticity,



Source: RAC Archives

Removed road signs were stored in roads board and municipal council depots, and by late 1943 as the threat of invasion receded, they began to be re-installed. An example is the Upper Chapman Road Board, which decided in August 1943 to have all the level crossings in its district inspected, and advised the RAC that it had reconditioned all the removed road signs and they were now ready for re-erection ("Upper Chapman Affairs", 1943). Even so, the old pre-war system funded and staffed entirely by the RAC was difficult to re-establish, and by 1946 roads boards were being called upon to undertake the task themselves ("Traffic Problems", 1946).

THE EAST-WEST HIGHWAY

The question of building an East-West Highway across the Nullarbor again came to prominence during the War, and the RAC was not backward in stating its support for the idea ("Case for East-West Highway", 1938; "East-West Highway", 1939).

In November 1941, the RAC president welcomed Aubrey Melrose back to Perth after having driven to Sydney and back in a car with a gas producer unit ("Producer Gas", 1941). The journey had cost just £6 in charcoal and was hailed as evidence of the capacity for gas producers to reduce demand for petrol. It also, for the RAC, emphasised the importance of constructing a trans-Nullarbor road.

The RAC was not the only lobbyist for a highway, with the Forrest National Highway Association (which proposed, without any sense of irony, that the new trans-Nullarbor route should be named Forrest Highway) also feting Melrose's journey, but proposing a privately funded initiative in the face of Federal intransigence to fund any such route ("East-West Highway", 1942).

The RAC, and especially 'veteran overlander' Percy Armstrong, and the Forrest Association had been lobbying for the highway for some years, and in 1942 they named it 'A Great Objective' to be achieved after the war in the interests of motor tourism, defence and attracting migrants from the Eastern States ("Forrest Highway", 1942). The latter objectives reflect the fears of a community then under enemy attack.

The proposed Forrest name for the highway attracted the support of Prime Minister John Curtin, but a biography of trans-Nullarbor explorer Edward John Eyre published in 1941 to mark the centenary of his crossing proposed the name Eyre Highway ("Flattering Reviews", 1942). After the sudden death of Curtin in 1945, another proposal was made to name the putative road Curtin Highway ("Of Interest", 1945; "Eyre-Highway", 1947). However, although by 1949 no highway had been built, the matter of its name remained in contention, and it would take another international event to make it a highway in more than just name.

No East-West Highway was yet in the offing, but the 1929 slogan 'everyone in a car' was becoming a reality, even in the face of all the privations and difficulties of the Depression and the war that impacted the importation of cars and fuel, but which instigated the development of a whole new field of dealing in and maintaining second hand cars. The network of contract service stations had been developed, bringing to all members across the State the advantages of the hugely popular roadside assistance in times of trouble.

The RAC had instigated the professionalisation in training and accreditation of motor mechanics to ensure members had more security in obtaining mechanical help. It was a key agency in ensuring the successful operation of petrol rationing during the war and had also made a direct contribution to the war effort through funding the fit out of an advanced operating theatre in Hollywood Military Hospital.

Additionally, the RAC has been a central player in the development of a compulsory third party insurance that brought almost immediate benefits to motorists, cyclists and pedestrians across the State, and also in the more general development of insurance for motor vehicles through both lobbying and the provision of insurance services for members and, eventually, all motorists.

One of the original RAC functions, making and installing directional and warning signs on roads, continued across the period and developed to a whole new level through the uniform road signs code. The war time removal of road signs had revealed just how critical this infrastructure had quietly become and pointed to the need for the State to shoulder more responsibility in this area.



In a related field, the RAC was instrumental in having the State rail authorities take responsibility for installing electric-powered flashing signals at railway level crossings, bringing an immediate decrease in the road death toll. As the second half of the twentieth century beckoned, with a promise of return to material prosperity, the RAC could look back over two very troubled decades with some sense of satisfaction.

CHAPTER 4: ALL THAT GLISTERS - POST-WAR BOOM TO ENERGY CRISIS | 1949-1985

I July is metric day! Get with the new signs. From 1 July, motorists all over Australia will have to measure their speed in kilometres per hour, and the distances they travel in kilometres. A kilometre is 1000 metres in length – that's about $\frac{5}{8}$ of a mile. For safety's sake, learn the new signs! Know what they mean! (Public Notice, Australian Department of Transport, The Road Patrol, June 1974).

AFTER THE WAR

The year 1950 dawned with by now familiar press reports of car crashes over the holiday period, and the efforts by RAC patrols to give assistance to motorists. Five road deaths occurred over the new year weekend, including a sixteen-year-old girl knocked off her bike in Adelaide Terrace by a drunk driver. The 32-year-old man fled the scene but was later apprehended by an RAC patrolman who handed him over to police (“Five Road”, 1950).

The reports make for gruesome reading, with fractured skulls, fractured limb bones, concussion and shock prominent, speeding and drink driving the chief causes and the youthful ages of many involved. All sorts of vehicles – cars, motorcycles, trucks and taxis were involved, as were drivers, passengers and pedestrians. The number of cars on the road was at a record high, and RAC patrols were praised in the press for working new, longer hours from 8am to midnight, assisting motorists everywhere including on the beaches (“RAC Patrolmen”, 1950).

Despite the apparently shocking start to the decade, two significant events for motorists that year signalled the end of old ways. The first was the demise of petrol rationing in February 1950, implementing one of the promises of the newly elected Menzies coalition federal government (Froude, 2002). Petrol rationing was the second-last item to come off rationing (tea was the last in July 1950), and almost immediately motor traffic increased on the roads along with demands for more traffic police (“Road Safety”, 1950).

This accompanied an earlier change the RAC had long lobbied for, the staggering of motor vehicle registrations and drivers licence renewals that had until then all fallen due on 30 June each year (“Vehicle Licences”, 1946; “Motor Licensing Change”, 1947; “Board Staggers”, 1947). At a time when renewals had to be made in person at the licencing office in James Street Perth or local municipal offices, the result had been lengthy, time consuming, often bad-tempered queues as licences were manually renewed, third party insurance papers checked, and petrol ration tickets dispensed all at the same time. These two changes, more than anything else, opened the door for motorists to a freer new world after the controls of the Depression and war.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

An editorial in the *West Australian* in April 1950 recognised the pressures with the growing volume of traffic in both city and country. It called for local vehicle licensing to be transferred from roads boards and municipalities south of the 26th Parallel (which it described as “grotesquely absurd” due to their apathy and impoverishment) to the Police Department, and for a Royal Commission to look into devising some means of ensuring country roads boards raised their sign-posting standards to “present-day requirements” (“Road Safety”, 1950).

However, they could hardly complain, lectured the editor, if signing was taken over by the Main Roads Department, even if its own record was not spotless.

Figure 21: RAC Patrolmen photographed with four new Austin A.40 vans in 1950

Cars replaced motorcycles as patrol vehicles from this point on.



Source: RAC Archives

The 1950 Royal Commission into the Local Government Bill did recommend that local governments should have the power to erect street name and traffic signs within towns (which was finally enacted in 1960) but did not mention country roads and highways ("Report", 1950). However, the vigour in removing road signs during the war was not matched by enthusiasm in reinstating them, and in 1949 the RAC retired its specially made but cumbersome signposting van, replacing it with a light Ford Ute. Some local governments gradually began to accept it was their responsibility (and cost) to install and maintain signposts on "all roads, towns and creeks" in their districts ("Road Board", 1950).

The cost of road signs was reflected in the costs of producing the RAC's renowned maps. With the creation of RAC Insurance in 1947, spaces on the Club's strip maps were set aside for advertising the new service. By 1951 the value of this advertising space was realised, and the side panels and back of the itinerary covers and maps was made available to commercial advertisers. Through this measure, advertising sales began to cover at least some of the costs of production. The increasing costs for signs and maps, services that had been at the core of the Club since 1908,

reflected not so many increases in real costs but the effects of inflation that came with the post-war boom.

In 1949 the Club increased its membership subscription for city members to £1 10s, although country members retained the old fee. This was the first increase since 1916, when the Club had been incorporated. However, in 2020 values, the 1916 subscription was worth \$109 and the 1949 city subscription, although nominally higher, was only worth \$86.50. Clearly, more subscription increases would be in the offing before even returning to their old Great War value if current and future services were to be maintained, let alone developed. Inflation, practically unknown for decades, had notable peaks in the early 1950s, and again in 1957 and 1961, from 1972 to 1975, and then in the mid-1980s.

As a result, membership subscriptions continually rose to try and keep pace while the Club maintained, and in some cases, expanded its services across the same period (Stevens, 1992). The saying “when a pound was worth a pound” passed from everyday talk into advertising slogans before decimalisation in 1966 swept away the old currency in favour of dollars and cents (“Make News”, 1963). Decimalisation, however, was no antidote to inflation and membership subscriptions incrementally rose across this period.

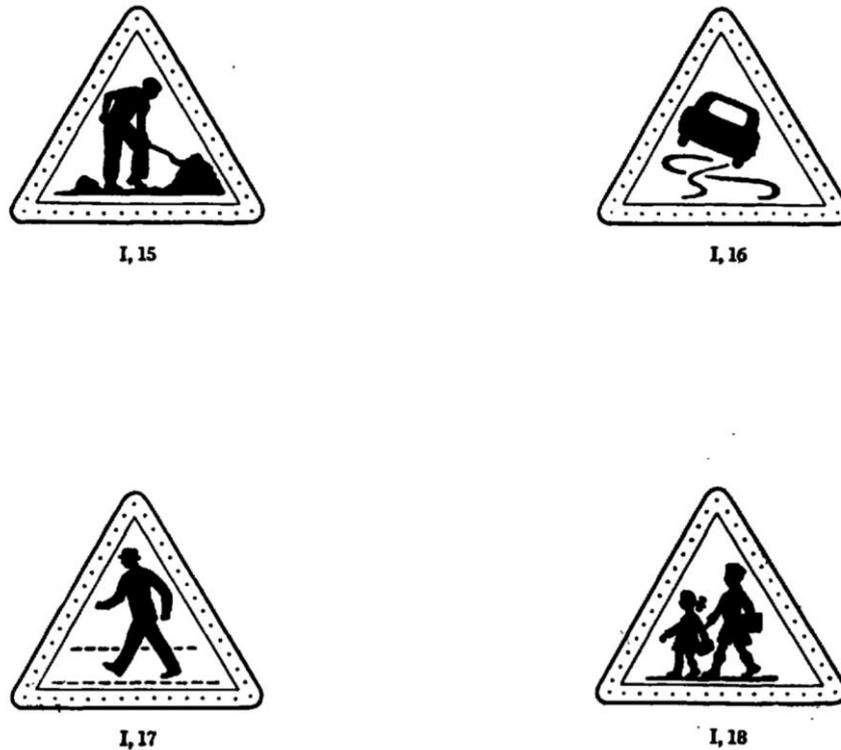
The 1949 United Nations Convention on Road Traffic was ratified by Australia and came into effect on 1 January 1955. The Australian Automobile Association (AAA) was appointed the issuing authority for international driver permits and international touring plates, for which the Australian code was AUS (RAC, c.1991). These functions were delegated to the AAA’s members, and from November the RAC commenced issuing the permits and plates for Western Australian motorists travelling overseas.

The Convention also set out the specifications for a wide range of ‘danger, instructive and informative’ signs, including sizes, shapes, colours, and placement beside roads, as well as standard traffic light colours and meanings, and standard hand signals to be used by traffic police, among other things (“Final Act”, 1949). In many cases these were updates of a 1931 convention that underpinned the new road signs the RAC started to install in 1940 and were intended to help drivers obey local road rules and drive safely in whatever country they were travelling.

However, the road sign program was less central to the work of the RAC in the immediate post-war years. In its 1953/54 budget, £2,000 was allocated to ‘road signs and surveys’ in an overall budget of £119,125, or just 2.5% of expenditure (“President’s Report”, 1954). Even so, nearly 4,000 maps were sold, and 9,285 tour itineraries were issued to members. The replacement of directional signs removed during the war was not a simple task, due especially to shortages of materials for sign making, and the expense of those available, and it was not until 1956 that the RAC resumed the program, thirteen years after the war-time removals. In that year a full-time directional Signposting and Road Survey Unit was created, with a staff of two men and a new van in patriotic Westralian black and yellow colours (“Signposting and Survey Unit”, 1956).

Figure 22: An example of the standard international signs for 'Danger' under the 1949 protocol, with the standard equilateral triangle shape and standard red border.

UN Conference on Road and Motor Transport, Geneva 1949; Protocol on Road Signs and Signals: 91.



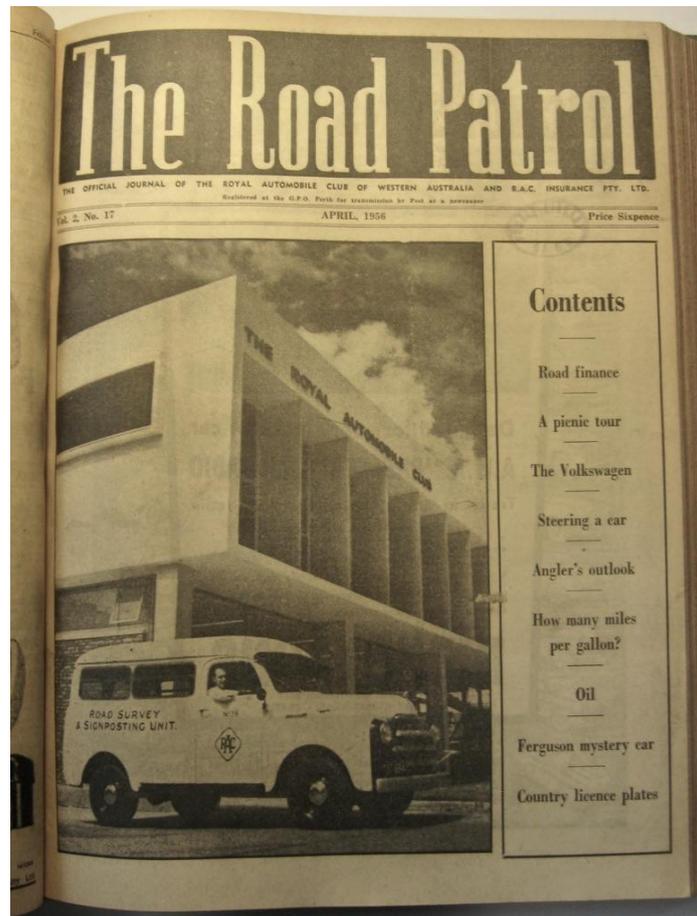
Source: RAC Archives

In addition to ascertaining what signs were needed, and then erecting them, the Unit also checked speedometer charts and compiled new charts for the preparation of tour itineraries. It was also intended that the unit's signposting work would form the basis of a proposed route numbering system. The Club was confident that the Unit, "will prove to be an enormous benefit to members". Within two years, the unit had erected over 1,000 new directional signs and travelled 90,000 kilometres across the State ("Annual Report", 1958, p. 15).

By 1952 the country Roads Boards Association declared its support for route numbering, but at that stage the RAC would only support this measure as a supplement to directional signs (RAC, c.1991). By the late 1950s the extent of roadside advertising signs was becoming a contentious issue, especially signs similar in appearance to the warning signs erected by the RAC, and the Club was critical of local governments who failed to use their powers to regulate what they called a spreading "blot on the landscape" ("A Blot", 1957).



Figure 23: The New Sign Posting Unit outside the Adelaide Terrace headquarters



Source: (Road Patrol cover, April 1956).

As well as detracting from local scenic beauty, the RAC was critical of the hoardings that obscured driver's vision and creating crash hazards. The advertising industry responded that, as road safety authorities used roadside advertising, they must be acceptable, and hoardings were also useful in keeping drivers awake by relieving the visual monotony of long journeys ("Correspondence", 1958). Despite widespread worries about 'highway hypnosis' (supposed to occur when motorists drove long distances in warm vehicles and fell into a trance or even sleep with their eyes open, but continued to steer, with no memory of doing so, and was often invoked as an explanation for unexplainable crashes), the RAC was not persuaded of the utility of these 'blots' (Williams, 1963).

The re-invigorated directional signs program continued, with over 600 RAC-badged directional signs erected over 1958 ("They'll Point The Way", 1958). An innovation for 1959 was the erection by the Club of eighteen large 'save water' signs on the Eyre Highway, asking motorists to turn-off taps at water tanks and generally not waste precious water. A series of 'next water - miles' signs were also installed at 42-kilometre intervals between Norseman and the state border ("Water", 1959).

In early 1959 the Club surveyed city street signs, concluding that in many instances street name signs were missing or poorly visible, and that one-way and no entry streets were insufficiently marked. It recommended Perth and Fremantle city councils and the Main Roads Department correct these problems, and suggested street name signs could be placed on the top of the new traffic light standards that were appearing across the city as traffic lights became ubiquitous in the metropolitan area (“Survey”, 1959).

Route numbering, as a variation on directional signage, became more prominent in the 1960s. Decisions had been made at national road conferences in 1949 and 1953 to implement State systems of route numbering, based upon US and UK systems, but the WA Main Roads Department had remained steadfast in its opposition to such a system (“Why Not Numbers”, 1962). Its main arguments were that main roads were already well-defined by their better alignments and better development, and any issues of confusion with main roads passing through towns and villages could be dealt with by adequate directional signs. The RAC dismissed this as ‘dubious’, reiterating that route numbering was a concise and definite method of identifying routes, verbally, by signposting and on road maps, and it was already familiar to out-of-state and overseas visitors.

The WA Tourist Development Authority and the WA Federated Chambers of Commerce already supported the RAC position, adding the advantages of commerce to those already championed by the RAC on behalf of all motorists. The RAC offered to erect route number signs for the Main Roads Department if it supplied the signs, but the inducement was not taken up (“Annual Report”, 1962). In 1965, with the election of the second Brand coalition government, the RAC welcomed the honouring of an election commitment to introduce route numbering (“Numbering”, 1965).²²

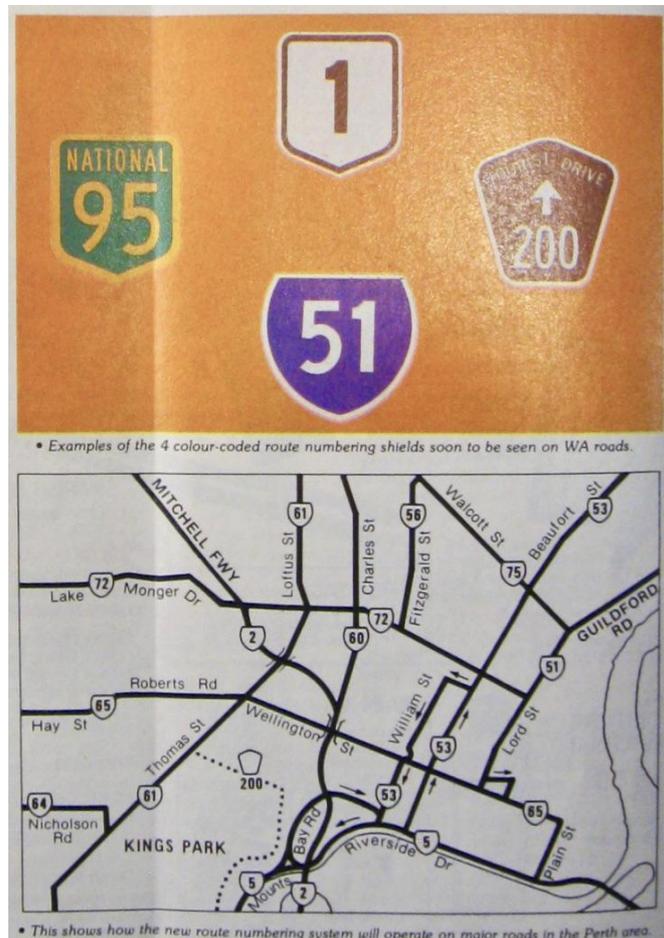
This system commenced on 27 June 1966 when the Minister for Works fixed to a post beside the Midland Town Hall a white shield marked with the black numbers 94, indicating the beginning of National Route 94, otherwise known as Great Eastern Highway, with further shields to be installed between Midland and Norseman (“Route Numbering in WA”, 1966). National Routes were to have reflectorized white shields with black numbers, and State Highways blue shields with white numbers. North-south highways would have odd numbers, and east-west highways even numbers. Albany Highway had been designated National Route 95, and others would be numbered and signed as surveys were undertaken.

Despite the enthusiasm, the program did not really take off, and it would be another twenty years before route numbering was comprehensively introduced to Western Australia, beginning in mid-1986. The RAC provided illustrated guides for motorists on the four new shield-shaped signs that would denote continental, national, state and tourist routes. Each had a different colour and numbering sequence. They also produced a model map of Perth showing all the signs, in black and white, to indicate how they would look on maps and street directories (“Route Numbering System”, 1986; “Driving by Numbers”, 1986).

²² The Liberal Premier David Brand was also Minister for Tourism, and the police and traffic portfolios were held by James Craig, Country Party MLA for Toodyay.



Figure 24: Coloured images of the new route numbering signs, and a city centre map depicting how the signs would be shown on monotone maps



Source: Road Patrol, April May 1986, p. 44)

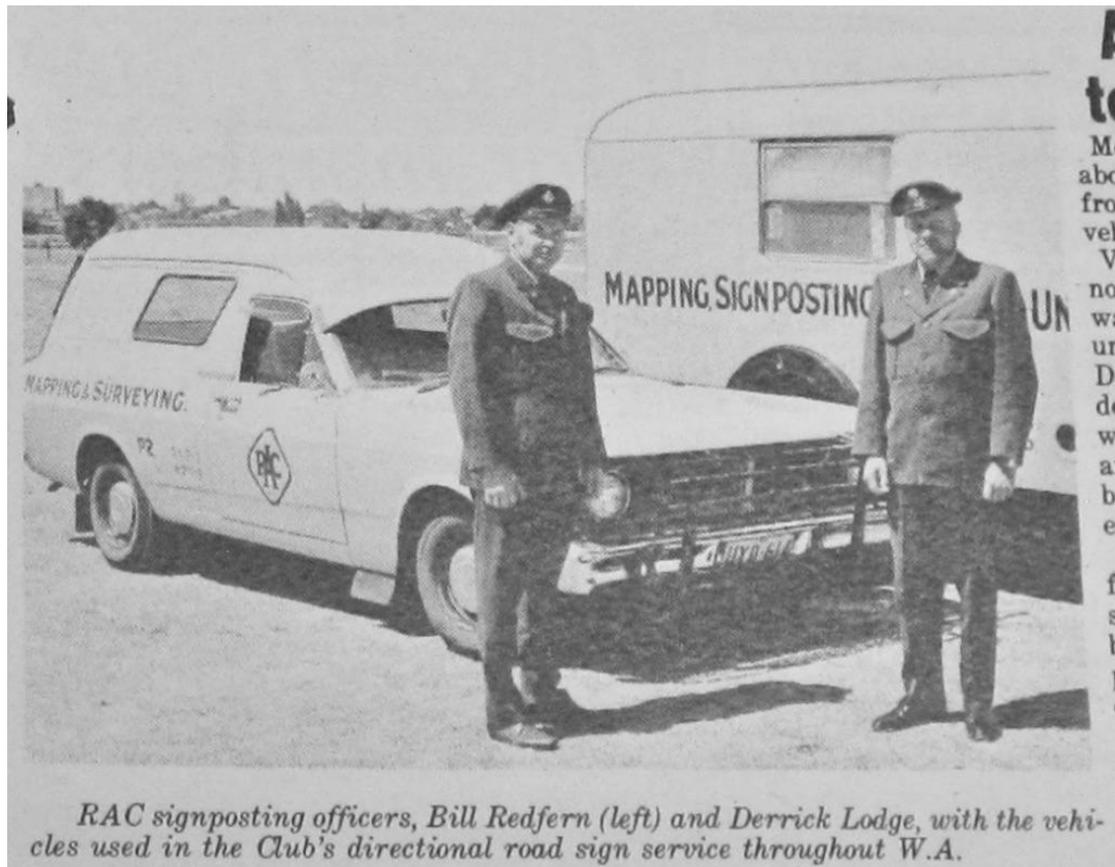
The RAC, which was involved in developing the system, in conjunction with the WA Tourism Commission and Main Roads, believed this would be a boon to visitors arriving for the America's Cup in the summer of 1987. They also encouraged local governments to adopt similar systems for local scenic and historic routes. The RAC's view was that the new system would simplify navigation and gave as example State Route 22 that would cover eight different road and street names in southern Perth.

Another variation on signage occurred in 1962 when the Roads Boards were elevated to Shires and municipalities to Town Councils. The RAC, which had a long tradition of issuing lists of local government number plate codes back to its *Yearbook* in 1919, published an up-to-date list following the changes ("Identification", 1962). Many of these were simply intuitive contractions of shire or town names, but some remained obscure such as KT for the Shire of Nyabing-Pingrup, and WA for the Shire of Manjimup.



This would keep generations of children on long road trips guessing the home shires of number plate codes on passing vehicles.²³ Along with route numbering and number plate codes, the RAC's directional signs program continued, with 368 new directional signs erected over the 1961-1962 period, making a total of 3,500 signs erected since 1956 and over 33,800 kilometres of roads re-charted and mileages updated ("Annual Report", 1962).

Figure 25: The last sign posters standing with their vans, once a familiar sight on country roads



Source: (The Road Patrol, April 1975, p. 5).

The directional signs program continued for another decade, but eventually on 30 June 1975 the service was discontinued ("End of Services", 1975). By this time, RAC signs were no longer being installed along main roads, and despite a final project of placing 70 signs on Rottnest Island's tracks and ways, the RAC felt they were largely being taken for granted by road authorities. The cost of maintaining the program, which in the 1970-1975 period had seen nearly 3,800 signs installed and over 50,000 kilometres travelled by the Mapping Unit, was assessed as over \$20,000 per year (\$166,400), and as such was no longer financially sustainable ("Annual Report", 1974).

²³ On the game or pastime of 'number plates', see "Now You Know The Answer". (1986, Apr-May). *The Road Patrol*, p. 28.

By comparison, the Main Roads Department spent \$20,000 in 1974 converting road signs on major roads to metric (Edmonds, 1997). The RAC signs would stay in place, but their RAC badges were removed, and the Club “hoped local authorities throughout the state will take over maintenance of the existing 8,000 signs”. It was a low-key end to a service that had been central to the RAC’s existence since 1908, and no plan appeared to be in place for a successor to the RAC program.²⁴

Within less than a decade of ceasing its sign posting program the Club was lobbying tourism authorities to address the decline in country road sign standards. Old signs were not being maintained, vandalism was a problem, and they were often actively removed, but local governments and state agencies continued to decline any responsibility. The Club in 1982 began stressing the importance of roadside directional signs in developing the State’s tourism industry, but to little effect (“Action Needed on Signposting”, 1982).

In 1971 the Main Roads Department assumed control over main road verges, including signage within the verges. After 1973, they had made a commitment to designing country and remote highways in response to their landscapes in order to promote the natural beauty and vegetation, and to also combat the old demon of highway hypnosis, or driver fatigue as it was becoming better known (Edmonds, 1997). It was a long way from the RAC’s focus back in the 1920s on creating national parks along major roads to preserve their scenic beauty.

NEW MONEY, NEW MEASUREMENTS

During 1961 the Federal government announced that Australia’s imperial currency of pounds, shillings and pence, would be replaced by a decimal currency. After public debate the new currency unit was to be called a “royal”, but this was later changed to the dollar (Reserve Bank of Australia, n.d.; Baskerville, 2013). In late 1965, it was noted that motorists would soon have to start thinking in terms of dollars a year, and cents per mile, rather than pounds and pence (“From Pence to Pounds”, 1965).

The official changeover date for the new currency was 14 February 1966, and in the February edition of *The Road Patrol* the monthly road test of a new car, in this case the Morris Mini De Luxe (with two ashtrays) reported prices in both old and new money (“Morris Mini”, 1966). The price was £833 (\$1,666), registration and the third-party insurance £16/10/6 (\$33.05) and stamp duty £6/15 (\$13.50), and a similar approach was used in the road test for the Mazda 800 Station Sedan.

This was the only time dual currencies were used, and most advertisers in this issue used either imperial or decimal, but some used the dual currency approach, such as the Wibroc Telescopic Door Mirror for £1/15 or \$3.50 and NGK sparkplugs for 8/3 or 82 cents. It apparently took some time for the change to be effected, with advertisers in *The Road Patrol*, such as Albert’s Bookshop, still advertising “You’ll save £££’s On Your Repair Bills With These Motor Repair Manuals”, all listed with imperial prices, four months after the change (“Advertisement”, 1966). The cover price of *The Road Patrol* changed from three pence to two cents, and for the RAC and motorists

²⁴ The closure of the signposting service had little impact on expenditure by the Touring Department within which it was located, which rose from \$202,652 in 1974/75 to \$311,639 in 1975/76. See Seventieth and Seventy-first annual reports, in *The Road Patrol*, October 1975 and October 1976.



generally, decimalisation seemed to be a much simpler change than metrication (“Cover”, 1966a; 1966b).

Changing from imperial to metric measurements was recommended by the Senate in 1968, and legislated in 1970, with a gradual change extending over fifteen years beginning in 1972 (WA Department of Commerce, 2008). With metrication came numerous unexpected consequences. One was the increased cost of postage with the switch to metric weights which marginally reduced the standard weights, meaning the weight of an issue of *The Road Patrol* needed to be reduced to remain with the new 50-gram limit.

Figure 26: Metric Petrol

Miss Bev Butler and Miss Lorraine Barnard admire Mr Ted Bunce's service of petrol by the litre at Maddington from a new metric bowser.



Source: (Road Patrol, October 1975)

At the same time, concessional postage rates for organisations were abolished, so that the annual coats of *The Road Patrol*, produced and posted to members, increased from \$3,500 to \$5,600 to \$8,000 over three years, “Among those most savagely hit are motorists’ organisations who distribute publications to their members”, wrote *The Road Patrol* editor in October 1973, going on to predict the end of the magazine unless things changed as,

“... it is a Government duty not to impede our activities for the short-sighted exercise of business principles in a public utility” (“New Postal Rates”, 1973, p. 2).



The target for producing all RAC road maps with metric distances was July 1974, and the process of updating the maps began in 1973. The eighth edition of the 'RAC Road Map of Western Australia' published in 1973 was the last produced in imperial measurements ("RAC", 1973). The vehicles featured in *Road Patrol* road tests also began to specify dual measurements from this time, with an example being the Renault R17 TL specifications that included, "kerb mass 1043 kg (2,300 lbs), overall height 1310 mm (48 inches) ... and fuel tank 55 litres (12 gallons)" ("Road Test", 1973, p. 14).²⁵

The conversion of road speed limit signs was also scheduled for July 1974, and *The Road Patrol* began to carry articles on how this would happen and the publicity campaigns that would be undertaken. The RAC Victoria representative on the Metric Conversion Board, representing all of the motoring bodies including the RAC, assured motorists they should not experience any difficulties as speed limit signs, and other motoring related measurements such as petrol and oil sales and tyre pressure gauges also changed ("Metric Campaign", 1974).

Advertisements also appeared at this time for converting speedometers to metric, for metric tyre pressure gauges, and other paraphernalia to help the motorist adjust to the new world of metric ("Advertisement", 1974a; "Advertisement", 1974b). Another unintended consequence, this time of a requirement for all speedometers to use metric from 1974 was that, for the first time, it became compulsory for motor vehicles to actually have a speedometer ("Traffic Topics", 1974). Eventually, "metric motoring day", 1 July 1974 arrived and the RAC advised members to be aware that the new speed limit signs would show much higher figures, a trap to be wary of with regard to speeding ("Motorists", 1974).

The last major metrication program for motorists took place in October 1975 when petrol bowsers were changed to dispense fuel in litres rather than gallons, and the RAC produced consumption scales for motorists to compare miles per gallon and litres per 100 kilometres ("Pumps Change", 1975). There was no easy way to convert one to the other, although the mathematically-keen were advised they could divide the miles per gallon figure by 282.2!

Decimalisation and metrication over the decade between 1966 and 1976 were major changes for all motorists and consumers, and the RAC played an important role in introducing members to these changes, educating drivers in various specialised measurements relating to motoring, and facilitating their acceptance within the broader community. This was also the period when Britain, after two more attempts, finally joined the European Common Market from 1 January 1973, and a gradual but inexorable decline began in testing and advertising British motor brands in *The Road Patrol*.

THE EYRE HIGHWAY REALISED

With the impending inaugural royal visit by Queen Elizabeth II in 1954, the RAC and the National Safety Council commenced a road safety campaign with the slogan "Let Courtesy Reign on the Queens Highway" ("Advertisement", 1954). A significant factor in this campaign was the rising road fatality rate, in which Western Australia had the highest rate in Australia in 1952 with 14 deaths per 10,000 vehicles compared to South Australia's lowest rate of 7.5 ("The Human Factor",

²⁵ Note the placement of commas within metric measurements was not yet clear.

1953). The key factor was attributed by the RAC to driver failures, especially speeding, rather than vehicle or road deficiencies as such. A large illuminated decorative arch was erected by the RAC in St Georges Terrace bearing the Queen’s Highway slogan, with the Club using the royal visit “to harness the stimulus of national rejoicing in a practical way so that the people might express their happiness by treating their fellow road users with courtesy and consideration” (“Cover”, 1954, p. 2). This was adjudged a success by the Club following Her Majesty’s visit when it described motorists as courteous and patient, with good natured and tolerant policing of drivers. The improvement, however, was only temporary.

Figure 27: RAC arch and royal visit slogan across St Georges Terrace in 1954



Source: RAC Archives

The poor competence of drivers was noted in 1954 by Mr and Mrs H. C. Gardner of Mt Lawley, who crossed the Nullarbor in their Ford Prefect, praising the RAC signs that kept them on track and criticising the problem with speeding drivers, one of whom they freed, unconscious, from an overturned car near Balladonia, as well as poor road conditions such as numerous large pot holes (“West to East”, 1954). Problems with the condition of the highway and its roadside facilities would become increasingly prominent after 1958 when it was announced that Perth would host the 1962 British Commonwealth & Empire Games (“The British Commonwealth”, 1958).

Sir Thomas Meagher, a past president of the RAC, president of the WA Olympic Federation and vice-president of the Games Association, writing to RAC members, stressed “the world will learn that here - on the shores of the Indian Ocean – is a city comparable with any in the world”, and although he did not mention how athletes and visitors would get to the incomparable city, the RAC would soon be able to use the impending Games to strengthen its lobbying for sealing the Eyre Highway.

Figure 28: RAC patrolmen preparing for 'Operation Eyre highway' in 1962



Source: RAC Archives

In early 1962 the RAC announced ‘Operation Eyre Highway’ that would operate for a month during the Games with all the state automobile clubs operating a common patrol service between Ceduna and Norseman. Advice was provided on the limited accommodation available during the crossing, and a lengthy list was advertised of spare parts that each motorist should carry. The RAC hoped that the Games, and the provision of patrol services, would remove the,

“... mental barrier to motorists thinking of driving from the eastern states to Western Australia” (“British Commonwealth Games” 1962, p. 16-17; “Eyre Highway”, 1962, p. 17; “The RAC Team”, 1962, p. 29).

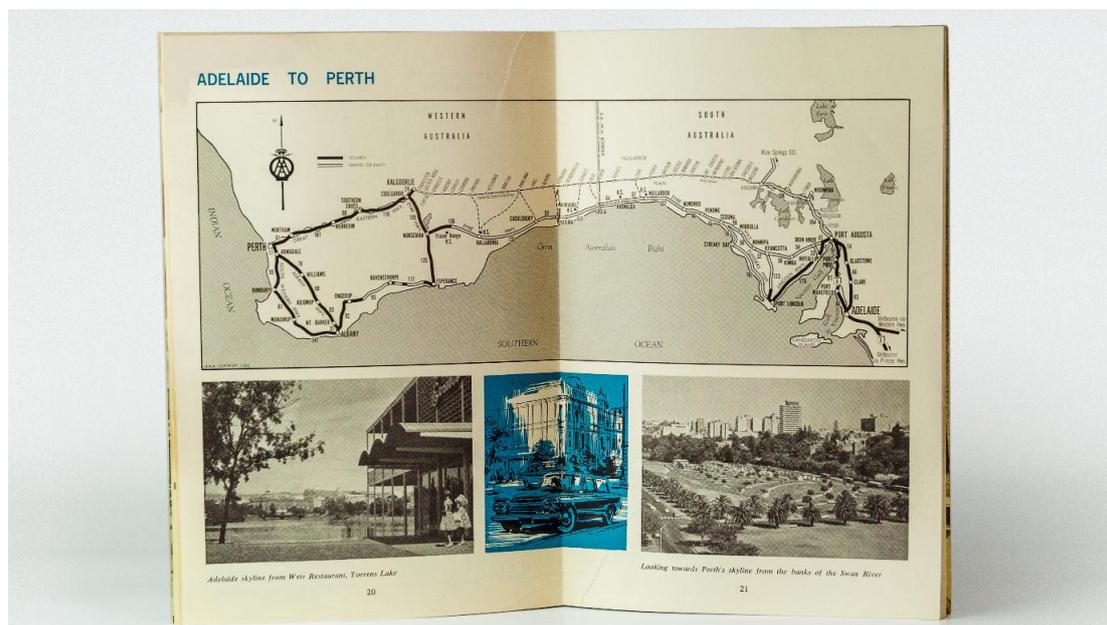
As planning for the Commonwealth Games proceeded, a new ‘mental barrier’ was put in place when the British government announced that citizens from Commonwealth countries such as Australia would, from 1 July 1962, need a visa to enter the UK (“Admission”, 1962). This would affect members who used the long-standing reciprocal rights held with the RAC in Britain and Ireland, and members who used the RAC shipping service to have their vehicles transported to or from Britain. The opportunity for taking up interstate membership with the RAC Australia in Sydney didn’t provide quite the same cachet (“Club Facilities”, 1962).



In tandem with the new visa requirements the British government initiated its first moves to join the European Common Market. It was assumed in Australia, at first, that this would include Commonwealth countries, leading to concerns within the AAA that Australia would be required to change from left to right hand driving. It was estimated this would cost £200 million in Britain, and the AAA president enumerated the many (and unpopular) changes that would be required in Australia including the likely increase in road crashes as drivers adjusted (“Left, or Right?”, 1962; “A Move to The Right”, 1962). However, when Britain’s first application to join the Common Market was rejected in 1963, the concerns about changing to right hand driving dissipated.²⁶

Figure 29: An internal page from the AAA's Eyre Highway Guide 1962

This guide was published in the lead up to the 1962 Commonwealth Games. This page includes a map of the route from Adelaide to Perth, and indicates which roads are unsealed.



Source: RAC Archives

The mental barrier of the Nullarbor was well and truly challenged during the Games months of November and December 1962. Operation Eyre Highway reported that 2,500 cars crossed eastwards or westwards over the 31-day period (usually, the daily average was 22 cars), over 400 had been helped due to various crashes, breakdowns and damage from pot holes (“Operation Eyre Highway”, 1963). Daily temperatures had reached 44°C, at times dust had reduced visibility on the highway to six metres, and the patrol men, in conjunction with St John Ambulance officers, had rendered medical assistance to motorists on numerous occasions. The eye-catching feats were many, but perhaps the more momentous event was a commitment by the State Minister for Works to sealing the Western Australian section of the highway by 1970 (“The Overland Route”, 1962).

²⁶ For the sequence of British applications to join the Common Market, see Baskerville, B. (2017). [The Chrysalid Crown](#): An un-national history of the Crown in Australia, 1808-1986 (p. 246) [PhD Thesis]. University of Sydney.

Sealing to the border was completed in a ceremony near Eucla by the premier, Sir David Brand, on 17 October 1969, attended by the RAC president Mr Vernon Fyfe (“Across the Continent”, 1969; “Rest Areas”, 1969). The Club claimed this as “an historic event to the RAC” and recited its serial campaigns for an all-weather crossing back to 1923.

The complete sealing of the Eyre Highway was scheduled for early 1976 when the South Australian section would be opened (“New’ Eyre Highway”, 1974). In October 1976 the sealing of the entire highway was complete, and the RAC, expecting a boom in overland motoring, issued a new map of the route that included distances and information on points of interest, insurance, petrol stops, journey preparation, firearms, and a history of the Eyre Highway (“Going by Eyre”, 1976).

At around the same time, new rules for the private importation of cars from overseas lead the RAC to conclude that, in effect, the new requirements would make such importation almost impossible (“Import Rules”, 1974). The shipping service was already in decline with the advent of containerisation, changed ship design, and cheaper air fares, and the final sealing of the Eyre Highway brought about its end in 1977 (“RAC Shipping”, 1974; “International Motoring”, 1977).

The RAC had skilfully linked the Commonwealth Games and the Eyre Highway to finally achieve a goal of an all-weather east-west highway, a goal stretching back to the 1930s and even earlier. It was a major achievement of continental significance for all motorists.

EMBRACING SEAT BELTS, SPEED LIMITS AND SOBER DRIVING

Knowledge of seat belts first came to the attention of Western Australian motorists in 1956 when the RAC reported on a debate in the United States on the merits of lap strap and shoulder harness seat belts, the various materials in which they were being made, and the methods by which they were attached to the car frame. It concluded that there was still much to research, but the combination lap and harness safety belt looked promising (“Safety Belts”, 1956).

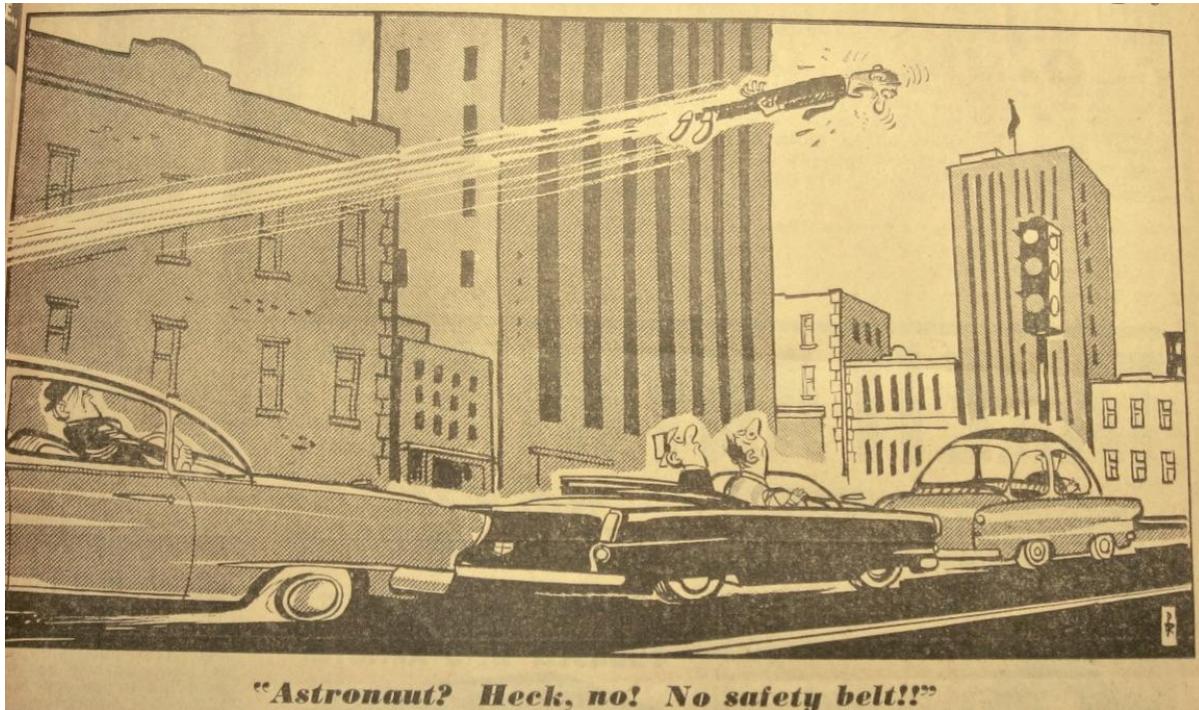
In the early 1960s the Club commissioned well-known local cartoonist Paul Rigby to produce topical cartoons for *The Road Patrol*, and in a 1962 issue a motorist was depicted shooting through the sky over motorists in downtown Perth with one remarking to the other “Astronaut? Heck no! No safety belt!!” (“Play it Safe”, 1962). At this moment, the first American astronauts to orbit the Earth had passed over Perth and, seeing the city glowing in the darkness, named it the City of Light (Gregory, 2003).

The value (and modernity) of seat belts was slowly starting to be recognised, and shortly after, the RAC published a list of safety belts that had been approved by the Standards Association of Australia (“Safety Belts”, 1962). Two caveats were included in the list: firstly, the list was gradually being extended as more belts were tested, so members intending to purchase seat belts should check with the RAC Technical Department for the most up-to-date list, and secondly each of the four basic designs had their advocates so it was important to only buy and install belts that had been tested and approved by the Standards Association. The RAC’s view was that educational



rather than scare campaigns were the best method to encourage seat belt usage, and it used both editorial and advertising space in *The Road Patrol* to this end.²⁷

Figure 30: Rigby cartoon linking road safety and seat belts with futuristic space travel



Source: (The Road Patrol, February 1962)

The growing importance of seat belts was emphasised in 1964 when the Club accepted its 100,000th member, Mrs DL Buffham of Mosman Park. In a presentation at the RAC offices, Mrs Buffham was presented with a picnic hamper and a set of seat belts. This was in conjunction with an Australia-wide campaign by automobile clubs to encourage the wearing of seat belts and overcome a prevalent view among drivers that crashes were unlikely to happen to them ("100,000 Strong", 1964; "Seat Belts Make Sense", 1964; "The 100,000th Member", 1964).

Despite encouraging seat belts, the RAC was at first opposed to compulsory use, taking the position in 1966 that AAA negotiations with the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries would result in their being fitted to all new models as standard equipment in return for the removal of seat belt sales tax ("Seat Belts", 1966). The Club argued that this approach would lead to further 'injury-protection features' being included in cars without increasing their sale price.

However, in 1970 the Club changed its policy to support compulsory seat belt wearing (RAC, c.1991). An amendment to the Western Australian Traffic Code in 1971 made the wearing of seat belts in cars, in which they were fitted, compulsory (with some exemptions such as reversing) ("Traffic Act", 1971).²⁸

²⁷ See for example, "Scare Safety Campaigns are "Ineffective"". (1962, Feb). *The Road Patrol*, p. 29.

²⁸ The requirement came into effect on 24 December 1971.

Figure 31: A member straps her baby into an RAC approved car-seat, c1975



Source: RAC Archives

By July 1978, 91% of cars in Western Australia had fitted seat belts, and 87% of drivers were wearing them. This partly reflects increasing enforcement after October 1976 when, due to reluctance by police to issue \$20 (\$130) infringements for not wearing seat belts, the penalty was reduced to \$10 (\$65), and both infringements and belt wearing increased (Milne, 1985).

With compulsion a fact, the Club's focus switched to having unapproved seat belts banned from the market. In 1973 it successfully lobbied the State government to ban unapproved seat belts and child restraints from 1974, as well as the re-sale of seat belts removed from cars, especially those from cars involved in motor crashes ("Bans Will Follow", 1974). From January 1975 manufacturers were required to fit retractable seat belts in all new cars, and at the end of the year the RAC surveyed members on the efficacy of the new seat belts ("National Survey", 1975).

A similar survey was conducted in 1977 on child restraints, which was coordinated with other State motoring bodies to collect national data on restraint usage and performance in car crashes ("RAC Launches Survey", 1977).²⁹ These surveys engaged drivers with increasing seat belt and child restraint effectiveness and are likely to have also played a significant role in increasing usage and reducing fatalities and injuries alongside increasing enforcement. By the mid-1970s, the

²⁹ Survey results and analysis in "Safety Survey Findings". (1978, Jun). *The Road Patrol*, 21.

reductions in motor fatalities were highest among young men aged between 17 and 29, with the greatest reductions in injuries to the head, spine and pelvis (Milne, 1985).

Looking back at the opening paragraph to this chapter illustrates the significance of these changes. All states in Australia made wearing seat belts compulsory between 1970 and 1972. This was a world-leading effort, with only Japan (1971), New Zealand (1972), and Singapore and rural France (1973) in the same pioneering era (“Seat Belt Legislation”, 2020).

At the same time the RAC opposed setting a uniform 65 mph (110 km/h) speed limit on country roads because, it argued, limits could not be enforced and instead advocated for local governments to be assisted by the State in surveying and developing route-specific speed zones on both highways and local roads. A uniform limit, it argued, encouraged drivers to speed up to the limit on roads neither surveyed nor engineered for such speeds, as had happened in a trial in England. Instead, the RAC wanted the government to take an “enlightened approach of scientific survey” before adopting maximum speed limits (“Speed Limits”, 1966).

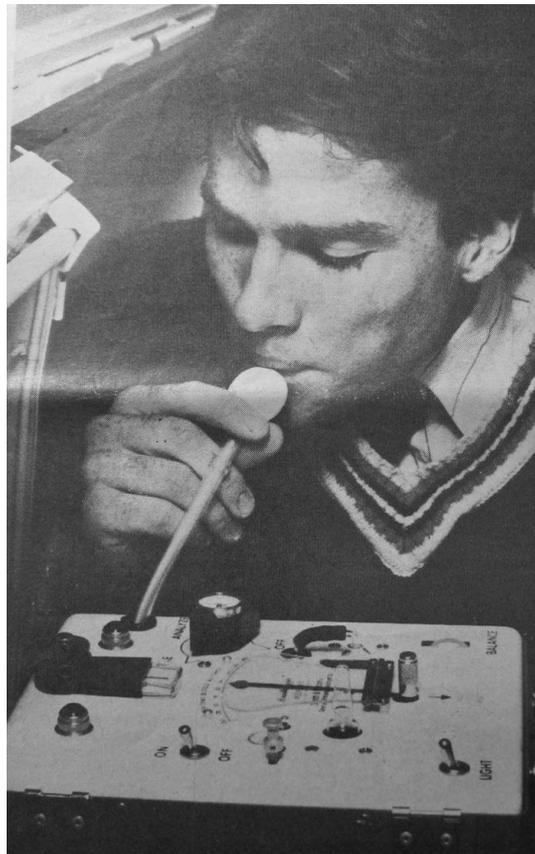
The RAC campaigned for the removal of the ‘de-restriction’ sign (a black circle and diagonal bar on a white field) and its replacement with a definite speed limit sign, arguing that fears by traffic authorities this would open them up to liability for crashes on roads unsuited to a particular limit simply showed the absurdity of ‘blanket limits’ (“Traffic Topics”, 1975, p. 3). By 1976, the Club was lobbying the Main Roads Department to install more speed limit signs so that drivers were aware of the limit, especially changing limits at intersections (“More Signs”, 1976). Essentially, the RAC held to its policy that more nuanced use of specific speed zones would produce better outcomes than a general limit of 110 kilometres per hour on country roads.

Despite concerns about speed limits, the RAC strongly supported efforts to control drink driving. Although an offence since 1919, proving a driver was drunk had long been a vexed issue. In 1974 the Club supported a proposal to require a driver to undergo a preliminary breath test where a traffic officer had reasonable grounds for believing the driver was under the influence of alcohol (“RAC Support”, 1974). Alcohol was a major factor in half to three-quarters of all severe and fatal crashes, and in the face of such statistics the RAC view was that the ‘reasonable grounds’ criterion was sufficient to preserve the civil rights of all drivers. The Club produced a book, *Drinking, Driving and You*, “for laymen”, in 1975 to explain the part alcohol plays in car crashes and marketed it to members as an ideal Christmas gift (“Drinking, Driving and You”, 1975, p. 15). Persuasion to bring about behavioural change remained as important to the RAC as legislative compulsion.

The Road Patrol carried a story in August 1978 on how a breathalyser worked, complete with pictures of a breath-testing van and a driver exhaling into a large complicated-looking machine (“The Breathalyser”, 1978). After describing the wieldy process, the story concluded with recent statistics on alcohol-related road fatalities, and the revelation that 45% of such fatalities occurred within five kilometres of the driver’s home due to the availability of local pubs, lapses in concentration and over confidence. After the nightmarish images and statistics, the Club heartily approved of the “persuasive approach to the problems of drinking and driving” in a new film released by the federal Minister for Transport to be used in schools and driver education courses (“The RAC View”, 1978, p. 2).



Figure 32: the price of drink driving - the new breathalyser machine



Source: (Road Patrol, August 1978, p. 1).

By 1980, the RAC was lobbying the Roads & Traffic Authority to include drink driving questions in the driver licence test and wanted education on alcohol impairment of driving included in the school health curriculum ("Seventy-Fifth Annual Report", 1980). However, it was less sanguine about a proposal to introduce random breath testing until it could be proven to be a more effective deterrent and argued that a professional study of drug affected driving was needed that could identify both provable effects and a practical test.

The Club's attitude to drink driving continued to harden, and in 1981 it stated its policy supported a six-month trial of reducing blood alcohol levels from 0.08 to 0.05, continued use of random breath testing, much more education of drivers on the effects of alcohol and other drugs on driving, and wider availability of low-alcohol drinks ("RAC in Drink Driving Talks", 1981).

MEMBERS AS CONSUMERS

The 1970s was a period that saw the emergence of the consumer, and ideas of consumer protection, as a major element in public policy. This can be partly seen through the development of the RAC's insurance business.

In 1960, following a survey of Club and insurance members by external management consultants, the management of the Club and the insurance business formally separated (RAC, c.1991). At the end of 1962 the insurance company sought to reassure members that it remained at their service. The company, it said, was “comprised of people who have banded together for mutual benefit and for this reason the Company endeavours, as far as possible, to accept insurances from people who observe the highest standards of motoring ... if, in the judgement of executives, [a member’s] record is bad, then his business is declined” (“This is Your Company”, 1962, p. 9). But an impression that the company had become a separate commercial entity was difficult to shake.

In 1965 the RAC needed to clarify for intending members that they did not have to be RAC insurance policyholders in order to be eligible for Club membership (“Membership and Vehicle Insurance”, 1965). While it did not consider this to be ‘common misapprehension’, it pointed out that insurance was a Club service taken up by seventy-five percent of all members, which “tends to speak for itself!”. That the ‘misapprehension’ needed to be addressed belied the casual dismissal of such perceptions. In the 1970s, the insurance business expanded in its scope and became available to a wider range of members.

From 1970 household insurance, under the brand name Homeguard, began to be developed, followed in 1973 by life insurance as agents for Security Life, under the brand name Lifeguard (RAC, c.1991; “Advertisement”, 1973). In the same year RAC Insurance began to sponsor daily airborne traffic reports. In 1977, RAC Insurance introduced its first policy for motorcycle and scooter insurance in response to increasing requests from members acquiring them for recreation or as a second vehicle (“RAC insurance”, 1977). The insurance company began investigating establishing a finance company in 1982, and in 1984 this came to fruition as RAC Finance Ltd., initially to provide loans to staff. By 1984 income from Homeguard exceeded one million dollars for the first time, and the following year both RAC Insurance and the Club begin accepting Visa and Bankcard payments (RAC, c.1991).

Insurance was one means of providing protection for members, but the introduction of the Federal Trade Practices Act in 1975 opened a new area of services. At first, the Club worked through the AAA to try and reduce the costs of spare parts, warn against alleged fuel-saving devices, publicise the rights of car buyers and limits in second-hand vehicle warranties (“Annual Report”, 1975). Western Australian-specific issues also came within the Club’s purview, such as the difficulties for car buyers in obtaining clear information on the title to a vehicle (“Title Dilemma”, 1977). Other advantages for members as consumers soon became apparent when in 1977 the Trade Practices Commission ruled building societies could no longer direct borrowers to a specified insurer, and RAC Insurance was quick to announce that its Homeguard policy could reduce the cost of home insurance for members with building society home loans by up to 39% (“At Last!”, 1977).

Figure 33: RAC Insurance office in Adelaide Terrace 1970s

The Lifeguard and Homeguard branding are on display.



Source: RAC Archives

Consumer protection issues for motorists became increasingly important, with matters including the importation of low quality or rejected tyres from the US, purchasing second-hand motorcycles, complaints about defects in new cars, testing the poor quality and limited value of rust-prevention products, advocating on behalf of members in warranty disputes, and from 1977 a policy of not accepting advertising in *The Road Patrol* for products and services it would not recommend (“Seventy-Second Annual Report”, 1977). However, it was in a newly emerging area that the RAC became more prominent in championing motorists as consumers.

THE RISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

Air pollution, or rather responding to it, became a problem for motorists in the early 1970s when the Federal government announced it would introduce controls on vehicle emissions. The RAC, while acknowledging there was a need to reduce air pollution, argued that adopting the proposed American standards would increase fuel use, increase car costs and reduce engine performance, among other things (“1976 Will be a Great Year for Lemons”, 1974). A 1975 proposal shortly after

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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to reduce the lead content in petrol was also opposed by the RAC, on similar grounds (“The RAC View”, 1975). The Club argued it would reduce engine performance and increase fuel prices, and that reducing airborne lead would have negligible health benefits. These were new issues for motorists, and after initial reactions it took some time for the Club’s position to evolve.

A 1978 report from the United States cast doubts on the energy efficiency of mass rapid transport systems as passengers still travelled by car to and from stations (“Rapid Transit”, 1978). At the same time, a Federal National Energy Advisory Committee reported on number of proposals for increased energy research and development to reduce growing dependence on imported crude oil and ensure that energy resources were used to good effect given the crisis in world energy supplies (“\$27 Million More”, 1978). Research needed to be directed to increasing “indigenous liquid fuels” through exploration, production of synthetic fuels including the economic and environmental aspects of such production, the use of alternative fuels for transport including coal powered electricity and solar energy for non-transport options, and improvements in the production and use of coal.

In 1980, as locally sourced crude oil reserves began to decline, the Federal government introduced parity pricing, making oil produced in Australia the same price as imported oil. Although initially opposed by the AAA, once in place the motoring bodies began to see parity pricing as important in achieving energy conservation and the development of alternatives, as well as promoting more oil exploration in Australia. They lobbied for the establishment of a research body to achieve these objectives funded by the revenue raised through parity pricing (“Use Oil Levy”, 1980).

At the same time the RAC was participating with the State Energy Commission in evaluating the trial performance of Daihatsu electric van and whether it could meet the challenge from the diesel engine (“RAC Looks”, 1978). The evaluation revealed competing views within the RAC. *The Road Patrol* editor was emphatic that the private car would remain the cornerstone of society, and a national energy program was needed to develop new fuel sources (“Car is Here To Stay”, 1978). Despite efforts in electric motive power, the internal combustion engine would remain dominant, assisted by reductions in the weight and size of cars and improvements in transport planning. On the other hand, the lengthy evaluation of the electric van by the RAC Chief Engineer Don Pitcher in the same issue concluded that while electric power was not yet economically competitive with petrol power in cars,

“The future costs of fossil fuels will dramatically change this comparison even if further development does not improve the economics, and the day is not far away when the electric car will have the edge. Perhaps even at this stage there should be some encouragement towards the use and development of electric vehicles” (“After Petrol”, 1978, p. 9, 13).

While the limited range, and the weight of the batteries, were the main problems with the electric van, Pitcher argued that electric cars had been around since the 1930s, if not earlier, but cheap fossil fuels had suppressed the incentive to develop them further. This was now changing, and electric motors had the ultimate advantage of being quiet, simple and non-polluting.



Figure 34: RAC's experimental electric van and its battery pack c1979

The original SEC Daihatsu electric van (right), and the full battery pack of another experimental Daihatsu electric vehicle, the 'Silent Power', withdrawn for display (left), both c1979.



Source: RAC Archives

In mid-1979, during Western Australia's sesquicentenary celebrations, the RAC made a major submission to the State Energy Advisory Council's inquiry into energy use in transport ("Oil Supply", 1979). While acknowledging "some confidence [in] moves being made by electric vehicles into light commercial and to a lesser extent commuter roles", and that hydrogen power would be a contender in the next century, the Club mainly argued for fuel conservation in the short term and for alternative liquid fuels in the medium term such as oil from coal, methanol or petrol from natural gas or coal, shale oil production and ethanol. There was scope for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) use in cars, but the lack of outlets severely restricted its use in Western Australia, and refineries were shamefully wasteful in 'flaring off' gas.

The Club had somewhat softened its opposition to vehicle emission controls, agreeing that small vehicles may be able to meet the new standards with little loss of fuel economy, but fuel consumption increases of between seven and 20 percent remained the case for large vehicles, and it was unconvinced there was a real pollution problem outside Sydney and Melbourne where much fuel was wasted in traffic congestion. Improving traffic flows was a better solution to that problem.

The Club continued to believe that diesel passenger cars were a cleaner and more efficient option that should be encouraged. In the longer term, the RAC argued for electrification of urban railways, rationalisation of air transport to fly fully loaded planes, the use of coal or a coal/oil mix as bunker fuel for ships, and the accelerated research and development of solar appliances. The

Club was also sceptical that oil exploration off the west and north-west coasts would provide commercial quantities of crude oil without astronomical costs. A major part of the response to these issues, argued the RAC, was that public awareness leading to reduced fuel consumption through education and market tactics was critical to changing attitudes.

The submission represented a major investment of time, research, and intellectual activity by the RAC in setting out a view on one of the most serious public policy issues of the time, as seen through the motorist's eye. Two major issues were apparent, air pollution (much of it from increasing petrol consumption) and declining oil supplies (perceived at the time to be from exhausting oil fields but also arising from political tensions in the Middle East such as the Iranian revolution).

The Club advocated an approach of conservation and reducing oil and petrol use to make the supply last longer, not unlike war time petrol rationing, although through persuasion of drivers rather than compulsion, as well as much better design and construction of vehicles and roads. Action, for the Club, was to be focused on educating members and motorists generally on ways to reduce fuel consumption, such as limiting use of air conditioners in cars, keeping cars well-tuned, not carrying around heavy objects, and using radial tyres at the correct air pressure.³⁰ The Club acknowledged air pollution was a problem as such, but was reluctant to accept it was a problem in Perth, and did not at this stage see any link between air pollution and the use of fossil motor fuels.

RAC maintained its opposition to emission controls, and to proposals in 1981 for stronger controls, as this would force the use of catalytic converters which in turn would lead to the removal of lead from petrol and increased costs for motorists. The Club remained sceptical that atmospheric lead pollution was a problem other than in "a few square kilometres in Sydney" and was successful in gaining State government support for this position ("Exhaust Emissions", 1981, p. 2; "WA Queries", 1981, p. 1). It nevertheless reported favourably on a trial petrol/ethanol blend being produced from sugar in Queensland, which included a potential lead-free ethanol/petrol blend, and supported a study of ethanol produced from sugar cane in the Ord River area ("Running Sweetly", 1981). However, the times were against leaded petrol. Despite claims by the petroleum industry about increasing costs, the Federal government required all new vehicles made or imported into Australia by 1986 to be designed to run on lead-free petrol ("Health vs Conservation", 1982; McFarlane & Cass, 1985).

Developments in electric motor technology continued to be followed by the RAC, with the development of sodium sulphur batteries more than doubling the range of an electric motor and reducing the battery weight by one fifth compared to lead acid batteries, predicted to be on the market by 1985 ("More Range", 1980). In 1980 *The Road Patrol* reported on a service station in Guyra NSW that had installed a hot water and air conditioning system with auxiliary LPG support. It was claimed the use of such renewable energy sources could reduce Australia's expensive reliance on non-renewable oil, LPG, and coal. This was the first time in a *Road Patrol* story that a link was made between energy or fuels and renewable sources.

³⁰ For example, "Club Backs Fuel Saving Campaign". (1979, Dec). *The Road Patrol*, p. 1. "Reasons for Poor Fuel Economy". (1979, Dec). *The Road Patrol*, p. 5.

Figure 35: The new RAC Head Office building, circa 1980



Source: RAC Archives

At the same time, plans were announced for a five-storey extension to the RAC offices in Adelaide Terrace, which would involve demolition of the historic original offices purchased in 1925, but the addition of a number of new building features, notably roof-top solar water heaters, reductions in the extent of glass windows to reduce radiant heat, and decreased energy use on air conditioning through better management (“Solar Energy’s Role”, 1979). The new building was completed by late 1980.

Reports in *The Road Patrol* on various alternatives to petrol continued over the next few years, but a study by Shell seemed to encapsulate the prevailing views: petrol would still be the dominant fuel by the year 2000, and the computerisation of cars would bring significant benefits in fuel economy and reducing emissions with only the remotest chance of electric batteries and fuel cells having any impact (“Shell Predicts Fuel Future”, 1981). Even so, the State branch of the Australian Electric Vehicle Association remained optimistic, and through both the State Energy Commission and Fremantle Port Authority, working with a ‘small engineering company at Kewdale’ and its managing director Terry Jackson, was building and refining experimental electric vehicles. They could now travel as far as Bunbury, were emissions-free, and good enough to persevere with (“Research Grants”, 1981).

The quest for fuel conservation was also evident in numerous other RAC-supported activities. The recycling of used motor oil was featured in a Road Patrol story on Western Oil & Refining in Bellevue where spent motor oils were recycled for re-use in motor engines (“Re-cycled Oil Saves”, 1978). Although the story emphasised the savings this created in the costs of importing oil, it also acknowledged that the company’s process was a closed system that emitted no atmospheric pollution. The main problem was obtaining local supplies of used oil, and the refinery only operated at one third its capacity.

The RAC participated in a working party in 1980 studying the feasibility of LPG as a replacement for petrol (“LP Gas”, 1980). The study found that LPG was cheaper, was not reliant on an overseas source, engines ran more smoothly, and it was lead free and had low hydrocarbon and carbon monoxide emissions. On the other hand, it required a more sophisticated distribution and storage system, took up more storage space and weight in a car, was highly inflammable, and car use needed to justify the high costs of conversion. The study concluded that, while LPG was the most feasible substitute for motor spirit, the limited distribution network and costs of conversion made it neither economic nor feasible.

The recycled oil and LPG issues both demonstrated a major problem in Western Australia, a lack of distribution networks for such new products and a lack of economic incentives for such networks to develop. The focus on individual projects or firms obscured the need for larger holistic approaches.

The interest in alternative energy sources continued, with stories mainly from the United States on hydrogen fuels for cars and reducing carbon monoxide emissions by a 90/10 blend of petrol, and denatured alcohol (“Hydrogen Power”, 1979). A consequence of the fuel shortages and rising prices was a proliferation of fuel saving devices on the market, but extensive testing by the RAC showed none of these products substantiated their manufacturer’s claims (“RAC Checks”, 1980).

Another consequence was a predicted change in caravanning and camping, with rising fuel costs reducing frequent travel between camping grounds and instead encouraging longer stays with less car travel, and a demand for improved toilet and washing facilities as drivers opted for smaller caravans without such facilities (“The Future”, 1980). Another sign of the times was the first recorded decline in the number of maps issued due to higher fuel prices, also evidenced by the number of inquiries being received by RAC Travel from members planning driving holidays on fuel costs for various routes (“Seventy-Fifth Annual Report”, 1980).

Shortly after the sealing of the Eyre Highway in 1976, a new map was produced for the ‘desert route’ between Perth and Alice Springs via Warburton, with advice on tools and spare parts to carry, avoiding travel in summer, availability of petrol stations, and obtaining Aboriginal Lands Trust permits before departure (“Perth to Alice”, 1977). The RAC’s XY Falcon panel van mapping and survey vehicle was sent to test the route. This tour was in response to the “new motorist emerging” who wished to get away from tourist routes, often in a four-wheel drive vehicle. From this time road tests of, and advertising in *The Road Patrol* for four-wheel drives began to increase, and in 1978 the Club made a submission to the State government on an Off-Road Vehicles Bill (“Seventy-Third Annual Report”, 1978).



Figure 36: RAC mapping vehicle on the road between Lake King and Norseman, 1974



Source: RAC Archives

The Club agreed with the 'general concept' of protecting the environment and the public, but the main problem it saw with the Bill was that it would prevent responsible drivers reaching their picnic, fishing and recreational spots, and it granted too much authority to rangers and inspectors to stop and inspect off-road vehicles. In response, the government agreed to redraft the Bill. Nevertheless, the Club was not happy with the *Control of Vehicles (Off Road Areas) Act* when it came into effect in 1979, claiming that 'over-zealous' officers with no mechanical knowledge would be seriously inconveniencing people driving off-road ("RAC Concerned", 1979).

In the event, the Act applied to a fairly limited areas of coastal Crown Land between Jurien Bay and Augusta, did not apply to registered vehicles such as four-wheel drives, required non-registered vehicles to conform to safety and noise regulations, and prohibited driving of such vehicles by children under the age of eight years. It provided for areas to be restricted for the sole use of mini-bikes, dune buggies or trail bikes, which were the real focus of the legislation. The RAC decided it could live with these fairly minimal restrictions and urged members to "always respect private property and environmentally critical locations like coastal areas and forests" ("Off-road", 1980, p. 22).

Other responses by the Club to environmental change are evident in stories in *The Road Patrol* such as a 1977 story on how to survive a bushfire in your car, given the lack of rain contributing to increased bush fire risks (“Don’t Run”, 1977). This became something of a perennial theme.³¹ The spread of dieback in the jarrah forests lead the RAC to issue a warning to motorists that soil caught in tyres could be a vector for the disease, and the new quarantine areas that would be imposed on large areas of forests and road closures would soon be shown on its maps (“Jarrah Disease”, 1975).

LOOKING AHEAD

The Road Patrol, in the lead up to the 1983 State election, carried for the first time the views of the rival Liberal/County Party and Labor Party leaders, Ray O’Connor and Brian Burke, on transport issues (“State Election”, 1983). Both focused on increasing funding for roads, reducing petrol prices, and continuing drink driving campaigns, with the only real difference being Labor’s commitment to review the financial performance and premiums of the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust. The technological developments in car design and efficiencies and alternatives in fuel use had reduced demand for petrol and coupled with over-production in oil-producing countries lead to surplus of cheaper oil by the mid-1980s. Petrol conservation had slipped off the agenda.

Issues that had preoccupied the RAC since its formation had been replaced in the 1970s with new worries. Motorists became consumers of motoring products. Safety became a matter of improving design and material quality as much as driver behaviour, although the RAC was at the forefront in showing behaviours could also be modified with the right approaches. The environmental impacts of motoring, and ideas of the natural environment as more than natural beauty, caused some confusion but the Club grappled with this challenge, sometimes looking to the past for solutions, but also experimenting with new solutions, and seeking to obtain the best value for members and motorists generally in a rapidly changing world. The impact that vehicles powered by electricity, and the significance of solar powered energy, were not yet apparent (other than to the aficionados), but the RAC was an important agent in nurturing this focus. The 1980s promised some good times, but for the RAC, managing risks on behalf of its members would be essential to survival in ways never previously experienced.

The impending America’s Cup in 1987 contained the potential for a wave of eastern states tourists crossing the Eyre Highway, and a new map was produced showing the highway and alternative routes including four-wheel drive tracks, points of interests and a new feature, LPG outlets, for which drivers were advised to check the distances between outlets before attempting the journey (“Updated Eyre”, 1986). Planning the way ahead would be crucial in the coming years.

³¹ For example, “Bushfire! A Guide to Survival”. (1982, Oct). *The Road Patrol*, p. 16.

CHAPTER 5: CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES – SAFETY AND UNCERTAINTY | 1986-1998

“It seems that most organisations, big or small, are undergoing ‘change’. It is a simple word, and we all know what it means but when it is applied to your organisation it can create much fear of the unknown. I can tell you that your Club is undergoing internal change to ensure that members are provided with the best service available. At the same time there are some exciting technological changes which the RAC [is] closely monitoring” (Colin O’Sullivan, on being elected RAC president, Road Patrol, February March 1998).

The decade from the late 1980s to the late 1990s was a challenging time for the RAC WA. In many ways this short period was something of a bridge that maintained links with the valued older ways but also highlighted the need for change. Deciding what should be retained and what should be jettisoned was difficult. However, in hindsight, it provided a necessary prelude to the renewal that would come with the new millennium and enabled the Club to plan for its long-term future.

CONTINUITIES IN SAFETY

The focus on safety of drivers, their passengers, and road users generally, is one of the ‘long stories’ running through the Club’s history, and this period is no exception. The most innovative event was the formation by the combined State automobile clubs and State traffic agencies in 1992 of the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) (“NCAP”, 1993; “The RAC View”, 1993; ANCAP, 2025). Under the scheme, new cars were tested by ANCAP, with the results published in the *Road Patrol* and other motoring publications to provide independent advice to consumers, dealers and regulators.

The tests were based on five standard criteria to rate a car’s safety as either Poor, Marginal, Acceptable or Good. The system has evolved since that time, but it provided for the first time a commonly accepted measure of vehicle safety. The ANCAP ratings made it clear that new car design needed to have a greater focus on safety features. This had been a common refrain from the RAC for many years, with its preference for improved design over regulation. The results were not always comfortable for car manufacturers, and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries objected to the whole program (“NCAP”, 1993).

New safety measures introduced during this period include air bags, which began appearing in vehicles in the early 1990s (Department of Infrastructure & Regional Development, 2015). The first air bags were not always reliable, and the Club’s view from its own testing was that, although useful, air bags were not a replacement for seat belts. The potential for air bags to be unexpectedly released, not released when needed, or even to cause injuries when inflating, made many drivers fearful of them. In 1999 they were subject to ANCAP testing. This concluded that while there was scope for improvement, they would become increasingly important in vehicle safety (“Motorists Fear Air Bags”, 1998; “Crash tests”, 1999).

Another initiative was the RAC School Safety Program, which commenced in metropolitan schools in 1989, and was extended to country schools in 1997 (“Annual Report”, 1993). This emphasis on education and training brought the Club into contact with future drivers and road users. It also formalised a number of similar programs that had been trialled over the years, including the RAC driver training school launched at the beginning of 1988 (“RAC Launches”, 1988; “A Quality

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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Services”, 1993). It also emphasised the value of using popular culture references in reaching new audiences with road safety messaging, perhaps most notably at the time the reporting in the *Road Patrol* on the death of Diana, Princess of Wales on 31 August 1997 as a poignant reminder of the dangers of speeding and driving (“Comment”, 1997).

The Club’s attitude to drink driving also continued to harden during this period. For example, in 1987 it announced its support for the Random Breath Testing (RBT) of drivers. It cited the effect of RBT in New South Wales, which had demonstrated a strong link between drink-driving and road crashes, noting, “the social acceptability of drink-driving was profoundly affected by this demonstration.” This had shown the effect that:

“RBT can have in changing or increasing public perceptions of the seriousness of the offence. In effect, this is a part of the process of changing social attitudes concerning drink driving.”
 (“The RAC View”, 1997, p. 2).

In the lead up to Christmas 1995 a *Road Patrol* reporter joined the police operating a ‘booze bus’ location in the suburbs and painted a picture of the levels of intoxication still considered acceptable by some drivers and the excuses and evasions they offered in their defence (“Booze Busters”, 1995/96). The story made it clear that the RBT program, in removing such dangerous drivers, was actively helping reduce road crashes and their attendant injuries and fatalities, and that this was being done with the support and encouragement of the RAC. It was in driver’s own hands to change their behaviour and attitudes towards drinking and driving.

As with its support for ANCAP, air bags, school safety and driver training programs, the RAC was playing a significant role in bringing about behavioural change in its members. This was a change that benefited them personally and socially as members of the broader community. The success of such approaches was confirmed in late 1997 when it was reported in *Road Patrol* that the use of speed and red-light cameras (along with RBT and other measures) had significantly reduced speeding and fatalities by forty percent since 1988 (“Silent Traffic Cops”, 1996/97). For this reason, the RAC would continue to support such road safety measures.

However, during this time the Club’s preference for improved road design over increased regulation of driver behaviour as another key factor in improving road safety, led it to become a public commentator on metropolitan freeway proposals, albeit with more mixed outcomes than its safety programs. Following the hosting of the America’s Cup in 1987, the Club became involved in several controversial issues. These included the future of the Old Swan Brewery buildings on Mounts Bay Road. The Club opposed a proposal from the State government to allow the building to be redeveloped by property developer Multiplex for a brewery and hotel, which it argued would attract,

“... large numbers of young people who flock to such outlets, and this situation will make the problems created at the Nedlands Park Hotel fade into insignificance” (“The Brewery Saga”, 1987, p. 2-3).



Figure 37: Aerial photograph of the Old Swan Brewery site, 1988



Source: RAC Archives

The Nedlands Park Hotel or ‘Steve’s’ was a popular university student venue at the time and suffered from overcrowding due to a relative paucity of suitable hotels in the area. In the relation to the Old Swan Brewery site, the RAC WA noted that over 400 crashes had occurred on this section of the road in the previous four years, and 14 fatalities in the preceding twenty years. The Club argued the buildings were an eyesore, that few were historical, their restoration would create a dangerous traffic hazard, and overall motorists would be inconvenienced, and their safety put at stake.

Two years later in 1989 the Club president and CEO presented their views to the Minister for Planning, with a more focused argument stating that, “almost every organisation with an interest in road safety has opposed the project ... the people who use Mounts Bay Road are those whose views should be paramount.” (“The RAC View”, 1989, p. 2). The site was ultimately redeveloped after 1992 as a low-key restaurant and function centre, consistent to some degree with the Club’s views (“Old Swan Brewery Precinct”, 2024).

As the Brewery issue was subsiding, the Club made a submission to the State government on a proposal to delete the Fremantle Eastern Bypass road reservation from the 1963 Metropolitan Region Scheme. The Club was “appalled” when the Minister for Planning decided in October 1992 to delete the reserve at the urging of local Fremantlites and their city council (“The Bypass Blues”, 1993).³² The Club argued that the deletion removed the potential to connect the Stephenson-Reid-Roe highways ring road around Perth, and that the Minister had made the wrong decision, “against the interests of the inhabitants of Perth in general, and adjacent municipalities in particular.”

The Club’s argument was more firmly based in traffic design and projected traffic volumes than it had been with the brewery site, but it was unable to persuade the government to change its mind. The bypass reserve was reinstated by a new Liberal government in 1994, and again removed in 2004 by a Labor government, despite a more muted opposition from the Club that it should be retained to keep options open (“Bypass Reservation”, 2003). In 2003 a letter published in *Road Patrol* from a member opposing the RAC lobbying for the bypass at the expense of better rail and public transport in the metropolitan area signalled changes in the role of the Club as a freeways champion (“Mailbox”, 2003).

In mid-1995 another controversial project with its roots in the 1963 Scheme came to public prominence with the announcement of the Northbridge Bypass Tunnel project (“Bypass for the 21st Century”, 1995). The tunnel was part of the larger Graham Farmer Freeway project, and in 1996, the Club’s representatives attended a presentation by Main Roads WA on the new high-tech safety measures planned for the tunnel, and the various options for its route and construction (“Bypass for the 21st Century”, 1995).

The new safety measures were impressive, but road tunnels were a new phenomenon in Perth and questions around safety continued to be publicly prominent. In 1999, as the tunnel was nearing completion, an article in the *Road Patrol* questioned just how safe the tunnel would be, especially during an in-tunnel crash, and later that year just before the tunnel was opened another article identified the emergency alternatives to using the tunnel (“Northbridge”, 1999; “Northbridge Tunnel”, 1999/2000).

From 1987 to 1999 there was a distinct change in the Club’s approach to road safety and freeway design. This shifted from the scattergun approach that occurred in relation to the Old Swan Brewery site, to a more focused approach on road safety and projected traffic volumes with the Fremantle Bypass. Both issues involved critical, but not especially productive, attitudes towards

³² For a detailed history of the Fremantle Eastern Bypass, see Gaynor, A. (2017). “A History of Roe 8 and the Perth Freight Link, 1955-2017”, in Gaynor, A., Newman P., and Jennings P. (eds), *Never Again: Reflections on Environmental Responsibility After Roe 8* (p. 11-14). Crawley: UWAP.

the State government's policies. Yet the direction was towards a clear focus on the safety of motorists with respect to the Northbridge tunnel, and engagement with Main Roads WA rather than direct public criticism of the government.

However, one aspect of the tunnel project attracted comment from the RAC that would prove counterproductive when it suggested the government should look to increased private sector involvement in road construction and cited the example of Sydney's new M2 motorway which was leased to a private company that collected tolls from road users ("Comment", 1997/98). The RAC had adopted a policy generally critical of toll roads in 1993, only to be used as a last resort or interim measure ("RAC Policy", 1993). This was not a matter of road safety, and feedback from the members would ensure that any support for toll roads, no matter how conditional, was not acceptable and it did not remain RAC policy for very long.

In a similar vein there was an unfortunate suggestion by the Club president in 1997 for the use of 'S' plates on cars driven by people above a certain age to try and alleviate road rage against older drivers, a suggestion that was hastily retracted with apologies for inadvertently upsetting so many members, and confirmation that it was neither RAC policy nor the RAC's intention to promote the idea! ("From the President", 1997a; "From the President", 1997b).

GOING OFF-ROAD

The 'fit' between road safety and freeway design had gradually come apart during the period, but a less bumpy road appeared to be in the offing with the continuing growth in recreational four-wheel drive vehicles from the mid-1970s, and the whole idea of going 'off-road', the very antithesis of orderly and controlled metropolitan freeway driving.

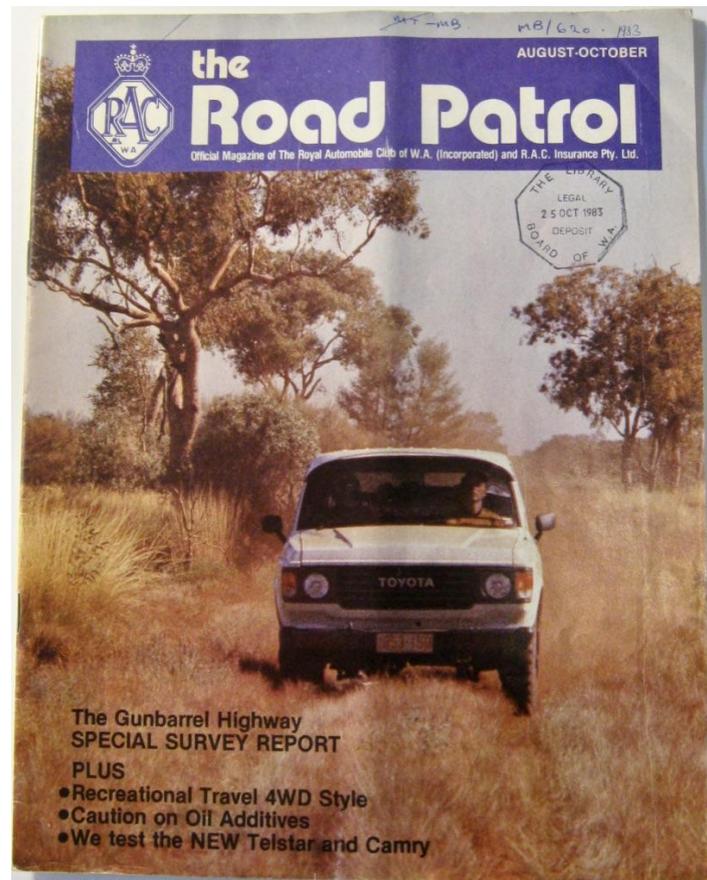
During the Club's early days, driving on rough tracks and unmade roads was part of every driver's experience, whatever their vehicle, but as road construction and maintenance improved and cars developed as distinctly domestic or urban vehicles separately to working and commercial vehicles, 'off-road' travel became a more niche or specialised activity.

During World War Two the American army Jeep became the first mass-produced four-wheel drive vehicle and was widely used by Allied forces. At the end of the war many were disposed of and purchased by farmers, among others. In 1947 the Rover company in England began producing the Land Rover, heavily influenced by the Jeep design, as a British version especially for the Australian and African markets.

The launch of the Range Rover in 1969 initiated the rapid expansion of comfortable on and off-road vehicles, and by the early 1980s the *Road Patrol* featured a Toyota Landcruiser four-wheel drive comfortably cruising the rugged Gunbarrel Highway in the arid interior (see Figure 38). With its promise of freedom from road rules, signs and law enforcement, the trend to off-road driving in comfort was well underway.



Figure 38: The first 4WD featured on a Road Patrol cover confirmed a new way of motoring



Source: (Road Patrol August-October 1983).

Over the next decade the *Road Patrol* carried numerous illustrated articles, and sometimes maps, on adventurous routes and journeys suited to four-wheel drives. These included the Gunbarrel Highway, Canning Stock Route, a Bremer Bay to Hopetoun route, the Eyre Highway, Northern Jarrah Forest touring, survival and off-road touring, and the Leeuwin Way. Articles also included recreational four-wheel driving tips, buying the 'right' four-wheel drive, the 'western circle' route through the deserts and the north-west, and four-wheel driving safaris through RAC Travel.

Additional features focused on wildflower touring through the Midlands, the Albany Coast, four-wheel driving in the Yeagerup Dunes, the Gibb River Road in the Kimberley, sand dune driving on the Turquoise Coast, off-road driving skills, driving D'Entrecasteaux National Park, and touring the breakaways of the Midwest. These stories were complemented by articles on caravanning and camping, with advice on topics such as how to tow a caravan, camping equipment, caravan and boat insurance, and caravan and camping parks, as well as stories on how to cope with the increasing number of road trains, B-Double 'road freight giants', and other heavy vehicles, especially on unsealed remote roads.

Four-wheel drive vehicles also increasingly featured in RAC road test assessments, although in 1995 ANCAP tested both four-wheel drives and small passenger vans, concluding neither was particularly safe and there was much scope for improvement (mainly due to each having a higher centre of gravity with increased roll-over risks). Despite the Club's occasional warning not to rush into buying a four-wheel drive without understanding the pros and cons, the RAC's long history of advising motorists on road conditions and helping plan road tour itineraries stood it in good stead to provide guidance on the increasingly ubiquitous four-wheel drive vehicles and preferences by drivers for 'adventure' driving and touring well away from formed roads.

As the risks associated with driving became better understood and managed in populated areas, and crash and fatality rates began to decline, a desire to escape the safety and security and perhaps sense of surveillance, even if only for short periods, seem to be manifested in the off-road phenomenon. The Club's guidance and advice helped members and drivers generally develop the skills for driving in such areas and also made the availability of off-road driving areas better known, thus maintaining its role in helping members in their adventures with some degree of safety. Yet it was not all plain sailing, with criticisms from members on the Turquoise Coast for encouraging uncontrolled four-wheel driving in the sand dunes around their sequestered shack settlements ("Letter", 1996).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, LEAD AND TAXES

The environmental impacts of off-road driving were not entirely unknown at the time, but the RAC was attempting to come to terms with environmental issues in another arena associated with motor vehicles, air pollution, and especially the issue of unleaded petrol.³³ The Club had opposed the reduction of lead in petrol since 1975, generally on the basis that fuel prices would rise and the risks associated with lead were negligible.

However, by the mid-1980s, reductions in lead content were becoming a reality, and the Club began to adapt to the new situation. With all new cars designed to be capable of running on unleaded fuels from 1985, the *Road Patrol* featured stories for readers on the differences between leaded and unleaded fuels, identifying the vehicles and models that could use unleaded fuels, explaining the use of catalytic converters that removed toxic pollutants from exhaust gases and their incompatibility with leaded fuels, and the gradually increasing but uneven spread of unleaded fuel outlets in service stations ("What You Should Know", 1985; "Existing Vehicles", 1985; "Living With ULP", 1986; "ULP Supplies", 1986).

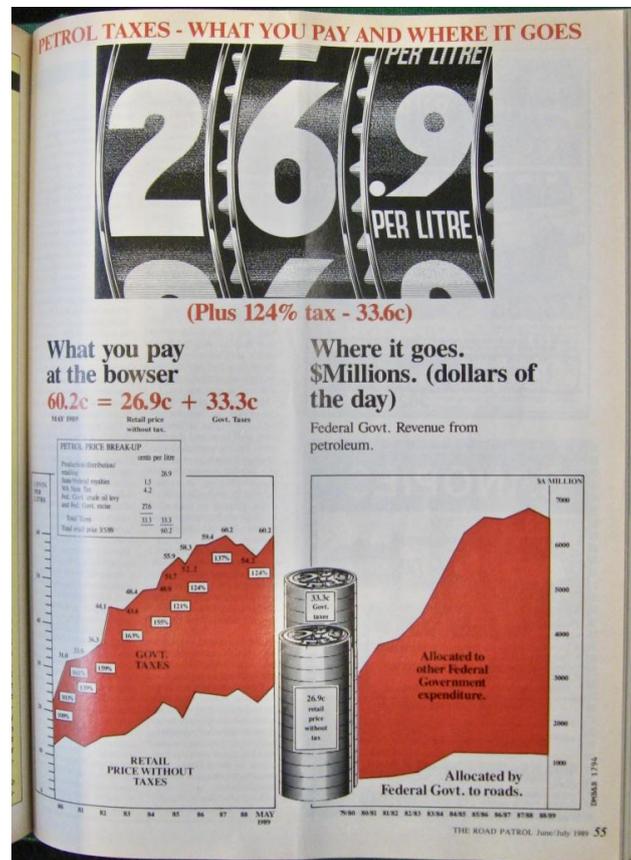
From the early 1990s the Club's environmental interests increasingly expanded after it tackled the issue of replacing ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in car air conditioners ("CFCs in Car", 1990). This preceded the adoption in early 1991 by the RAC of a comprehensive environmental strategy developed by the AAA ("RAC's Environmental Strategy", 1991). The key element focused on improving fuel efficiency to reduce greenhouse gases, with a target of reducing average fuel consumption in new cars from nine litres per 100 kilometres to six litres per 100 kilometres by the year 2000.

³³ See for example, *Off-Road Vehicles Impact on the Australian Environment*. (1977). Third Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation March 1977. Canberra: AGPS.



Figure 39: Anti-petrol tax advertisement 1980s

This which regularly updated to show the increasing take by the government of taxes raised on motorists.



Source: (Road Patrol, June July 1989, p. 55)

The Club also pledged to support education of motorists on ways to reduce the environmental impacts of their cars. This included greater integration of private and public transport with land use and environmental planning, traffic management (including road design) initiatives to reduce fuel consumption and emissions, road design measures to reduce noise levels, and roadside landscaping to preserve native flora and fauna. Although the RAC CEO argued that environmental controls needed to be balanced with personal, freight and industry needs, he acknowledged that motor vehicles were a major source of environmental concern.

Some of the priorities were long-standing for the RAC, such as reducing fuel consumption, supporting the retention of wild vegetation on roadsides, and good design and construction of highways, while others such as reducing road noise levels and greenhouse gas reductions were more novel. Many of the RAC's actions over the 1990s were consistent with this strategy. For example, the Club produced a 'green driver' guide, gave advice on comparing LPG and unleaded petrol, discussed air pollution problems within older cars, and engine problems with unleaded petrol.

It also supported the State government's 'Smoky Cars' campaign and advocated for a range of changes within the design and manufacture of motor vehicle components and parts. These included, 'green' car air conditioning, removal of lead in car paint pigments, and the care and maintenance of catalytic converters. In addition, the *Road Patrol*, issued positive reporting on the opening of the new northern railway in Perth, and the use of SCATS, a system of computer co-ordinated traffic signals, to improve traffic flows ("Drive Green", 1991; "Old Cars", 1992; "Taking Care", 1992; "LPG and Unleaded", 1993; "Engine Problems", 1994/95; "Smoky Car", 1995; "SCATS", 1993; "Rapid Transit North", 1993; "Lead Alert", 1996).

However, the Club's preference for metropolitan freeways was not always consistent with this strategy and did not always receive support from the members. At the time the environmental strategy was adopted, the AAA was critical of the federal government's increasing taxation of petrol and argued that further tax increases were unreasonable even if they reduced consumption. A subsequent campaign that spanned much of the decade through the pages of *Road Patrol* and other publications was the 'Where Your Petrol Taxes Go' campaign. At its heart was opposition to the indexation of petrol excise, introduced in 1983, which with inflation running at between five and ten percent across the decade meant a continually rising price for petrol at the bowser.

The campaign focused on two elements. One was the apparently relentlessly rising gap between a hypothetical retail price without any taxes and the actual retail price, the other the increasing amount of federal revenue raised by petrol taxes that was spent on matters other than roads. Issue after issue of *Road Patrol* carried the full-page advertisements, continually updated with the latest figures, in stark black and red colours, as shown in Figure 39. This was matched by editorials and stories to emphasise the point, many highly critical of the Federal government.³⁴ A key effect of the use of petrol taxes for non-road expenditure, it was claimed, was the decaying state of roads, for which the Commonwealth was held responsible for not distributing enough funding derived from petrol taxes to State road authorities. Allies such as country shire councils announced their support for the campaign. A twist in the campaign came in 1993 when the first academic policy papers were produced for a tax on, among other things, petroleum products including fuel.³⁵

³⁴ For just some examples, see "Cut Excessive Petrol Taxes, Says IAC." (1987, Apr-May). *Road Patrol*, p. 8-9; "Petrol Taxes – What You Pay and Where It Goes." (1987, Jun-Jul). *Road Patrol*, p. 30; "Petrol Taxes – What You Pay and Where It Goes." (1987, Oct-Nov). *Road Patrol*, p. 16; "Road System a Decaying Asset." (1988, Apr-May). *Road Patrol*, p. 42; "You're Being Bailed Everytime You Fill Up – Tell Us About Your Road Problem." (1988, Aug-Sep). *Road Patrol*, p. 12; "Road Funding Campaign – The Facts." (1989, Feb-Mar). *Road Patrol*, p. 14; "Country Councils Support Campaign." (1990, Feb-Mar). *Road Patrol*, p. 10-11; "Road Funding Shortfall Threatens Safety." (1990, Feb-Mar). *Road Patrol*, p. 10-11; "Petrol Taxes – What You Pay and Where It Goes." (1992, Apr-May). *Road Patrol*, p. 45; "World Fuel Prices." (1992, Apr-May). *Road Patrol*, p. 49; "Petrol Taxes – What You Pay and Where It Goes." (1992-93, Dec-Jan). *Road Patrol*, p. 50; "Petrol Taxes – What You Pay and Where It Goes." (1993/94, Dec-Jan). *Road Patrol*, p. 61; "Petrol Taxes – What You Pay and Where It Goes." (1994, Apr). *Road Patrol*, p. 52; "Stop The Carnage – Fix Australia – Fix The Roads." (1994, Jun). *Road Patrol*, p. 55; "The RAC View | Motorists Pay More." (1994, Aug-Sep). *Road Patrol*, p. 4; "The RAC View | Roads in Crisis." (1995, Feb-Mar). *Road Patrol*, p. 4; "The RAC View | Fixing the Roads." (1995, Jun-Jul). *Road Patrol*, p. 2; "Fix Australia Fix The Roads | 1995 Summit." (1995, Jun-Jul). *Road Patrol*, p. 26.

³⁵ For a summary of these papers and historical proposals for a carbon tax, see Meng, S., Siriwardana M., and McNeill, J. (2011). *Australian Carbon Tax Winners and Losers*, Business, Economics and Public Policy Working Papers, Number 2011-3 (6-7). Armidale: University of New England, Armidale.

The Club promised members it would monitor such developments and would oppose any additional 'energy taxes' being placed on petrol ("Energy Tax", 1993). The anti-petrol taxes campaign finally ceased in 1994 after running for eight years, replaced by a less-combative 'Fix Australia, Fix The Roads' campaign. Perhaps its main achievement was the commencement of the federally funded (from petrol taxes) Black Spot Program in 1991 to improve the physical condition of road locations with a history of fatalities or serious injuries. A 1995 evaluation of the program stated it had reduced serious road crash injuries by between fifty and sixty four percent in Victoria and New South Wales ("Evaluation", 1995).

In late 1996 the RAC commenced a fuel watch scheme, with reports in each issue of *Road Patrol* on the locations of lower-priced petrol stations across the metropolitan area and larger country towns, and comparisons showing highest and lowest prices for different fuel types ("RAC Fuel", 1996). Compared to the petrol tax campaign, the fuel watch scheme was far more measured and returned to a more traditional RAC approach of providing information to members from which they could make their own choices rather than the often-heckoring and even partisan tone of the petrol tax campaign. In 1997 the Club argued that fuel excise should no longer be linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), but this time without the petrol tax campaign hype, and in 2001 the indexation was temporarily removed ("RAC Comment", 1997).

COMING OR GOING?

The late twentieth century proved to be a confusing period for the RAC. Its long-term focus on road safety continued with benefits for the whole community, especially in areas such as reducing drink driving and its support for ANCAP. At the same time the Club's hard-won community standing, even among its own members, was challenged when it strayed into broader issues with tenuous links to road safety such as the Old Swan Brewery site redevelopment issue. In a similar way, off-road four wheel drive was on the one hand an exciting new way of adventure motoring and holidaying, not unlike the new motor touring of the 1920s, in which the Club had the authority to educate and train drivers, but it did not always sit well with a rising public awareness of environmental issues or those living remotely who suddenly found their splendid isolation accessible to many others.

The Club made many advances in coming to terms with the environmental impacts of motor vehicles and was something of a leader in adopting environmental policies and approaches, but at the same time it remained reticent until the late 1990s to accept there were serious health risks associated with leaded petrol. The Club's earlier interest in alternative fuels, and especially electric-powered vehicles, was barely evident, although at the same time it supported public programs to reduce air pollution such as the 'smoky car' campaign, and it no longer questioned whether there was, in fact, air pollution problems in Perth.³⁶

³⁶ See "Humming Hatches." (1994, Feb). *Road Patrol*, p. 57. For a review of a WA Solar Supplies electric powered vehicle, which concluded that it would take 715,000 kilometres of travel to save the equivalent amount in costs for a petrol-powered vehicle – although it accepted that an electric car was not far away.

Figure 40: Kwinana Freeway northbound, circa 1990s



Source: RAC Archives

This paradoxical attitude was strongly evident in the long campaign against petrol taxes and fuel indexation. Although a road safety message was implicit, and sometimes explicit, in its criticisms of insufficient funding for roads from petrol taxes, the campaign was also truculent and oppositional in ways traditionally atypical of RAC advocacy on behalf of members and drivers generally. Strong criticisms were made of governments and ministers, and public spending programs, especially at the federal level, criticisms that could easily appear partisan and biased. This seemed even more obvious when the campaign ended shortly before the election of a coalition federal government in 1996. The move after then back to a more civil and co-operative approach to lobbying public State and Commonwealth authorities can be seen in the Northbridge Tunnel campaign.

Distinctions between advocacy and partisanship became blurred, and running campaigns against government, rather than in support of an issue, could be counter-productive to advocacy. There was a recognition that more sophisticated approaches were needed to achieve positive changes, to use changing technologies to communicate with members, and perhaps the changing demographics of membership. In early 1996 the RAC launched its website, which although somewhat clunky to today's eyes was ground-breaking in its time, coming only three years after the first websites were developed in the United States ("We're On The Net", 1996; "History", 2025).

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Although not used at first for advocacy, the launch of the website came at the same time as initiatives such as the launch of Fuel Watch, and moves by the Club and RAC Insurance to publicly support charities such as the Princess Margaret Hospital Institute of Child Health Research, the Perth Christmas Pageant and the Sudden Infant Death (SIDS) Red Nose Day, as well as financial assistance for the Motor Museum at Whiteman Park. At the same time, the RAC branch network reached its maximum extent with fifteen branches and two district offices as well as head office in Adelaide Terrace, and fourteen distinct areas of activity. From the outside, the RAC appeared loud and strong and engaging with the community.

The long anti-petrol tax campaign, as well as much of sensationalist RAC Insurance advertising of the time around theft, vandalism and arson, and need to protect the car, home and boat from very bad people, exemplify one face of the RAC in the early-mid 1990s. However, away from the public gaze of strident advertising campaigns and shiny new branches there was a sense in this period of a loss of clear purpose mixed with enticing hints of the promise in new communication technologies. The earliest significant use of the new website, for instance, was not RAC advocacy on road safety or environmental initiatives to inform members and the public, but to provide online insurance quotes, the first such use in Australia (“RAC Launches”, 1997).

The petrol tax campaign, while producing the Black Spot Program, failed to end the indexing of petrol excise. Responses from members to the Club’s position on the Fremantle Eastern Bypass, the ‘S’ plates idea, the hints at road tolls as an acceptable form of funding new freeways, even to aspects of the coverage of off-road motoring, were not always supportive. Annual membership numbers were barely increasing or even declining during the mid-late 1990s.

The RAC Council elections were seriously contested in 1997, with nine candidates running for four seats. There were clear distinctions between status quo candidates, citing their credentials of long standing involvement in RAC committees and the business world, and challengers fearing their club was becoming “more ‘Business’ and less ‘Club’ oriented”, arguing “the concerns of ordinary members should be the priority of the RAC Council”, for “cheaper insurance premiums for RAC members”, for ensuring “the interests of all members continue to be well represented, from membership fees to environmental issues”, and concerned about the “lack of equal and effective representation for women indeed all Club members, on Council” (“The Candidates”, 1997, p. 7-8; “New faces”, 1998, p. 3; “From the President”, 1998, p. 3). Two of the challengers won election, and of the two returned members, one had explicitly promised to improve member benefits, review the RAC corporate structure and had “no alignment to any motor industry group”.

The 1997 candidate platforms, and election results, pose the question of whether the mixed approaches of the previous decade had undermined the Club’s traditional capacity to influence government policy, and instead positioned it as just another noisy pressure group in danger of losing touch with its own members. Time would tell. By the end of the 1990s, an internal restructuring was in the air and a new CEO was being sought as the Club prepared for the new millennium.



Figure 41: Kalgoorlie Branch Office, late 1980s the second branch established in 1930



Source: RAC Archives

CHAPTER 6: EXPANDING MOBILITY FOR ALL – INNOVATION, CREATIVITY AND CONTINUITY | 1999-2019

“Ensuring our members get to their destinations safely, easily and with the least environmental impact is central to RAC’s vision, as is promoting travel to quintessential Western Australian destinations, and helping members holiday in their State” (RAC president Tony Evans, President’s Message, Horizons, August/September 2018).

When Collin O’Sullivan was elected president of the RAC in 1998, he looked around, in his first report to members after the tumultuous 1997 Council elections, for a familiar landmark in the Club’s history. What he needed was a safe and enduring anchorage from which the Club could commence its journey into the approaching new millennium. He turned to Cliff Bowra, RAC Travel Service manager and informal Club historian, and the event they landed on was hiding in plain sight within the Club’s name. In 1922, at a time when it had just one thousand members, King George V approved the Club using the honour ‘Royal’ in its name. That may seem unremarkable now, but in 1998 the new president began his address with the words:

“As I write this column, the Republic debate appears to be taking a well-earned break from its domination of the media. I do not intend to provide a spark for further debate ... [but] irrespective of the ultimate outcome of the Republic debate, I expect the ‘Royal’ prefix to remain part of the Club’s title. The Club’s link with the Crown is fortified today by having as its Patron the Governor of Western Australia [who] takes a keen interest in the Club’s activities, as well as road safety and related matters generally.” (“From the President”, 1998, p. 3).

O’Sullivan’s words were bold for the time and could well have sparked further turmoil. However, instead they were a salve that linked the Club to the stability of something older and bigger than itself, and to one of the continuities in the Club’s history as it approached its own centenary, a strong concern for road safety. In the longer run, his statement would prove to be more perceptive of the times than the media that he cited.³⁷ Within months, O’Sullivan had farewelled one RAC Group CEO and welcomed a successor in Terry Agnew, already well known for his work in strategic planning and management. Agnew, said O’Sullivan, was the right person to guide the Group’s future direction as it faced exciting challenges and increasing competition, part of which was encouraging RAC staff, through “proper disciplined effort” to take ownership of the strategic and operational changes that would add value to the organisation (“From the President – Farewell”, 1998, p. 3, 7). Underpinned by some older certainties, new strategies and new ways of doing things were clearly being flagged.

EVER SAFER

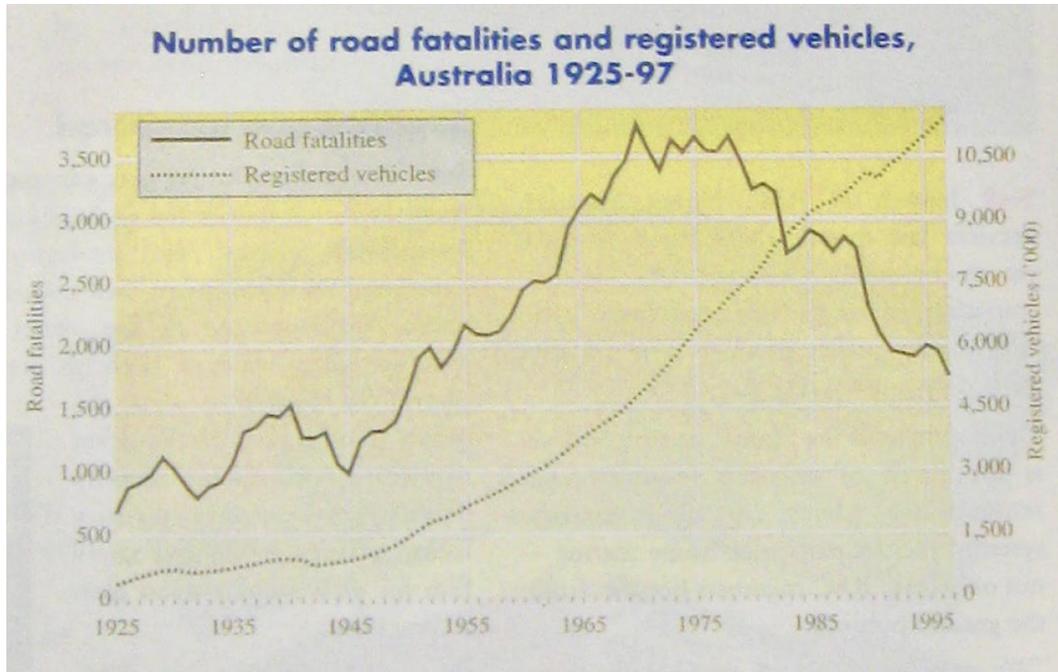
At the end of 1998 a National Road Safety Summit was held in Canberra, with the RAC and other interest groups invited to participate in developing a new national road safety strategy (“Making Tracks”, 1998/99). The success of road safety campaigns and measures since 1970 was made abundantly clear. Road fatalities peaked in 1970 at 30.4 deaths per 100,000 people and had steadily declined since. The key factors in the decline were attributed to the introduction of seat

³⁷ The 6 November 1999 referendum results for Western Australia were 58.5% for the Crown and 41.4% for a republic.



belts in new cars in 1970, the compulsory wearing of seat belts since 1971, and the progressive introduction of RBT in all states and territories between 1976 and 1988 along with the reduction of the blood alcohol limit to 0.05% and 0.02% for probationary drivers.³⁸

Figure 42: Chart from the summit showing declining road fatalities since 1970



Source: (Road Patrol, December January 1998/1999, p. 19).

These were all measures that had been strongly supported by the RAC. Other significant factors were the development of the Australian Design Rules for Motor Vehicle Safety, which had led to myriad improvements to safety in car design. Amongst these were the introduction of radar speed cameras, the upgrading of roads, notably installing passing or overtaking lanes on rural roads, fixing crash black spots, and the development of audible edge-linings (such as shoulder rumble strips) on dangerous roads.³⁹

Despite the high-profile concerns expressed earlier in the decade, the last twenty-five years had in fact seen a marked decrease in road fatality and injury rates. The 'ambitious vision' adopted at the summit was to continue this trend into the future. Fatalities per 100,000 people had declined from 30.4 in 1970 to 9.7 in 1997, and this was projected to fall further to 4.5 by the year 2010. This was cause for optimism, although Western Australia's rate consistently remained the second highest in Australia after the Northern Territory, but was declining (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2012).

³⁸ On the date for compulsory seat belts in new cars, see Vulcan, P. (2000). "The Role of Communication in Road Safety", in van Holst, H et al., (eds), *Transportation, Traffic Safety and Health – Prevention and Health, Third International Conference, Washington USA 1997* (p. 68). Heidelberg: Springer Verlag.

³⁹ For a brief history of the Australian Design Rules, see "Australian Design Rules." (n.d.). Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Canberra. Accessed 3 September 2020.

The significance of these outcomes was clear when the Club undertook its most comprehensive survey of members during October 1999, with the findings reported in the winter 2000 *Road Patrol* ("Results", 2000). Road Safety was rated as the most important priority for the Club by over ninety percent of respondents, and over eighty percent wanted the Club's lobbying of governments to be directed to increasing safety. In particular, they wanted lobbying to focus on having most, if not all the funds, derived from speed cameras directed to road safety. This included improving the design and layout of roads, and on better enforcement of driver and vehicle licensing regulations especially through better training for new drivers. The priorities for future lobbying were clear.

The second highest priority was 'crime', which meant increasing the traffic police presence on roads, and crackdowns on drink driving and not using seat belts. There is a remarkable consistency between the reasons behind the declining road fatality rate since 1970 and the priorities of RAC members for the future that encouraged, even directed, their Club to continue lobbying for the continuation of those measures. The emphasis on the RAC lobbying the State government on these matters, rather than attempting to act as the agency for their implementation as it had once done with, for instance, its road signposting program, was also clear.

One area in which this clear focus for road safety lobbying can be seen was for improving the design and layout of roads, which for the time being continued to mean metropolitan freeways. With the completion of the Graham Farmer Freeway in 2000, and the opening of the Northbridge Tunnel, consequent changes were made to other parts of the freeway system around the Perth city centre. In mid-2000 the severing of links between the Mitchell Freeway and Riverside Drive, and the general future of the Drive, became a matter of public debate and the RAC sought greater public consultation on planning matters ("Riverside Drive", 2000).

At around the same time, another survey of members showed a preference for expanding the suburban rail network and improving bus services as the best way to entice motorists from their cars and help improve Perth's air quality ("More Trains", 2000). Two years later the State government announced a proposal to build a new railway line from Mandurah through the city to Clarkson, with the city section involving the construction of a tunnel beneath William Street by a 'cover and cut' method that would involve serious traffic disruptions.

The RAC, although supportive of the rail project, publicly expressed concerns about the haste with which the plans were being progressed with limited public consultation, and argued the disruptions for motorists could be alleviated by using a tunnel boring method ("Off The Rails", 2002). Some months later the Minister for Planning released a Master Plan for the project which promised the new trains and additional bus routes would remove up to 20,000 cars daily from the Kwinana Freeway. The RAC pronounced the plan was "good news" that catered for the interests of rail, bus and car users, and through compromises and co-operation "would achieve a win for all groups" ("New Rail Link", 2002, p. 9).

A year later a proposal to remove the William Street Bridge that connected the southern end of William Street to the Freeway to allow the construction of a railway station on the new rail line again raised RAC concerns about a lack of a holistic approach to transport planning and the potential for unintended consequences in terms of increased traffic congestion ("Compromise",

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2003). The Club was unconvinced by the Minister's argument that the new railway service would remove sufficient peak-hour drivers from the city to minimise any traffic build-up, or that the bridge's removal would improve the aesthetic qualities of the foreshore and open up the area to pedestrian access. The Club chose not to comment on the latter points but remained committed to working with the Minister "to overcome its concerns on traffic congestion and road safety" ("Bridge removal", 2003). William Street South was closed in 2004, and the bridge was eventually removed with the new railway line opened in 2007 ("William Street", 2004). The new underground railway station was initially named Esplanade station then re-named Elizabeth Quay station in 2016.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENTS

A significant and pivotal meeting was held at the Observation City hotel in Scarborough during 2000. The meeting ultimately resolved to separate RAC's governance into two elements: the RAC Council, responsible for club activities and ownership of the RAC brand, and RAC Holdings, responsible for the commercial activities of the group.

With this clear differentiation of responsibilities, the Club could pursue social objectives. As the February 2001 State election approached, the Club interviewed the premier and opposition leader. Their responses were similar. Both supported increasing funding for road safety, establishing a joint parliamentary standing committee on road safety, and undertaking a review of the number of radar speed cameras before increasing them. They also proposed to abandon the Federal government's automatic indexation of fuel excise, to convert the State government fleet of vehicles to run on LPG, declared they had no plans to introduce compulsory annual vehicle safety checks and, for good measure, opposed the introduction of toll roads ("You Be The Judge", 2000/01). RAC policies, it seemed, were supported by both sides in politics.

A new Labor government under Premier Geoff Gallop came to office, and the Club established an informal advisory group to expand liaison with State parliamentarians and maintain pressure on all parties for safer roads ("Setting", 2001; "RAC Keeps", 2001). A year after the election, the Club assessed the Government's record against its actions ("Government's Record", 2002). The analysis was generally positive, identifying advances in a number of areas, notably the fall in the road fatality rate to its lowest level in 40 years to 8.6 per 100,000 people, and initiatives such as introducing 50km/hr residential street speed limits and prohibiting drivers holding mobile phones. A parliamentary committee on road safety was still to be established, and the Club had some concerns that road funding looked like it might decline in coming years.

The RAC reaction to the State budget for 2003 was less generous, described in *Road Patrol* as "a tale of woe and broken promises for Western Australia's long-suffering motorists" ("Ripper's Rip-Off", 2002, p. 6-7). The Club's main concerns were rising fees and charges on motor vehicle registrations, and that only 48% of revenue from speed and red-light cameras was going to road safety measures, while the rest went to unrelated expenditures. This would mean less spending on road safety, an outcome exacerbated by a budget estimate that road fatalities would rise to ten per 100,000 people. The following year the Club had much the same criticisms of the State budget but welcomed the government accepting an RAC argument that rises should be kept within the inflation rate then running at 3.3% ("State Budget", 2003).

By the time of the William Street Bridge consultations in 2003, the Club had appointed an Executive Manager, Member Advocacy who was responsible for, among other things, liaison with external bodies such as governments. Since the turn of the century the Club had been critical of the State and Federal governments when it believed it necessary. However, it also balanced criticism with supportive public commentary on matters in which it believed government actions had been consistent with RAC policies on road safety in its broadest sense. The bombastic approaches of the 1990s had been replaced by more conciliatory ways of engaging with public officials and parliamentarians. This approach has tended to remain the RAC way, acting as both an independent advocate, but also a gracious partner in advancing its member's interests.

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

The launch of the RAC website in 1996 opened a door to a whole new way of communicating with members and the broader public. Although surveying members was not a new practice, it became more comprehensive and increased in regularity during the 2000s. As noted earlier, the comprehensive survey of 2000 had directed the Club to focus on road safety and related issues as its top priority. The two lowest priority areas were the introduction of the Goods & Services Tax (GST), which 52% rated as a high priority, and the republic debate and referendum, with a 44% rating. At the time these were both highly topical issues, but not priorities among the membership, for the Club to engage with. It was also notable that, for all the anti-petrol tax campaigning of the previous decade, the price of petrol only ranked seventh out of ten issues in importance for members. The results lead the RAC CEO to conclude that "in particular we intend to campaign heavily on road safety, in the hope that we can make a significant difference where it matters – on our roads" ("Results", 2000).

Surveying members was one method of understanding their priorities and concerns, but the new technologies of the 2000s also allowed for completely different approaches to servicing member needs. With a new central call centre, internet and phone pay services, monthly payment of insurance premiums by direct bank account debit and other changes, there had been a 20% to 30% fall in members going into metropolitan branches since 1998 ("Providing Greater Service", 2000). The need for an extensive branch network for over-the-counter transactions was in decline.

In response to this, mobile vehicle inspection services were introduced that could be booked by telephone or online, and vehicle fault diagnosis services were made available through RAC approved repairers. This new approach was first seen in the closure of Subiaco and Rockingham branches, and the amalgamation of the two Bunbury branches in 2000 to form a single shop front in the Bunbury Forum shopping centre. The provision of vehicle repair services through approved repairers rather than RAC workshops was intended to provide local convenience and remove the need for members to travel long distances from their home areas.

The RAC's mobile inspection fleet was expanded, and their onboard equipment upgraded to provide 'master checks' previously only available in RAC workshops. Branch workshops, such as Midland which had opened in 1994, were closed and instead a shopfront to provide member services was established in Midland Gate shopping centre in 2001, following the Bunbury model.

Figure 43: An artist's impression of the first purpose-built RAC head office, as first shown to members



Source: (Road Patrol, December January 2003-2004, p. 23).

This new approach of taking services, especially vehicle services, to members rather than having members bring their vehicles to the RAC, combined with establishing small shopfront outlets and increasing use of online payments, allowed the Club to wind down its physical branch structure. The once extensive workshops and administrative offices in Adelaide Terrace that had grown piece by piece since 1925 gradually became redundant in this new world, and from 2002 planning began for a new head office building without all the accoutrements that were no longer needed. In December 2003 plans were announced for building an entirely new complex in West Perth to be opened during the Club's centenary year in 2005 ("RAC Centenary", 2003/04).

As the new technologies harnessed by the Club were changing its relationships with its members, it also began to reach out to the broader community in matters beyond traditional motoring pursuits. The signal event that brought this broadening approach into focus was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001. The Club quickly realised this was an epoch-shattering event, which quickly became known as '9/11', and in the *Road Patrol* issued soon after advised members that although the impacts of the attack, and of the recent collapse of Australia's domestic airline Ansett, were not year clear, members would be kept informed ("From the Group CEO", 2001; "A Message", 2001).

One immediate impact was that new RAC Travel insurance policies would no longer cover areas impacted by the attacks in the US. Within a year RAC Travel was reporting on a return to domestic car travel and away from overseas air travel, trends accentuated by the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002 and then a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in East Asia over 2002-2003 ("Time for Rebuilding", 2003). This followed new caravan sales reaching record

heights, and the premier opening a new production facility at Forrestfield in early 2002 for Coromal Caravans when it was noted that “since September 11 the desire to holiday at home has increased people’s interest in travelling around Australia by road” (“New Production”, 2002).

In response to these shocks, members, and indeed many Australians, were turning to ‘cocooning’, or seeking to insulate themselves from external dangers by staying within familiar environments (Mann, 2001; “Cocooning”, 2025). One response from the RAC was to emphasise the homely character of its Call Centre with the slogan “We won’t send you East” (“We Won’t Send You East”, 2002). Call Centre manager Sharon Mather emphasised the RAC was based in Western Australia, made up of Western Australians, and its call centre was located in Joondalup where calls were responded to “right here at home”, rather than transferred to the distant eastern states. The advertising campaigns of the 1990s featuring violent criminals invading personal spaces and menacing property were replaced with campaigns that emphasised safety and friendly supportive care.

Having been perceived as a motoring organisation for its near century of existence, the RAC was able to use changing technologies to reinforce ties with its members as well as begin to consolidate a new role for itself as a model corporate citizen for all Western Australians. Sponsoring health and sporting initiatives had been undertaken since the mid-1990s, but in the post 9/11, post Bali, post SARS world of the early 2000s these became bridges to reach out to new groups who were not necessarily car owners or drivers, but who did seek the security of an embracing community.

The Club began placing a stronger emphasis on shared events, such as its support for the annual Channel 7 Christmas Pageant through Perth, which was supported by the RAC and, by 2003 was described as “one of the finest in the Southern Hemisphere” (“Christmas Pageant”, 2002/03). In another innovation, members were advised they could find further information on car parking and pedestrian movement on the RAC website.

Support for charities expanded, such as the 3 Boys Legacy for children with brain cancer, and *Road Patrol* changed to a more ‘lifestyle’ focus in its look and with new sections on home and garden, food and wine and entertainment (“A Wonderous Legacy”, 2003; “Welcome”, 2003). Feedback from members leading to the revamp of *Road Patrol* has also indicated a demand for more travel stories that focused on touring with Western Australia rather than overseas, and so perhaps not surprisingly a strong preference for retaining the title *Road Patrol* because it remained relevant.

However, drivers were not forgotten, with the launch of the Red Spot program in May 2003. Based on the Black Spot program, members and non-members were invited to nominate “traffic trouble spots that make you see ‘red’”, with the Club then lobbying the relevant State agency or local government to fix the problem, and reporting on their successes (“Red Spots”, 2003/04). Another example was the Club taking on the State government in 2003 when it delayed the introduction of the Written Off Vehicles Register (WOVR) to stop the ‘rebirthing’ of stolen vehicles.

The Club was just “making sure the Government stays on the job” said the RAC Senior Engineer Mike Upton, and a month later he could report the WOVV would come into effect in October 2004. Sweet reason had persuaded the government not to delay, and all “genuine consumers”, whether members or not, could now purchase an unlicensed vehicle without the fear of it being stolen (“Wrecks Register Delayed”, 2003; “Wrecks Register In”, 2003/04).

Through such measures the RAC began to intensify and develop its social capital in the community as the new century unfolded. It emphasised stability, fellowship and shared values in troubled times, not for the sake of being seen to be altruistic, but because it strengthened the Club’s hand in its vital lobbying work with governments on behalf of its members.

EMBRACING ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The second-highest ranked group of priorities for members in the 2000 survey were environmental, especially air pollution as an environmental issue (80%), and as a health issue (77%), with a lesser but still notable concern over logging in native forests (58%). The strong interest in countering air pollution was a continuation of concerns around leaded fuels and vehicle emissions more generally, while the logging priorities may have been linked to the increased access to forests through four-wheel and off-road driving that brought many urban motorists into direct visual contact with logging practices for the first time.

Australia’s first commercial wind farm, which opened in 1994, and its savings on diesel fuel power generation and reductions in carbon pollution, was featured by *Road Patrol* as a key tourist attraction in Esperance in 1999, and later that year an announcement that leaded fuel would be phased out altogether in the new year as part of a strategy to reduce air pollution was welcomed by the RAC with the news that this would not disadvantage the twenty-eight percent of members with pre-1986 cars (“Space Junk”, 1998/99; “Life Without Leaded Fuel”, 1999).

The new century opened with a three-page feature in *Road Patrol* on air pollution and vehicle emissions in Perth (“Those Smoggy Days”, 2000). Vehicle emissions were the largest single contributor to forming photochemical smog and haze, pollution that had increased significantly in the past five years and which could be attributed to poor emission controls on Perth’s cars, which formed one of the oldest fleets in Australia, combined with car dependency and a hot summer climate. This was predicted to worsen with population growth and urban sprawl.

Various solutions were outlined that drivers could undertake, such as regular engine tuning and smoother driving styles, while the Club set out what it saw as its role. The main features were evaluating the cost-effectiveness of vehicle emission testing and vehicle disposal schemes, participating in the Perth Air Quality Management Plan Committee, and launching its own ‘Air Care’ campaign. The Air Care campaign, launched by the State Minister for the Environment in March 2000, was the first environmental campaign run by the RAC, and was informed by members seeking information and education from the RAC on how to reduce their emissions (“RAC Air Care”, 2000).

The campaign was planned for three years and provided free emission checks for members at Shell Auto Centres, free safety inspections of LPG car installations at Transport WA Licensing Centres, campaigning to substitute public transport, cycling and walking for car use, and encouraging regular engine tune ups. It also included sponsoring a billboard at the Horseshoe

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Bridge on the corner of William and Wellington streets in Perth with a continuously updating electronic display showing the current levels of air pollution. The Air Care campaign, a first in itself, partly drew upon older methods such as free vehicle inspections (but with partner organisations rather than in-house at RAC branches), and providing information, now called 'education', to enable members to change their behaviours as well as raise awareness of the nature of the problem. It also drew upon innovative new measures facilitated by new technologies in the form of continually updating electronic displays with real-time environmental data.

The electronic display also reached the general motoring community (in Perth at least), and not just members. As the campaign progressed further information was provided. Levels of the carcinogen benzene in Perth's atmosphere were equal to those in Sydney and Los Angeles (the epitomes of polluted air), and carbon monoxide levels inside poorly maintained cars could be up to five times greater than outside ("Take A Deep Breath", 2000). But hope for a better future was also becoming evident in the new technologies for propulsion and fuels. In mid-2000, Daimler Chrysler unveiled the first zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell car that generated electricity and water vapour, could reach speeds of 145 km/h and travel 450 kilometres before refuelling.

As the environmental impacts of petrol were becoming more prominent in public debate, some of the once promising petrol alternatives were losing ground. In late 2001 the bowser prices for diesel and LPG in Perth were relatively stable, and for diesel higher, than more variable petrol prices ("LPG & Diesel", 2001). Car fuel sales comprised 13% diesel and 9% LPG, proportions too small for retailers to engage in competitive discounting. Refineries also produced more petrol than the market demanded, making it relatively cheaper and subject to discounting.

An LPG conversion would take six to seven years to recover the cost, and factors such as these militated against widespread uptake by consumers of diesel and LPG. A federal government decision in 2003 to cap the proportion of ethanol in fuel at ten percent, and to require ethanol fuel to be clearly labelled, reduced demand but was welcomed by the RAC because of ethanol's corrosive effects on metal, rubber and plastic elements in engines ("Consumers Win", 2003).

Concerns about declining world oil stocks lead the State government to develop a strategy with RAC input to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels. The strategy focused on developing alternative fuels thought to be more environmentally friendly such as biodiesel, natural gas, LPG and hydrogen although they had cost disadvantages, and the need to introduce more efficient engines and hybrid and fuel cell technologies ("A Future Without Fuel", 2003). For the RAC, reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions was a major factor driving the strategy, although for the time being comparatively cheap retail petrol prices were the main inhibitor to innovation. Members' desires for both cheap fuel and reducing car pollution produced something of a wicked problem for the RAC.

Nevertheless, there were promising alternatives. The excitement that electric batteries had created in the 1980s was again apparent when the Air Care campaign predicted the demise of the internal combustion engine by 2020 and feted the arrival of the first hybrid-electric cars when the prototype Holden ECommodore was launched, emitting ninety percent fewer atmospheric pollutants and using fifty per cent less fuel than a conventional car ("RAC Air Care", 2000).

The future, it was contended, lay with hydrogen fuel-cell powered vehicles predicted to come onto the market in 2003, with their only emissions being water. In the meantime, the RAC and other state motoring organisations had been working with the Federal government's Australian Greenhouse Office to develop a fuel consumption labelling system for all new cars, which was launched in mid-2001 ("Ask Yourself", 2001). The labels allowed car buyers to see and compare fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and was part of the Australian response to the 1997 Kyoto Protocols on climate change. Passenger vehicles accounted for 9% of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions, and along with initiatives such as labelling, the RAC offered members the use of an estimator on their website to determine a car's greenhouse gas emissions. The intent of these measures was to enable members to personally participate in reducing climate change and global warming.

Around this time the RAC also began to look at its own operations, and announced that it was joining the Carbon Neutral Program operated by Men Of The Trees ("Planting The Seeds", 2002).⁴⁰ The program grew and planted trees in salt-affected rural lands, and the RAC signed-up its entire fleet of 325 vehicles, for which it paid an annual \$50 subscription for each vehicle that would result in over 5,500 trees being planted. The trees offset carbon dioxide pollution produced through vehicle emissions, and reduced wind erosion and helped stop water tables rising and bringing salt to the surface.

Members were encouraged to also join the program personally, for which Men of The Trees would provide a number plate surround "to let everyone know they are driving a Carbon Neutral vehicle". The Club promised to issue a public statement each year with an update on the number of trees planted because of support from the RAC and its members. Members could join the program by completing a coupon in *Road Patrol*, or by logging onto the RAC website. In a similar vein, a special edition of *Road Patrol* was produced in late 2002, sponsored by the Water Corporation, with a focus on water conservation and designing 'waterwise' gardens ("Waterwise by Design", 2002).

CENTENARY CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

The RAC celebrated its centenary in 2005 with both outward fanfare and some introspection. Centenary events included a special meeting of the RAC Council in the former Strelitz residence in Peppermint Grove where early meetings of the Club had taken place, a Centenary Car Rally leaving from Government House, installation of the Motoring Walk of Fame, the sale of replica historic RAC badges, and a series of centenary souvenir lift outs in the *Road Patrol* ("100 Years On", 2005; "RAC Centenary", 2004/05; "RAC Centenary Special", 2005).

One of the most enduring events was the departure of the Club from Adelaide Terrace, its home since 1926 and its relocation to new, purpose-built premises in Wellington Street, West Perth. This was a signal event in the Club's history, with the new building located in a quarter of the city undergoing urban renewal as the railway lines that once separated the city from Northbridge were sunk underground. The new building had high visibility from the freeway and Wellington Street, access to car parking and nearby shops, and had been designed to achieve at least a four green star energy rating reflecting its capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy

⁴⁰ Men Of The Trees changed its name in 2018 to Trillion Trees.

use ("New Head Office", 2005). It also left behind the motor workshops and mechanical maintenance facilities that characterised the Adelaide Terrace facility.

The final centenary souvenir lift-out reflected the introspection of the time when it said, "The RAC is now a lifestyle organisation that touches the lives of hundreds of thousands of Western Australians". RAC president Freda Crucitti, in her report on the centenary year, gave more depth to this when she cited the launch of new team values, the creation of a new vision for the RAC, and the launch of a new five-year corporate plan as significant outcomes of the centenary year, and concluded:

"At the end of 2005, we emerged with a heightened awareness of our place in the community, clear goals and renewed faith in our future – all of which focus on putting our members first"
("The President's Report", 2006, p. 2).

Freda Crucitti wrote in early 2007 of the increasing interest by the members in social and environmental issues, and the RAC's belief that it had a corporate and social responsibility to engage in activities that benefit all Western Australians ("New Challenges", 2007a). She noted that Western Australians made up just under 10% of the Australian population but accounted for both 12% (and rising) of the road toll and 33% of Australia's export income ("New Challenges", 2007b). These statistics pointed to the significance of the mining boom then getting underway in the State, with rising numbers of heavy trucks on the roads needing to be accommodated by improved road design which, it was estimated, would reduce by 40% road fatalities and injuries. But it was in her conclusion that Freda Crucitti set out an overarching vision that would guide the RAC:

"Ultimately, mobility is about social and financial inclusion. Safe, effective transportation systems that allow people to move around the State at a reasonable cost are essential in ensuring equal opportunities for all to participate in the life of our state" ("New Challenges", 2007b, p. 3).

This concept of mobility was crucial to the RAC's future directions, and the statement was in the first issue of the RAC's new magazine, *Horizons*, that had replaced the *Road Patrol*. In the new magazine's second issue, Freda Crucitti expanded on the RAC's role in fostering a Western Australia that valued mobility and inclusion. She emphasised the Club was not breaking with its past but instead using its history as a catalyst to adapt to the twenty first century and outlined three areas of focus for the future ("Continuing Values", 2007).

The first was advocating safer roads, safer cars and safer driving, emphasising that road safety was not just an issue about transport but also public health, and that each member and each motorist had a responsibility when it came to road safety. The second focus was on creating stronger and safer communities, and the third was helping to protect and preserve Western Australia's 'unique environment'. The second two areas would continue to be developed through the RAC's sponsorship and partnership portfolios.

In some ways these goals were a refinement of the 2000 (and subsequent) member survey results, which had emphasised road safety, crime prevention and environmental sustainability as the key issues for members, but they also draw upon more traditional themes in the RAC's history,

or as Freda Crucitti said, “Our heritage is safety on our roads” (“The President’s Report”, 2007, p. 2).

The Club’s work on road safety began with early programs such as installing road signs, with crime prevention in its early campaigns to have car theft and later car watching criminalised, and with the environment in early campaigns for national parks. A century later, by the mid-late 2000s, the campaigns had smarter names but familiar resonances.

In 2007 the ‘Safer Cars Safer Lives’ program was encouraging buyers to only purchase cars with an ANCAP rating of four or five stars. In addition, the Red Spot campaign had identified 24 key road sites for re-engineering to reduce risks, and the AusRAP program (funded by state motor clubs) was star-rating major highways and providing data for the RAC to lobby governments for improved road funding. Other similar initiatives included the Community Education program that engaged with both school students and older people on road and personal safety.

The Club was also supporting programs in partnership with the Police such as Community Safety Month, the Neighbourhood Watch and the television program Crime Stoppers. It was also sponsoring the RAC Rescue 1 helicopter which, in 2006, airlifted over 200 people to safety, as well as the annual Fire Fighters Awards.⁴¹ This list is not exhaustive, but gives a sense of how the RAC was operating to fulfil its new vision and strengthen its bonds with the broader Westralian communities beyond its traditional motorist membership base.

The RAC Rescue helicopter is a case in point. Sponsored by RAC, funded by the State Government and managed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), the Club successfully tendered for the right to sponsor the new helicopter rescue service in 2003. The Bell 412 EP helicopter was painted in the same yellow and blue livery as RAC road patrol vans, with the RAC badge, because, as RAC CEO Terry Agnew said, this was “recognised throughout the State as a symbol of the trust, security and service that the RAC is renowned for” (“RAC Rescue 1”, 2004a, p. 24-25).

FESA (as DFES was previously known) selected the RAC because of the Club’s strong commitment to Western Australia, and because of the mutual interest of the two organisations in “making our communities safer”. The RAC Rescue helicopter completed 116 missions in its first twelve months, mostly in response to motor vehicle and motorcycle crashes, and its role was projected to expand to include transferring ‘priority one’ patients from country hospitals to the city (“RAC Rescue 1”, 2004b).

Within eighteen months, surveys were showing then RAC Rescue helicopter was considered by members to be the Club’s most valued sponsorship, and a Foundation was established to accept donations to pay for onboard emergency medical supplies (“Help RAC Rescue”, 2005). By Mid-2007, the RAC Rescue helicopter had flown more than 750 missions, and in excess of 100,000 kilometres and had “saved countless lives in WA” (“To The Rescue”, 2007, p. 16-19).

⁴¹ These issues are all itemised in “The President’s Report”. (2007, Oct). Concise Annual Report for 2006-2007. *Horizons* (p. 2).

Figure 44: The RAC Rescue helicopter quickly became a sponsorship valued by members



Source: RAC Archives

A year later the RAC Rescue helicopter reached 1,000 missions and was able to service 90% of the State's population living within a 200-kilometre radius of Perth. Mr Agnew said the RAC was committed to the service "because of the vital role it plays in saving lives in the WA community and because [it] helps seriously injured motorists who have been involved in a crash" ("1,000 Missions Achieved", 2008). The purpose of the sponsorship had evolved, and now explicitly gave voice to the new vision around road and community safety, which in many ways was a reformulation of the Club's 'trust, security and service' motto outlined in 2003. In 2016, a second RAC Rescue helicopter, based in Bunbury, was added to the fleet ("About the RAC Rescue", 2016-17).

In addressing its environmental vision, the Club's approach developed in two strands. One continued the focus on vehicle emission reductions, brought to the fore at this time by the election in November 2007, of the Federal Labor government of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and its policy of putting in place an emissions trading scheme that would include vehicle emissions. However, before then, it was clear that some earlier promise in alternative fuels was not being realised, with ambivalent reports in *Road Patrol* on the environmental and mechanical impacts of biodiesel and ethanol blends, and the imposition of a Federal excise on LPG.⁴²

Despite this, there remained optimism about some alternatives such as hybrid engines and hydrogen fuel-cell powered vehicles, demonstrated in Perth's first three Mercedes Benz Citaro fuel cell powered buses introduced in 2004 with zero emissions and low noise levels ("Zero-emission", 2004). The RAC critique of hybrid and fuel cell vehicles, at this stage, was that they were mainly advantageous in urban areas, but there was optimism that technological development would soon extend their range and utility to rural areas and heavy vehicles.

The combination of technological developments, safer communities and environmental change allowed the RAC to draw together ideas for alternate fuels and sustainable cities, which in Western Australia really meant the Perth metropolitan area. Fears of 'peak oil' during the 2000s increased the search for alternatives, and a 2007 feature in *Horizons* listed future priorities as raising community awareness, reducing demand by changing motorist behaviours, improving vehicle efficiency, and developing alternative fuels ("The End of Oil", 2007). Changing behaviours and increasing efficiencies were thought more likely to be achievable, at least in the short term.

One area in which efficiencies were predicted to be likely was in battery technologies for electric powered vehicles, as well as hydrogen cells, and the potential for solar powered cars ("Car of the Future", 2007). In mid-2008 the RAC and the WA Sustainable Energy Association welcomed to Perth a solar-powered taxi then on a world tour, which RAC president Alden Halse said, "gave the RAC an opportunity to view the technology of tomorrow and to be inspired about how to best respond to our members' demands in the future" ("Solar Taxi", 2008, p. 9). It was at this time that the letters page in *Horizons* began making member's interests in alternate fuels clear, although the RAC still acknowledged the main problems awaiting resolution with electric vehicles were limited range, battery recharge times and battery replacement costs ("Electric Dreams", 2008).

Ideas of a sustainable Perth were also explored through feature stories in *Horizons*. In 2008 the resources boom was predicted to continue for at least another 20 years with a rapidly rising population being accommodated in denser, lower emission, climate-responsive housing, increased use of household solar power generation, and reductions in vehicle emissions through replacement of cars with trains and bicycling. Western Australia's per capita greenhouse gas emissions were higher than Australia's and even the United States, and a combination of developing low emission technologies and changing personal behaviours were the way forward.

⁴² See for some examples "Bio-Diesel – Proceed With Caution". (2006, Aug-Sep). *Road Patrol* (p. 15-17); "Ethanol Blend Petrol – Is It Right for WA Motorists?". (2006/07, Dec-Jan). *Road Patrol* (p. 10); "What's Fueling You?". (2007, Feb-Mar). *Road Patrol* (p. 13-15).

Perth might still have urban sprawl, but it would become denser with more public transport to reduce car travel, especially to work. House design would become more internally focused with open plan living spaces, more security and little or no garden because busy residents would not have time for such activities (“Alternate Futures”, 2008; “Future Perth”, 2008; “Sustainable Cities”, 2008). Perpetual business is characteristic of writing during this time. Rottnest was offered as a model community to emulate elsewhere, with climate-responsive architecture, low emissions, low energy use and a relaxed and local community safety.

The big national issue over 2008-2009 was the Rudd government’s proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), or emissions trading scheme. A feature article in *Horizons* covered this quite complex proposal, setting out various pros and cons, drawing upon comments from the Australian Consumers Association and the WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as the RAC’s own Vehicle Policy Manager Mike Upton (“Trading Carbon”, 2008). The main points for the RAC were that pricing carbon emissions would probably increase incentives to reduce emissions *per se* through technological development and decreasing energy use, but on the other hand oil companies might reduce production (and so increase fuel prices) rather than buy permits and engage in emissions trading, while reducing petrol emissions would only be achieved by changing production methods or reducing use.

A company could reduce emissions, and therefore costs, by moving from coal-fired to solar-powered energy, but a motorist did not yet have that option. Although it was proposed to reduce Federal petrol excise on a cent-for-cent basis for every rise in the petrol price from the CPRS, there was no guarantee this mitigation would be evident at the bowser. The RAC did not take a specific stance on the CPRS, instead sticking to providing information to allow members to come to their own conclusions, but the public debate, which became more rancorous over 2009 and into 2010 until the government withdrew the proposal, also occurred as the Global Financial Crisis of 2007 to 2009 unfolded. On top of this, the fears and uncertainties invoked by 9/11 and subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which had quietened but never really gone away, began to resurface as the second decade of the new century began.

The other environmental strand in the RAC’s activities was a merging of personal environmentalism within the lifestyle sections of the Club magazine. This ‘lifestyle environmentalism’ was conveyed to a large degree within features about travel within Western Australia, with subtle but comforting patriotic overtones. The cocooning effect after 9/11 and other shocks had not really dissipated and the combination of safety in domestic intra-state road travel and exploring environmental wonders within secure State borders, evoked by visually beautiful imagery of natural wonders and the seductive, even nostalgic character of low-key family holidaymaking was a powerful message.

In 2005 RAC Travel launched its online Journey Planner on the RAC website. Members could login and develop a tour itinerary with printable maps and downloadable route descriptions, book accommodation, use ‘see and what to do’ and ‘where to stay’ options along routes, zoom in and out of detailed locality and town maps, and otherwise plan in some detail a motoring holiday across the State and even nationally (“Travel Planning”, 2005). Tasks that once required a visit to an RAC Travel office or branch could now be accomplished at home.

Despite the comfort, the resources boom meant increasing numbers of vehicles on roads everywhere and petrol prices fluctuated wildly in response to overseas events (“Keeping WA’s Wheel Turning”, 2005/06). One response from the RAC was to provide every member with a ‘free rider’ or ticket to travel on any of Perth’s buses, trains or ferries to encourage more diversity in travel arrangements. Another was to promote bicycle use, and especially Perth’s developing Bike Network that by 2007 covered 750 kilometres with no home more than 1.5 kilometres away from a bike route of some sort (“On Your Bikes”, 2007). Every kilometre cycled instead of driven saved 300 grams of greenhouse gas emissions and \$50 per week on fuel, parking and car maintenance costs. Despite these incentives for urban travel, it was longer distance country holiday travel that really attracted members’ attention.

The first issue of *Horizons* tackled this in two ways. One was to provide tips on reducing greenhouse gas emissions when travelling by aeroplane to the top four destinations for holidaying Western Australians, Tasmania, topical Queensland, New Zealand and London (with a personal 4.5 tonnes of greenhouse gases produced by a return flight) (“Save the Planet”, 2007). Methods included the then-new concept of paying for carbon-offsets to neutralise carbon produced through travel emissions. The other was to emphasise the many holiday destinations within Western Australia. The ‘Top Ten Great WA Drives’ identified a mix of day trip routes and longer regional journeys with distances, highlights and visual treats along the way (“Great WA Drives”, 2007).

The resources boom conditions of the time had a negative impact on budget holiday accommodation, with 17 caravan parks closed or closing between 2005 and 2007 and only one new park being opened, and cheap rentable beach shacks being replaced with beachside mansions. Options for budget family holidaying within a reasonable distance from Perth were narrowing and old resorts such as Mandurah and Busselton became increasingly expensive to visit (“Budget”, 2007). Instead, the luxury spa and spiritual retreat were the short new holiday destinations (“Making a Getaway”, 2008).

The RAC sought to offset this to some degree for its members through, for example, a partnership with Bush Heritage Australia to sponsor a pastoral land regeneration project at its Charles Darwin Reserve near Perenjori through which members could experience the benefits of conservation at a local level (“Upfront”, 2008). The Club also promoted touring the Walpole Wilderness Area with its forests and beaches and the country town atmosphere of Walpole, where the local visitor centre provided information on natural sites, accommodation that included caravan and tent sites, and cultural attractions for the “time-poor visitor” (“Wilderness”, 2008). This was the very place in which the RAC’s earliest nature conservation efforts had born fruit when it lobbied for the creation of a national park in the 1920s.

History could be an attraction for Western Australians seeking to discover their own heritage. A *Horizons* feature article outlined new approaches to experiencing the past being taken by museums and through heritage trails, and also identified the values involved in heritage conservation, values resonant with the RAC’s values (“Keeping”, 2008). History was now about sharing stories of adventure, courage, tenacity and tragedy and embracing both Aboriginal and European heritage. It was about connecting with people’s personal memories and family

histories, about providing an Aboriginal voice in museum exhibitions, about detective work and the fun of discovery.

There was concern that the boom conditions were having a negative impact on cultural landscapes, and the challenge of having heritage incorporated into planning was not being met. Yet despite this, Western Australia's history and heritage had, at its core, people driven by passion for what they did, and a capacity, as Mike Lefroy of Fremantle Museum put it, to tell a good story to unlock the door to the past. Visiting local and State museums and heritage trails was a low-cost and environmentally friendly way of holidaying.

Another was visiting Perth's urban parks or being a 'geotourist' visiting outdoor geological sites, and there were always the opportunities to take a small boat out on the water anywhere along the coast ("Urban Parks", 2008; "Are You A Geotourist?", 2008/2009; "On the Water", 2008/2009). These were ways the environmentally conscious member (and non-member) could still enjoy an affordable family holiday and experience their home state despite the troubled world around them.

Apart from beautifully illustrated magazine articles, the Club also pursued this through support for the annual Western Australian Tourism Awards, which from at least 2004 included ecotourism and cultural heritage categories, promoting ecotourism and the green star accreditation system for tourist accommodation, and participating in the development of Tourism WA's '2020 and Beyond' strategy ("RAC Travel", 2004/2005; "WA Tourism Awards", 2006/2007; "Developing WA", 2008). As Mark Abercromby of the RAC's Travel & Leisure Division remarked in 2009:

"Tourism is our heritage ... the first road maps for motorists touring the state were produced by the RAC and we're committed to continuing to meet the tourism needs of our members and the WA community" ("Green Stars", 2008/2009).

Advocating safer roads, safer cars and safer driving was the other key focus identified in 2007. This was not so much a new focus for the RAC as a more clearly specified direction. Safer driving tended to mean modifying driver behaviours or establishing good driver behaviour patterns in young people about to commence driving.

In 2004 the Community Education team was stressing to high school students that it was illegal to use a mobile phone while driving, and in the same year the State government announced it would legislate, with RAC support, to criminalise driving under the influence of drugs ("Don't Be Tempted", 2004; "Welcome Crack Down", 2004). However, it was excessive speed that was the main cause of death and injury in road crashes for 17- to 24-year-old cohort. The Community Education team sought to deter such behaviour by instilling good driving habits, such as adjusting driving to weather conditions, staying just below speed limits, planning journeys to avoid rushing, and resisting peer pressure to speed ("Cut Your Speed", 2004).

Over 2005-2006 the RAC initiated a public debate on smoking in cars to support a campaign by the Australian Medical Association to reduce smoking while driving, mainly because of the passive smoking risks to children ("Smoking", 2005).

A 2005 assessment of the 50 km/h speed zones introduced in 2001, as advocated by the RAC, showed significant reductions in both deaths and injuries in metropolitan and country areas in such zones, although there were still drivers breaking the limit in residential areas (“50 Zone”, 2005). However, the Club did not advocate lowering speed limits across the board, arguing that many factors, especially road design, were involved in car crashes and simply lowering all speed limits was not a solution (“Slower”, 2006; “Slower Speed”, 2006).

Vehicle design was also an important factor, and in 2007 a series of confronting advertisements were made as part of a ‘Safer Cars Save Lives’ campaign to raise awareness of a new safety star rating program developed by ANCAP (“Hard Hitting”, 2006/2007). Research by the RAC and the Office of Road Safety had shown that safety was still not a key factor in decisions to buy a new car.

Conveying safety and behaviour modification messages was a constantly evolving art, and in 2006 the RAC Community Education Division with sponsors Channel 9, Radio station 92.9 and the *West Australian* newspaper, asked high school students to design advertising that would appeal to their peers (“Belts”, 2006). The winning advertisements focused on wearing seat belts as fashionable and linking the avoidance of drink driving with saving a mate’s life.

By 2008, the fields of safer vehicle design and driver behaviour were beginning to merge. A *Horizons* feature article on the history of car safety covered the major advances such as seat belts over one hundred years, and concluded that the near future would see the development of technologies that actively monitor a driver’s performance and then act to correct problems, such as drifting across a lane, before an crash occurred (“The Evolution of Car Safety”, 2008; “Stars on Cars”, 2008).

The role of the ANCAP star rating system was emphasised, with evidence of its impacts showing safety had become, within two years of equal importance with fuel consumption in buying a new car, and that sales of four and five star rated cars (the highest safety levels) in Western Australia were now higher than the national average. Far from having to convince drivers of the desirability of safer cars, RAC campaigns meant safety had now become a top priority in purchasing new cars.

As with earlier campaigns around wearing seat belts and reducing drink driving, the RAC had been successful in changing attitudes and behaviours among motorists to such a degree that they were successfully reducing road crashes and their attendant fatalities and injuries. Such an outcome reflects the trust held by members and non-members in the messages around safety associated with the RAC, a trust that had been built up over a century. The changes had also been supported by increasing attention to safety in the design and manufacturing of cars, and now the possibility beckoned of cars that could respond to driver behaviour and actively correct problems and prevent crashes.

The design of roads remained an important aspect of RAC lobbying in this period. The Gallop Labor State government launched a three-year Road Safety Strategy in 2004 with the RAC’s support. The road improvements component of the strategy focused on targeting Black Spots and road enhancements such as sealing shoulders on rural roads (“Road Safety Strategy”, 2004). The RAC also sought guaranteed funding for the Road Trauma Trust Fund that was proposed by the Road Safety Council. Later the same year there was a Federal election and the RAC made a submission to the major parties seeking support for its priorities, which were to double the Black

Spot program funding in Western Australia, a Federal contribution to funding ANCAP, and an increase in the proportion of the fuel excise set aside for roads (“Vote for Safer Roads”, 2004).

The RAC unveiled a new system for rating roads through the Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) in 2005 (“New Road Ratings”, 2004/2005). The system analysed crash history and traffic volumes of sections of national highways and then ranked them according to levels of safety and risk to road users. Engineers could then design solutions to make them safer, and the ratings would be used to prioritise lobbying of governments for road improvement funding. In the initial ratings, the top five worst highways were in the north of the State, with the exception of the worst-rated highway which was the section of Great Eastern Highway between Mundaring and The Lakes, on the metropolitan fringe.

In 2006 the AusRAP ratings adopted a star system, and many of Western Australia’s main country highways totalling 19,000 kilometres in length were included, with most receiving a three- or four-star rating (five stars was the top rating) (“WA’s Roads”, 2006). This was better than the ratings in some other states, and it allowed the RAC to fine-tune its road lobbying efforts. The RAC then added another component to the AusRAP star ratings when it launched a ‘Risky Roads’ campaign, inviting members to nominate safety ‘flashpoints’ on the State’s roads. Members responses, mainly about the lack of overtaking lanes on country roads and unsafe intersections in the metropolitan area, allowed the RAC to further refine its lobbying and identify sites for which local governments were responsible (“Risky Roads”, 2007).

The election in September 2008 of the Liberal National Coalition State government of Premier Colin Barnett led RAC president Alden Halse to urge the new government to bring to fruition its promise of increased infrastructure spending by investing in sub-standard roads and roadside infrastructure (“Safer Roads for All”, 2008/2009). Through the AusRAP, Risky Roads and other methods, the Club had already identified clear priorities for road improvements, and it was confident that a new government policy for directing more mining royalties into regional areas would be of benefit in funding road works and reducing road crashes, deaths and trauma.

A special feature in *Horizons* explored the history of road building and use of road materials, with an emphasis on safer roads (“Roads, Risk, and Redesign”, 2008/2009). The RAC advocated greater investment in “building a safer road environment”, citing its support for the Road Safety Council’s new road safety strategy, ‘Towards Zero’, which set out a framework for road safety from 2008 to 2020. The strategy, which the RAC had helped develop, was based on four cornerstones of safe road use, safe roads, and roadsides, safe speeds, and safe vehicles. This had been recently put in action with the RAC advising Main Roads WA on the development of the new Perth to Bunbury Highway to ensure it gained at least a four-star AusRAP rating, the first time any Australian motoring club had collaborated with a road agency in this way.

The Club believed that large-scale change was required in designing and building roads in Australia, and cited Professor Raphael Grzebieta of the University of New South Wales who argued that Australian road design needed to move away from its historical reliance on American templates, as the United States was the worst performing OECD nation in terms of road safety and road deaths, and instead look to the ways European road agencies were developing best-practice safer road systems, especially in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Sweden. This new direction, combined with the Barnett government’s new ‘Royalties for Regions’ program and the

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

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RAC's AusRAP and ANCAP programs (ANCAP was based on the equivalent EuroCAP), and a seemingly never-ending mining boom, made for a promising start to the new decade.

INTO THE 2010S

Five years after the centenary, the RAC faced a new decade. At first, the never-ending mining boom seemed to have a permanence that would only be belied by later events. One consequence of the rapid population growth being experienced, especially in Perth, was an equally rapid increase in congestion on metropolitan roads. Congestion would be solved by “thinking differently”, and the RAC sought to aim for a “world of better mobility for members”, which meant an increasing focus on rail and other forms of public transport, and encouraging cycling and walking as alternatives to driving.⁴³ Occasionally, storm clouds marred the horizon, but the quick response of the RAC in assisting members following a devastating one-in-a-hundred-year hailstorm over Perth on 22 March 2010 was typical of the RAC's abilities and confidence. The storm resulted in \$1.3 billion in insurance claims, making it the costliest in Western Australian history (“Perth counts”, 2010; “Ten years on”, 2020).

RAC president Tim Shanahan wrote in 2013, at the height of the boom, that while “people often fear or resist change, change was inevitable”, and as the Club was changing its focus it was also changing to a logo as a physical representation of the changes. Amid the boom euphoria, the club badge that had been in use for well over eight decades was replaced by a simplified emblem without the initials ‘WA’ or the crown, but with the tag line ‘For The Better’, to “reflect a determination to deliver change for the better for our members” (“Embracing the New”, 2013, p. 7).⁴⁴

One example of a new approach to reducing congestion in 2014 was the RAC-funded trial of new traffic light timing technology on Orrong Road (State Route 8) between Francisco and Oats streets. The micro-simulation modelling software meant vehicles received a green light more frequently, resulting in clearing traffic faster and reducing queues (“RAC Trial”, 2014). Queue lengths were reduced by 34%, and journey times became 20% shorter (“RAC Trial”, 2015). The trial supported RAC calls for increased funding for the Traffic Operation Centre (TOC) and arose from the long-term agenda of advocacy and contributing to a vision of the RAC being seen as the most valued organisation in Western Australia by 2020 (“RAC Post”, 2010; “RAC Posts”, 2011; “The RAC's 2012-13 Financial results”, 2013).

The Club harnessed the results of the Red Spot campaign, which had received over 6,000 nominations from members in 2010, to prioritise its lobbying of State and local governments to address road safety problems and was finally successful in having the State government agree to devote all of red light and later speed camera revenue to road safety (“RAC Posts”, 2012).

Promoting road safety among school children was not new, but in 2011 in partnership with FESA, St John Ambulance, the Western Australian Police and Royal Perth Hospital the RAC launched ‘RAC bstreetsmart’, an annual event aimed directly at senior school students who watched

⁴³ See for example, “Embracing the New Road Reality”. (2013, Oct-Nov). *Horizons*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ The badge and the logo are compared on the [Brand New](https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/new_logo_for_rac.php#disqus_thread) blog, https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/new_logo_for_rac.php#disqus_thread, accessed 20 September 2020.

graphic re-enactments of road crashes and heard presentations from road trauma victims. In 2013 RAC bstreetsmart reached 5,000 students plus another 2,000 students at Country Week, an annual rural high schools carnival held in Perth and continued to grow in its reach each year.

In 2019, the RAC Project Road Smart® was launched for year 10-12 students, travelling around country areas and featuring a crash re-enactment, filmed as a docudrama, attended by real emergency services, with students having opportunities to listen to speakers who have been directly impacted by road trauma and talk with emergency services personnel (“RAC Project”, 2019).

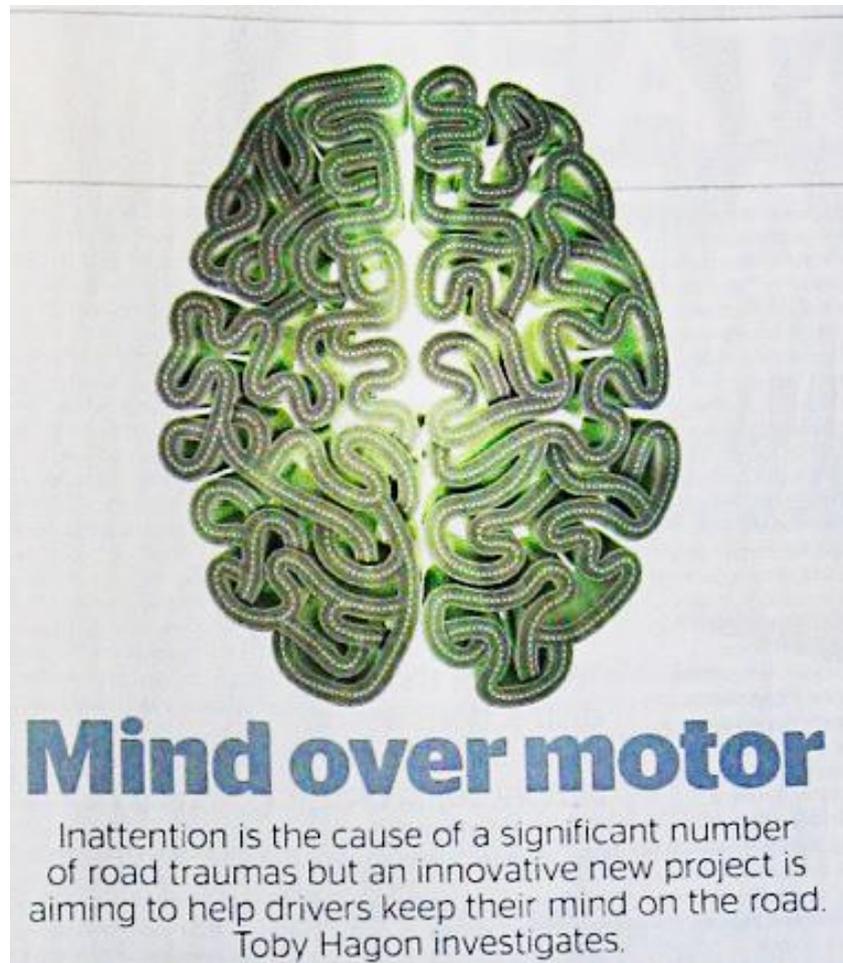
Beyond the metropolitan area, a new focus was identified in 2013 when it became clear that 55% of road deaths were occurring on country roads, especially in the Wheatbelt, although only 22% of the population lived outside the metropolitan area (“The RAC’s 2012-13 Financial Results”, 2013). Driver inattention was emerging as a major problem in road crashes. In 2015 an RAC survey found that, rather than any particular factor distinguishing Wheatbelt crashes from other regions, there was a noticeable reluctance within the region to talk about the trauma caused by crashes to families and communities (“The Elephant”, 2015).

To provoke community discussion and break the silence, the RAC commissioned the ‘Elephant in the Wheatbelt’ as part of a five-year campaign to highlight the consistently high rate of road fatalities and serious injuries in the region. The sculpture gave form to the expression ‘the elephant in the room’, directly referring to the well-known but rarely mentioned regional road trauma record. The life-sized sculpture was moved around Wheatbelt shires and towns and positioned in prominent roadside locations. It was intended to provoke discussions within local communities about the impacts of road trauma and promote road safety messages among residents of all ages. At the same time the RAC provided information to challenge myths about crashes and begin implementing strategies within local communities to reduce crashes. In 2015 the Club committed \$3 million to this program over five years (“The RAC’s 2014-15 Annual Report”, 2015).

RAC Insurance, from 2012 onwards, also agreed to no longer insure vehicles that did not have a four- or five-star ANCAP rating (“The RAC’s 2012-13 Financial Results”, 2013). By this time, ANCAP ratings were beginning to include the technologies that could assist a driver in preventing or minimising road crashes.

The problem of driver distraction was also addressed over 2013-2014 with the development of the Attention Powered Car in collaboration with Emotiv-Australia. The vehicle was able to respond to whether a driver was paying attention or had become distracted, in which case it slowed down. Inattention or distractions accounted for almost as many fatalities in Western Australia as speeding, or drink driving (“RAC Attention”, 2013; “Attention”, 2013). The technology was developed to use the existing car computer systems and formed the basis for the further development of interventions that could appropriately respond to driver inattention (“Mind Over Motor”, 2013/2014).

Figure 45: Eye-catching graphics and design in the new Horizons magazine got the attention of drivers and their families



Source: (*Horizons*, December January 2014, p. 41).

The move by RAC Insurance in 2012 to link insurance premiums and vehicle safety rating to achieve reductions in vehicle crashes and road trauma highlighted the links between them and was in line with the RAC's mobility agenda focus on safety, accessibility, and sustainability. This connection was further developed in 2014 when the State government issued a green paper on no-fault compulsory third party insurance ("Our State", 2015). The original 1943 third party insurance scheme only applied to parties able to prove that someone else was at fault, and the RAC supported the principle of extending the scheme for all people catastrophically injured as a result of a motor vehicle crash.

The RAC saw the green paper as an opportunity to achieve a better approach than proposed in the green paper, and drawing upon both a commissioned study and feedback from members argued in its response that the costs of the scheme could be reduced while also achieving better public policy outcomes in road safety (RAC Advocacy and Members, 2015).

The RAC argued the proposed premium was too high for members already subject to rising living costs, and that the proposed changes should be part of ramping-up Western Australia's Road Safety Strategy, such as, for instance, among motorcyclists who accounted for five percent of registered vehicles but 24 percent of fatalities. It also sought assurances that the Compulsory Third Party Scheme would remain in public ownership and not be privatised, as had happened in some eastern states with consequent increases in premiums. The RAC agreed that the proposals were an important equitable social policy initiative, and by engaging with the government sought to both 'live' its vision and remain member centred, looking after their financial and social interests.⁴⁵

Another approach to reducing road trauma was identified through the emerging international development of driverless vehicles. Early debate had begun in South Australia on the technology and road infrastructure design needed to accommodate driverless vehicles and in mid-2015 the RAC was flagging the need for an even more progressive and active debate to commence in Western Australia.

This technology was connected to the bigger concept of managed motorways and connected networks communicating with roadside infrastructure, satellites, vehicles and drivers to improve mobility and reduce congestion as well as reduce fatalities and crashes. This would become known as the 'smart freeway' and establish the connectivity that would enable driverless cars in the not-too distant future ("Smart Freeways", 2020).

Recognising that over 90 per cent of all deaths and serious injuries from motor vehicle crashes are a result of driver error, RAC became a determined champion of accelerating the safe and smooth transition of autonomous vehicles into the existing Western Australian transport network.

A survey comparing British, American and Australian attitudes to driverless cars indicated that Australians were the least likely to have heard of autonomous vehicles but had the most positive attitudes towards them and were the most likely to be interested in knowing more about the technology ("The Driverless Future", 2015). It was also apparent at the time that Australia's transport authorities had given little thought to the infrastructure design, policy and regulatory settings required to support and enable the safe introduction of driverless vehicles within Australia.

The RAC decided it should seize the initiative and began a world-wide search for a suitable driverless vehicle which it could publicly trial in Perth. The key objectives of the trial were to accelerate government policy and regulatory changes to support autonomous vehicles; enable community members to experience first-hand a driverless vehicle operating on public roads; and ultimately accelerate the safe transition of driverless vehicles saving countless lives and injuries lost through road trauma.

In 2016 the RAC Intellibus®, an autonomous shuttle bus began operations in Perth in an Australia-first trial of a fully electric, fully driverless bus operating on public roads ("RAC's 2015-

⁴⁵ The new provisions were enacted through the *Motor Vehicle (Catastrophic Injuries) Act 2016*, which commenced on 14 May 2016.



16 Annual Report”, 2016). Driverless cars, it was predicted, would reduce car crashes by ninety percent, and constitute a quarter of all vehicles on the road by 2030 (“Our Driverless Future”, 2016). They could also have environmental benefits through more efficient driving practices that reduced emissions and fuel use and even eliminated them altogether with electric batteries.

Environmental issues continued to be important, although the successful lobbying by all the state motoring organisations including the RAC to have petrol exempted by the Federal Labor government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard from its carbon pricing scheme in 2010, even when paired with increased benefits for members who drove lower-emission vehicles, strikes a discordant note (“RAC Posts”, 2011; “Rewarding”, 2015). Nevertheless, the RAC’s Less Emissions Mission to educate motorists on ways to reduce their carbon dioxide car emissions sought to achieve a similar objective (“The RAC’s 2012-13 Financial Results”, 2013).

The RAC was successful in lobbying the State government to allocate funding in its 2011/2012 budget for increased cycling infrastructure and additional CAT buses in the city centre, and the Club also increased its partnerships with groups delivering cycling and driver education programs to encourage more people off the roads (“RAC Posts”, 2012). By 2015 a focus on sustainable transport options had become a significant part of the Club’s ‘thinking differently’, when the RAC committed to funding the construction of a series of fast electric vehicle charging stations on a route from Perth to Augusta (“Building”, 2015). The route would be known as the RAC Electric Highway®. RAC President Esme Bowen, in her final Horizons column said:

“We achieved an Australian first through the construction of the RAC Electric Highway®... RAC funded the highway as part of its commitment to promoting more sustainable motoring and encouraging electric vehicle uptake” (“Building”, 2015, p. 19-22).

As the excitement of driverless cars and electric highways, and imaginative approaches to road trauma such as the Elephant in the Wheatbelt and RAC bstreetsmart in the RAC Arena were filling the pages of *Horizons* in the mid-2010s, another less-noticed event was taking place. The endless mining boom was coming to a halt. By mid-2015, unemployment was rising, State government expenditure began to contract, and population growth began to stall (Heaney, 2016; Wright, 2018; “WA Tomorrow”, 2019). This was acknowledged in the RAC’s 2016/17 annual report which noted:

“The external operating environment remains uncertain for many, with the management of the economy, the condition of the State’s finances and the cost of living all remaining at the centre of attention” (“RAC’s 2016/17 Annual Report”, 2017, p. 15).

The boom time enthusiasm had gone. Now, the RAC’s focus would be to continue to operate sustainably, continue to innovate and advocate, continue to deliver new and improved member services, and continue to ensure members can move around the state safely, easily and sustainably. Continuity was the key word.

Figure 46: The launch of the RAC Electric Highway® in 2015 opened up a whole new world in mobility



Source: RAC Archives

The one aspect of this post-boom continuity was a re-emphasising of intra-state tourism. During the boom years overseas, travel had returned to some prominence, especially to China and other east Asian destinations.⁴⁶ Promotion of local touring had also continued, but in 2014 the RAC purchased the caravan park at Cervantes and invested in substantially upgrading the facilities, setting a model for future acquisitions well beyond promoting local tourism. The goal of this program was to provide members with good quality and affordable holiday accommodation in key tourist destinations around Western Australia and provide members with opportunities to holiday in their own backyard (“RAC’s 2015-16 Annual Report”, 2016).

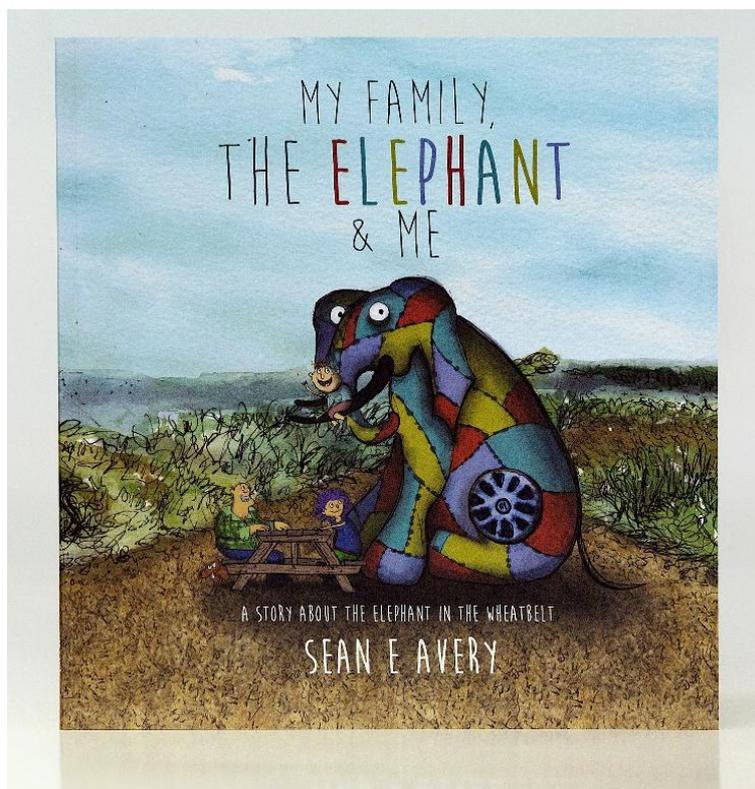
⁴⁶ For one example, see “The New China”. (2008, Jun). *Horizons*, p. 18-20.

By 2016, RAC Parks and Resorts consisted of Ningaloo Reef Resort, Exmouth Cape Holiday Park, Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort and Cervantes Holiday Park, to which was added that year the Busselton Holiday Park. Strung along the west coast these parks gave back to members, especially families, the casual beachside holidays that had been in danger of vanishing during the boom. The parks were pre-existing caravan and camping parks purchased by the RAC located in iconic tourist destinations, with the intention of encouraging extended regional visits rather than overnight stays (“RAC Parks and Resorts”, 2016).

A complementary program came through a partnership between the RAC and the State Department of Parks and Wildlife that provided members with a fifty percent discount on a range of Parks and Wildlife passes, with the additional benefit that revenue collected from the sale of such passes would go to the conservation of parks and visitor facilities (“Two Major Benefits”, 2015). As in earlier years, blending local holidaying with environmental benefits provided a salve in the disconcerting years after the boom.

The final years of the decade between 2016 and 2019 were years of consolidating existing programs. Sponsorship of the two RAC Rescue helicopters was maintained, with a second helicopter based in Bunbury extending the area covered to more of the South West. Despite several spectacular sea rescues, their main missions continued to be providing rapid transport for car crash victims to emergency treatment facilities.

Figure 47: “My Family, the Elephant and Me” picture book



Source: RAC Archives

The RAC bstreetsmart program continued to grow, with a record 9,000 students taking part in 2018, and Community Education programs were taken to over 15,000 primary and 30,000 high school students. The Elephant in the Wheatbelt program continued to attract attention, with local communities responding positively and local artists spreading the message through sculptures, quilting and song, amongst other media. In 2018 the launch of a children’s story book titled *My Family, The Elephant and Me* further expanded the program with the book delivered to all primary school children in the region.

Figure 48: The arrival of a trial autonomous vehicle was announced in 2016



Source: (Horizons, April May 2016, p. 17).

Between May 2018 and May 2019, RAC tested an automated prototype vehicle, the RAC Intellicar, on a closed, private track. While there were no plans to progress the RAC Intellicar trial to a further stage, RAC continued to operate the world leading RAC Intellibus® trial. By 2018 more than 8,500 people had experienced the RAC Intellibus® in South Perth, and in 2019 a partnership with the City of Busselton, through a Federal Smart Cities and Suburbs program, extended the driverless experience on public roads to country Western Australia, and in 2020 to the City of Greater Geraldton. In the Parks and Resorts program, a \$20 million upgrade of the Monkey Mia resort doubled its capacity from 600 to 1,000 guests with a range of accommodation prices, the redevelopment of the RAC Karri Valley Resort both increased its capacity and restored its historic character, and the acquisition of the RAC Cable Beach Resort in Broome was finalised.

Changes were few in the post-boom period, but they were notable. In 2017 the State Labor government of Premier Mark McGowan came into office. The RAC had warned the parties in the lead-up to the election that now was not the time to become complacent on road safety, congestion, and integrated transport planning that included cycling and public transport “even though the WA economy and population growth has slowed” (“Give me time”, 2017, p. 18-19). One of the priorities set by the RAC for an incoming government was to legislate for on-road protection for emergency services workers, a priority that was met in 2018 when the ‘Slow Down Move Over’, or SLOMO, laws came into effect requiring drivers to slow down to 40km/h when passing stationary emergency vehicles with flashing lights (“Get Up to Speed”, 2019).

The uptake of electric vehicles across Australia, of which sales began in 2010, had declined by 2019 from a high in 2015 of 1,700 new cars. The main factor was a lack of models at affordable prices compared to Europe, but the lack of mandated CO² emissions standards was also a culprit identified by the RAC as inhibiting innovation (“Slow Charge”, 2018). Motor companies were promising more models and prices for Australia in 2019, but in some ways the situation was reminiscent of the earliest days of motoring when demand in Europe was so high that models all sold out before any became available for export, a problem that took some fifteen years to overcome. However, although in 2020 electric vehicle registrations across Australia almost doubled their 2019 level, they still accounted for less than one percent of all registrations (ABS, 2020).

RAC Group CEO Terry Agnew retired in March 2019 after twenty years with the RAC and was succeeded by Rob Slocombe. In his testimonial, RAC president Tony Evans acknowledged Agnew’s leading role in innovations such as the RAC Electric Highway®, the RAC Intellibus® and the Parks and Resorts program, and positioning the RAC in Australia’s top 100 companies with “an iconic and leading brand” that had also been assessed at platinum standard over the past five years for workplace safety (“President’s Message”, 2018, p. 7). A crowning achievement had been the Club’s enrolment of its one millionth member (equivalent to 51 per cent of the Western Australian population aged 20 and above in 2018 financial year) during Agnew’s final year.

There remained at the end of 2019 a view that the Perth metropolitan population would increase by 1.5 million new residents by 2050, expanding in thirty years at a similar rate to the previous 180 years (“The Shape of Things”, 2019). This would have numerous implications for urban lifestyles, density and mobility, explored in a *Horizons* feature, with the paradoxes captured by David Galloway of the Leederville Connect community and business group:

“For 10,000 years, the high street was the place where human interactions happened. Then we had 100 years of cars and now 20 years of digital connection, so we don’t have to actually connect with real people anymore. Despite that, we see an increasing desire for human connection and interaction” (“The Shape of Things”, 2019, p. 25).

As the decade drew to a close, visions for planning for new routes and connections, new ways of doing mobility, were again starting to find a voice.

The final half of the 2010s decade strongly contrast with the earlier years of the decade and are more reminiscent of the early 2000s after 9/11 and other global shocks. People sought stability and certainty after the rapid changes of the boom years and returned to cocooning habits. ‘Slow

Down' or 'connection' is perhaps the message that captures the spirit of this period, rather than the boomtime 'change is inevitable'. There was a consolidation of the RAC's services and initiatives that demonstrated its commitment to both members and the broader community, without abandoning visions for a better future.

The Parks and Resorts program stands out in this regard, with its emphases on safe and affordable places for personal restoration and familial interaction through positive experiences of Westralian natural and cultural environments, while the Electric Highway, autonomous vehicle trials and envisioning a future Perth kept alive a sense of hope in the years ahead. The president's report for 2018/2019 captures something of this when it concluded:

"The support provided by members is captured in the very core of the RAC's existence, its social purpose. It is this purpose that has built a history and will drive the future" ("Combined Report", 2019, p. 9).

A BLACK SWAN LANDS IN THE FORM OF COVID-19

As summer turned to autumn in 2020, the RAC, like the rest of the world, was suddenly cast into dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic. At the time of writing, the pandemic was still ongoing, and so this final part of a story spanning over 115 years can only briefly narrate and illustrate the ways in which the Club has been able to draw upon the strengths that are innate within its great inheritance.

The first instances of COVID-19 in Western Australia were in February 2020 when two passengers repatriated from a cruise ship in Japan, the *Diamond Princess*, landed in Perth. The first death in Australia, one of the *Diamond Princess* passengers, was recorded in Perth on 1 March. These were frightening shocks for Western Australians, and various restrictions on movement and shutdowns of businesses and institutions quickly followed. The State border was closed on 24 March to curb transmission from the eastern states and overseas. Regional boundaries were closed on 1 April to prevent transmission within the State. The regional boundaries were successively re-opened between 18 May and 6 June, allowing intra-state travel to resume, but at the time of writing the State border remains firmly closed.

The RAC was considered an essential service, and its administrative offices remained open but with limited access from 23 March 2020, and with only very limited access, and staff and contractors began working from home wherever possible. All of RAC's member service centres remained opened with appropriate health precautions in place. Supporting its members was a high priority for the Club in line with its proud traditions. The June July 2020 issue of *Horizons* carried a message from RAC president Jacqueline Ronchi stressing that the Club's responsibilities to members and staff remained clear, and the Club was continuing to advocate for important matters and support essential services. She recalled the Club's long history of public service in difficult times such as the Great War while reflecting on the way the current uncertainties were bringing out new strengths. The RAC is providing a priority breakdown service for all medical practitioners, fire fighters and police officers and other essential workers, and has developed a COVID-19 Hardship package to support members financially impacted by the pandemic. Ms Ronchi concluded that "After 115 years, we are and will continue to be, here for you" ("President's Message", 2020, p. 2).

Further details were provided in *Horizons* on support for members suffering financial hardship, on conducting insurance transactions online, and on the ways all Roadside Assistance Patrols and Auto Services Centre are following hygiene advice, using social distancing, wearing protective gloves and using appropriate sanitisation products (“RAC Covid 19 Response”, 2020). A feature article in the same issue was able to take a look at very traditional RAC concerns, the ways the pandemic was affecting the supply of new cars and car parts, and petrol prices (“Production Disruption”, 2020; “Pandemic”, 2020).

In a nutshell, demand for new cars was already outstripping demand before the pandemic, and manufacturers in Asia, Europe and North America were now suspending, or had already suspended, production of vehicles and parts and global supply chains were being disrupted everywhere. Car dealers were mostly closed, and customers were being directed to online manuals for maintenance issues, but the longer term effects for consumers had yet to be revealed. Petrol prices had been falling globally as oil production continued to outpace rapidly declining demand with travel restrictions reducing fuel use, although wholesale prices had fallen further than retail prices, and members were encouraged to use the online Fuelwatch and continue to buy from retailers with the lowest prices.

As the pandemic unfolded, the RAC also maintained its advocacy programs where post-pandemic benefits could be ascertained. In June 2020, the State and Federal Governments announced a funding partnership to deliver the first year of a Regional Road Safety Improvement Program (“Regional”, 2020). The \$100 million commitment will fund safety treatments to 1,400 kilometres of Western Australia’s country roads, such as sealing road shoulders and installing audible edge lines.

The RAC welcomed the funding but continued to call on both governments to fund a Regional Road Safety Package and commit to upgrading a further 16,000 kilometres of WA’s regional road network. The package focuses on low-cost safety treatments, notably audible line markings (rumble strips) and sealing road shoulders. RAC argues the full package would deliver \$900 million in life-saving upgrades to 17,000 kilometres of Western Australia country roads and should be prioritised and completed within four years.

Another feature article in the August September 2020 issue of *Horizons* looked at how adapting to the pandemic was rapidly changing ways of working and commuting and asked whether these changes might be permanent (“How Coronavirus”, 2020). Picking up on the RAC’s environment and community safety interests, the options appear to be either more road congestion as people abandon public transport, a suburban village revival as people found they could work from home and cycle and walk more locally, and/or country towns experiencing a revival as people left the city to work remotely.

Cities the world over are grappling with the same issues, and while there are short-term mobility issues to be faced, there is a need now to look at how things might change permanently. The RAC’s Public Policy and Mobility Manager Anne Still argues that “any sort of crisis naturally generates innovation, and I think we’ll see a range of solutions coming through in coming months”. The opportunities to develop working from home arrangements were identified as a major factor that would in turn shape mobility and transport needs, and Still concluded:



I think a lot of the challenges we're experiencing will be managed but even when we're back to some kind of normality, we have to expect, and even welcome the idea, that things will change.

The RAC's long continuity clearly demonstrates that both members and the organisation have the capacity to draw upon a legacy of meeting challenges, adapting to changing situations and providing leadership in times of uncertainty without having to abandon its rich heritage. The way forward may not yet be clear, but the RAC has shown time and again that when its purpose is clear and well-articulated it can forge new pathways, reinvigorate old tracks, and have the confidence to be a guiding light into the unknown.



CHAPTER 7: REFLECTIONS

According to Rob Slocombe, RAC Group CEO, while launching a new Purpose, Vision and Mission for the RAC in September 2020: At RAC our 'why' is 'To be the driving force for a better WA' ... Our 'why' is critical because to truly have a purpose for the future, our organisation must reconnect with our values, our history, and our heritage – because they are unique to us and to Western Australia. (Slocombe, 2020).

Researching and writing a history of an organisation like the RAC is not straightforward. Not only does the history span 115 years, but the organisational structure is also complex. It comprises a mixture of commercial (for example, insurance), and non-commercial (for example, advocacy) activities, all governed within a member-based not-for-profit incorporated association. Distinguishing the historical developments in an organisation representing the interests of motorists from the development of motor manufacturing and dealing, motor fuel refiners and sellers, the makers and retailers of motor accessories, traffic and road regulators, road designers and builders, motor sporting bodies and numerous other interests is not easy.

In many ways they are not separate but rather distinctive elements or expressions of something more wholistic, the means for moving people and goods from one place to another in a safe and effective way. However, the task here has been to make that distinction, to illuminate the role of a motorists' organisation within that bigger system of moving things around, or of 'mobility', and finally, to where it may be heading. As behoves any writer in Western Australia, questions of whether this story has any Westralian characteristics is always in the background, and occasionally the foreground, of the work.

TO BE THE DRIVING FORCE

As Rob Slocombe noted in his launch of the new Purpose, Vision and Mission in 2020, the RAC is unique in Western Australia. There may be some commercial competitors for some aspects of RAC operations, such as a roadside assistance services operated by some insurance firms and car dealers, or commercial franchise and independent caravan parks, but only the RAC provides such services within a comprehensive framework of mobility advocacy in all its forms. There is no other RAC-like organisation in Western Australia, and although there is a similar body in each state and territory and New Zealand, with which the RAC works collegially (partly through the AAA). Each has sufficient differences in their corporate structures, activities, histories, and in their respective communities, that they are not simply analogues of each other. The RAC is therefore unique across Australasia. However, uniqueness can engender pride and reflect a certain distinctiveness, but it also comes with a need to remain focused on purpose or, as Slocombe said, the 'why' an organisation continues to exist.

Eighteen months earlier, Slocombe's predecessor Terry Agnew, on the cusp of retirement following two decades in the top role, reflected on the increasingly rapid pace of technological and social change in the twenty-teens. Change was disrupting everything, and Agnew identified the 'big four' mobility trends as electric, connected, automated, and shared, all of which would affect as well as benefit the RAC (Woods, 2019). Mobility was the key word, and the mobility agenda encompassed safety, accessibility, and sustainability.

In August 2014 Agnew arranged for Larry Burns, who later wrote *Autonomy: The Quest to Build the Driverless Car and How it Will Reshape Our World*, to deliver a presentation to the RAC leadership team (Burns & Shulgun, 2018). This led, through the mobility agenda focus on safety, initially to the development of the Attention Powered Car, and then to a partnership with Navya, a French manufacturer specialising in electric and autonomous vehicles, to develop in Western Australia an Automated Vehicle, or AV. It was felt that AV technologies could be critical to the mobility agenda of safety, and indeed accessibility and sustainability, and the AV project had three specific aims: increase knowledge of the potential impacts and opportunities of AV, allow people to see and experience AV technologies, and help prepare Western Australia for the transition to AV.

The RAC believed it had one outstanding advantage over commercial firms. It was working to advance its mobility agenda, not to raise profits for distribution to shareholders. This advantage led to an environment being created for the project in which it was 'safe to fail'. This encouraged risk taking and projected a message that the RAC was secure in its purpose and committed to advancing knowledge through innovation. 'Failure' was not a problem but a means of learning. Agnew was clear that the purpose of the AV project was about,

"Having a robust understanding of the technology and what it means for WA [that] will help develop a roadmap for a safe transition to our driverless future" (Woods, 2019, p. 7).

The AV project went on to underpin the development of two generations of the RAC Intellibus®, and the continuing expansion of AV trials in metropolitan suburbs and country towns, as well as a supportive infrastructure such as the RAC Electric Highway® and the evolving Smart Freeway network. The RAC's role has been either to directly manufacture or construct some of this technology, or to lobby for and sponsor its development by agencies such as Main Roads WA. In doing so, the RAC was positioning itself as a change-agent and both embodying and leading technological, behavioural, and emotional change within its members, staff, and the broader community.

In relation to the purpose or 'why' of the RAC, these recent strategic choices have been placed, at least partly, within a historical trajectory. In relation to the AV project, it was stated in 2019 that,

"In WA, historically, there had always been a pioneering spirit and a motivation to succeed, and this continued with this project" (Woods, 2019, p. 7).

At a higher level, the RAC's Vision 2030 emphasises the need to "reconnect with our values, our history and our heritage, because they are unique to us and to Western Australia" ("RAC Vision 2030", n.d.). That history and heritage is studded with innovative approaches, from the earliest and previously unheard of signposting of roads with directional and informative signs in the 1910s, to a sequence of largely experimental approaches to developing third party insurance between the wars, to changing the behaviours of motorists to accept compulsory seat belts and random breath testing in the 1970s and 1980s, to the earliest experimenting with electric powered vehicle development in the 1980s and promoting hydrogen cell and hybrid technologies in the early 2000s.

The centrality of the members and the broader community are also emphasised in Vision 2030, as is the role of the RAC as a "voice for community change". The values of safety, sustainability

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The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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and connectivity could be represented in three key projects, the Smart Freeway (safety), electric vehicles (sustainability) and autonomous vehicles (connectivity). The RAC faces similar challenges to the early ACWA in not only charting routes into the future but actively seeking to shape those routes. In 2020 it has a more clearly defined and articulated vision than in 1905, but unexpected events can suddenly alter routes no matter how meticulously planned, such as the Great War in 1914 and the COVID 19 Pandemic in 2020.

The 'safe to fail' philosophy of the AV program is one key to understanding why the RAC has been, and continues to be, resilient in weathering such storms. The second-hand car market, for instance, rose in the harsh times of the Great Depression, and the RAC successfully adapted to its member's needs for advice on maintaining their cars and prolonging the life of car parts rather than purchasing and importing new cars.

The launch of the first RAC Intellibus® route in South Perth in August 2016 began at the Old Mill, built in 1835 and an early colonial example of technological advancement. The Mill was not entirely successful due to its inconvenient location, from which future flour millers learned important lessons ("A Brief History", n.d.). Like the colonial millers, the RAC would learn lessons from this first trial and improve its AV operations.

Pioneering spirit and a motivation to succeed are part of the RAC's historical trajectory, as are its commitment to its members and to the Western Australian community. Yet the governing structures of the RAC also play their part and will be equally important in the Club's future. Particularly, if that trajectory leads to a destination in which there are no motorists as traditionally understood, but instead AV 'passengers', who may or may not own the vehicles in which they travel. The central need for mobility will likely remain at the core of the RAC's purpose.

OUR FIRST ASSET IS OUR MEMBERS

The centrality of mobility is linked to the centrality of the membership in the RAC. Patrick Walker, Group Executive Social and Community Impact, in a wide-ranging interview in November 2020, identified the relationship between the Club and its members as critical to its future. "Our first, and most important, asset is our members" he said (Walker interview, Nov 26, 2020). Walker identified the members and the Club as co-creators of member value, fostering and building commitment to the Club through non-commercial activities. One way this is evident is in the organisational structure. The members elect the RAC Council as the overall governing body, and the Council has established the RAC Holdings Board and Insurance Board which manage the commercial activities.

The Council focuses on achieving the overall mobility vision and agenda. The metrics by which performance is measured are, in effect, measures of social and community impact often achieved through political influence on public policy makers. These include indicators of declining vehicle emissions and declining road trauma. Developing a new framework of social impact measurements is part of the Council and Board calendar for 2021.

The RAC has over the past decade freed itself from a 'car club' mentality through the mobility agenda. This has allowed it to engage in developing new public policy frameworks that, at least initially, are specific to Western Australia. An instance of this approach can be seen in the developing public debates around taxing electric vehicles by State governments, notably in

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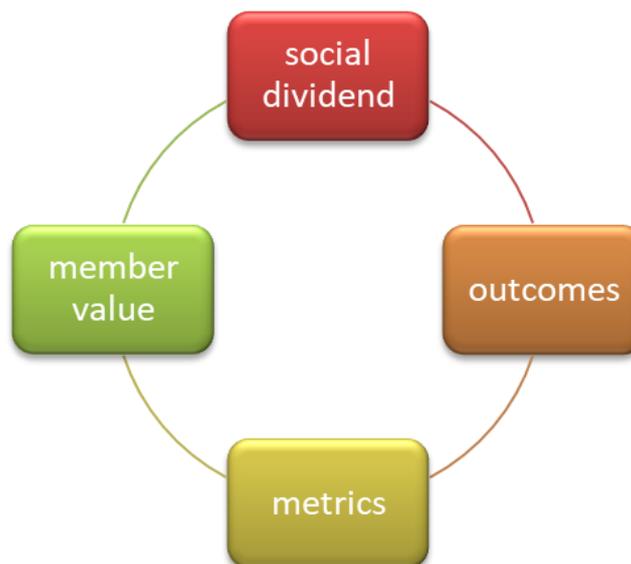
Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales. Debate is predicated on the basis that EV owners do not contribute to the costs of road maintenance whereas internal combustion engine (ICE) owners do through fuel excise.⁴⁷ Excise is a Federal tax that is imposed on petroleum products (among other things) and cannot be levied by the states.

Through its mobility agenda, the RAC argues for a road user pricing model that is fair and equitable for all vehicle owners. Increasing the cost of operating EVs alone is a disincentive to EV adoption and will not address increasing vehicle emissions and poor air quality, argues Walker, whereas an equitable system of road user charges across all types of vehicle are necessary as EVs and then AVs supersede ICEs. Consequently, fuel excise will rapidly decline, and an equitable system of road user charges across all vehicles will help State governments transition their funding of transport infrastructure.

The rapidity with which motor cars superseded animal-powered transport in Western Australia, especially in the decade of the 1920s, points to a similarly rapid transition from ICEs to EVs, a transition assumed in the mobility agenda to take place between 2020 and 2030. The mobility agenda positions the RAC as an influencer of and participant in developing public policy for this foreseeable and rapid change, rather than limiting it to reactive stances that, in effect, inhibit the transition to electric-powered transport and maintain the real costs of factors such as road trauma and vehicle pollution-induced illnesses experienced by RAC members and the community generally.

The mobility agenda, as explained by Walker, relies on a strong sense of unified purpose across the Club and its commercial activities. This can be understood as a virtuous circle, as shown in Figure 49.

Figure 49: The RAC Virtuous Circle



⁴⁷ For an example of this debate, see Quiggin, J. (2020, Dec 9). 'Victoria's electric vehicle tax and the theory of second-best'. *The Conversation*.

Walker identifies several key factors in driving the mobility agenda into the future. One is keeping member value at the centre of thinking and maintaining positive interactions with and between members. Another is keeping Western Australia as the heartland of the RAC's operations and leveraging its 'trusted brand' status to continue developing and growing in the coming post-ICE age. A third is the potential to leverage brand and location to develop partnerships with overseas organisations sharing similar values.

The concept of peer-to-peer transactions will be significant in this development, leveraging information technologies to empower members to share information about, for instance, excess capacity in areas such as vehicle usage as AVs supersede vehicles reliant on human drivers, a development the mobility agenda assumes will greatly advance in the decade of the 2020s. By the late 2030s, there may be few drivers, as we understand them today, but there will continue to be RAC members.

Current insights into the RAC's pathways to the future, pathways that are envisioned and strategized towards being achieved rather than left to chance, recall some earlier periods in the organisation's history, such as the 1920s-1930s under the leadership of Oscar Zehnder. There are some long continuities, and there are also periods when these continuities have been obscured.

Disruptions and failures are part of the RAC's story, or rather, the way the RAC has been able to harness the energies they released and capitalise on opportunities and lessons learned to go forward. The mobility agenda similarly has been able to draw upon the capacities that characterise a venerable organisation – its stability, its endurance, and its identity, all rooted in close connections between the membership and organisational structures, and a clear and compelling vision and purpose, to chart a map to the future.

CHAPTER 8: APPLYING THE CME RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for research into co-operative enterprise is focused on understanding the business model of the co-operative and mutual enterprise (CME), and how it is influenced by, and in-turn influences, systems and member level factors (Mazzarol, et al. , 2014).

At the systems level, which relates to the external environment, there are four major inputs (i. e. , social cooperation, role of government, industry structure, natural environment), and two major outputs (i. e. , economic, and social capital formation). These elements also interact with each other within the systems architecture. This views a social system as comprising six key elements (Luhmann, 1984; Mattheis, 2012):

1. *Communication* – all systems are social in nature and therefore it is essential that a system has communication between the actors within it, and between systems.
2. *Autopoiesis* – a Greek word for ‘self-creating’ or ‘self-making’, recognising that all systems must be able to replicate, adapt and evolve using communication to exchange knowledge and ideas, resulting in learning, amongst the actors within the system.
3. *Differentiation* – all systems are autopoietic systems (social structures) that operate within the wider environment and are differentiated and independent from each other.
4. *Operative closure* – each system can isolate (close) itself to develop its own unique systems-specific activities.
5. *Functional differentiation* – due to differentiation and operative closure, each system can evolve its own unique characteristics that can create functional and dysfunctional interactions between different systems within the environment.
6. *Structural couplings* – where two or more systems recognise the need to link together, they create inter-system relationships that open *structural holes* between them enabling an exchange of communication relaying ideas, information, and knowledge (Burt, 1992a/b).

Social systems are self-forming, complex, and dynamic. They involve interaction and behaviour at the individual, group, and organisational levels, through which change is achieved within the broader environment (De Haan, 2006). The creation of social systems is generated through both formal and informal networks of individuals and organisations that have common interests, and/or resource dependencies (Jessop, 1997; Klijin & Koppenjan, 2000).

A CME is a social system and has all six attributes outlined above. It operates within a systems level environment in which all other social systems (both formal and informal) operate. These other social systems interact with the CME, and the components of its business model (e. g. , purpose, profit formula, processes, resources, share structure, and governance), which influence its ability to deliver a compelling member value proposition (MVP) to its membership. Key areas of interaction are social cooperation between individuals and organisations, government legal and regulatory systems, market competition within industry structure, and the environment.

At the member level, the framework examines the four roles or “hats” that the member wears (e. g. , investor, patron, owner, member of a community of purpose) (Mamouni Limnios et al. , 2018). Members loyalty and commitment to the CME is influenced by how well the enterprise addresses the needs of its members (both manifest and latent) through its ability to generate and sustain a member value proposition (MVP) (Suter & Gmür, 2013).

In the following sections the history of the RAC WA is examined and the lessons it provides are discussed, with a summary of these issues found in the Appendix A.

ASSESSING THE CRITICAL EVENTS THAT HAVE FACED THE RAC WA

This study has identified seven critical events over the 120-year history of the RAC. A critical event is defined here as ‘a contingent event that is causally important for an outcome at a specific time that has longer-term strategic consequences. It is important to summarise these events in order to provide a historical context against which the RAC can be examined using the conceptual framework. As outlined in this case study the RAC has faced seven critical events that risked its future viability and required strategic and operational responses from the RAC council and management to address.

THE FIRST CRITICAL EVENT – ESTABLISHMENT OF A MOTOR CLUB WHERE NONE HAD PREVIOUSLY EXISTED, 1905

Establishing a mutual support body for motorists may not seem a critical event in its own right, until measured against the presence or otherwise of similar bodies. In 1905, the motor vehicle was only just beginning to move from a glamorous but very expensive form of transport only available to the very wealthy to a more affordable and reliable, although still expensive, means of moving around.

The motorist organisations of which Western Australia drivers had some knowledge were the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland, which had been in existence for nearly a decade, and similar clubs in France, Germany and the United States. These four countries were all the leading sources of motor vehicle innovation and manufacturing at the time. In addition, motorist groups had very recently been formed in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, New Zealand and Ceylon, and a club was being formed in Queensland. These colonial organisations focused on motor drivers, car racing, socialising and initially on procuring vehicles, spare parts and fuels from overseas in the absence of commercial operators.

The formation of the first automobile club in Western Australia, where the costs of importation were greater than elsewhere and the market smaller, took a leap of faith among early motorists. Distinctions between motor cars, motor bikes, motor boats and other motorised transport were still forming, and their viability was not necessarily assured. However, there was sufficient networking and reciprocity among the small group of motor vehicle owners and drivers in the Perth metropolitan area to have created a degree of social capital that could, by 1905, sustain a mutually supportive organisation.

It would take another ten years until 1916 for an appropriate legal form for the body to come to fruition when the club was registered as a not-for-profit incorporated association. The RAC has maintained that legal structure ever since, and over the longer term has developed to become the

largest and most influential motoring, or mobility, entity in Western Australia and one of the largest in Australia.

*SECOND CRITICAL EVENT – INVENTION OF ROAD SIGNS AND OTHER MOTORING
INFRASTRUCTURE, 1908*

The increasingly widespread adoption of motor vehicles created a need for adequate transport infrastructure, and the earliest such need was for drivers to know where they were actually going. Transport routes, especially beyond town boundaries, until this time had largely developed organically to cater to the needs of animal-based transport, walking and existing lines of fence. Facilities such as hotels and stables had grown up roughly 15 kilometres apart, or the general daily distance travelled by such means. Directions to destinations could be obtained by travellers from other travellers, innkeepers and stable hands without any need for accurately measured directional signs or detailed maps, or the precise timing of railway timetables.

The installation by the RAC of the first directional road signs on the route between Perth and Fremantle in 1908 was hugely innovative. Some models of directional road signs were available from the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland, but apart from clearly printed destinations (e.g. 'Fremantle') and a reasonably accurate indication of the correct direction to take, such as an arrow-headed sign or pointing finger painted on the sign were essential. Showing distances to a destination had to wait until such distances could be accurately measured, which included agreeing upon start and end points.

RAC members participated in measuring distances every time they travelled, keeping log books that were submitted to the Club. In 1912 the RAC produced its first road map that showed vehicle routes with their various curves and turns between named locations annotated with distances expressed in miles. The map was modelled on similar maps being produced by the European car clubs and rapidly expanded the areas to which drivers could travel. They would know when they should arrive, calculate fuel usage (especially as extra fuel usually still had to be carried in the vehicle), and plan to stop at beauty spots and other attractions along the route.

Road signs and maps were essential infrastructure for drivers who could easily travel distances much further than 15 kilometres in a day. They were also useful for authorities looking to regulate road usages and determine methods by which drivers would contribute to the costs of other road infrastructure such as road surfaces. Registration of animal-drawn carts and similar vehicles had been in place since 1873, but their wear and tear on roads and demands for additional infrastructure were minimal compared to motor vehicles for which whole new road building and maintenance methods were needed.

The RAC took on the responsibility for developing a standardised list of local district vehicle registration places, or number plates, again based on British and European models, which was finalised in 1916 with a standard code for each local government licensing body. Vehicles registered with the City of Perth, for example, had number plates commencing with the letter P. Although there would be many variations over the years to road signage, route mapping and vehicle registration, all have remained central to driving. Road signs are now a State responsibility, road mapping has become largely electronic rather than paper based, and WA

remains the only State with a system of district number plates, but all these systems were invented by the RAC.

Initially all these forms of 'signage' were to serve the interests of RAC members, through the Club's capacity to mobilise them in socially co-operative ways and then, having created such social resources, successfully transfer them to either the State to administer through its legislative practices (number plates, and later road signs) or as road mapping became useful for many more purposes it was able to overcome free-riding problems, for instance, by selling mapping data to private firms producing an increasing variety of specialised maps, street directories and finding aids.

THIRD CRITICAL EVENT – COMMENCEMENT OF ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE SERVICES, 1926

As cars became increasingly cheaper to buy and operate after the Great War, increasing numbers of women and men learnt to drive cars, motor tourism developed as an industry, and motor vehicle and engine design became more complex, the demand for mechanical support services became apparent. Once again, a British model was followed with the creation of a roadside assistance scheme for members. Introduced from 1926 onwards, a mechanic on a motorcycle could either be flagged down (they regularly patrolled specific, advertised routes), or could be called by a member (provided they could access a telephone) to assist them with a car that had broken down on the roadside. Common problems were running out of fuel and flat tyres. The service was an instant success, and within two years RAC membership almost tripled, and also motivated the installation of roadside public telephones.

Five years later in 1932 two further innovations were introduced, the contract service station and motor mechanic testing. Contract service stations provided services to a member where they could have their car serviced or repaired with a member discount on the costs. Many contract service stations also operated RAC roadside assistance schemes, especially in country districts which facilitated the expansion of the scheme. Motor mechanic testing, often linked with contract service stations, was introduced to try and standardise mechanical skills to assure members that an accredited service station could be relied upon to maintain or repair a vehicle to at least a minimum standard.

Today, roadside assistance remains a significant aspect of RAC member activities, also emulated by some private firms. Some elements of the contract service station survive in RAC-accredited vehicle testing stations where cars can be tested for roadworthiness as part of the registration process. Public telephones became critical infrastructure during the twentieth century but have now largely been replaced by private mobile phones. The training and accreditation of motor mechanics has been taken over by State technical or vocational education bodies.

These measures initially worked because of the trust members had in the club to provide such professional services, and because that trust also allowed members to own and operate motor vehicles without having to become motor mechanics themselves. The club created enduring social capital for itself, and as the structures of the motor vehicle support industries (such as repairs and servicing) developed competitive intensities the RAC, rather than seeing these as threats, welcomed them as new entrants. The RAC acted as an incubator for developing all manner of motor vehicle support industries, only operating in those industry spaces for as long

as needed for their commercial viability to become established and attractive to commercial enterprises. The RAC could then withdraw, leaving an industry legacy valued by both RAC members and non-members.

FOURTH CRITICAL EVENT – GETTING INTO THE MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE BUSINESS, 1947

At the same time as mechanical support services were being developed, the problem of insuring motor vehicles also came to the fore. Initially, because motor vehicles were so new, insurance companies lacked any meaningful data on which to assess the risks of insuring cars and so were hesitant about offering insurance. Nevertheless, member demands for some sort of insurance continued to grow, and in 1925 the RAC entered into an arrangement with Lloyds underwriters to provide car insurance and third-party insurance for members at an affordable premium (the few schemes available were still prohibitively expensive for most car owners). Presumably Lloyds had by that time sufficient data from nearly three decades of actual motor vehicle usage in Europe and North America on which base its offerings.

In 1937 the Lloyds scheme was superseded by the formation of a private company in which RAC was the shareholder called Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd to provide competitive motor insurance for members. Club Motor Insurance acted as a broker on behalf of members to obtain suitable and affordable insurance for motor vehicles. It also heralded a new type of business venture for the RAC. The formation of a proprietary limited company allowed profits to be kept off the RAC's books (as a not-for-profit) except as a dividend paid to RAC Inc as the owner of the business but otherwise invested back into the insurance business. Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd was thus something of a hybrid between an investor-owned firm with just one investor and a co-operative model of investing profits back into the business, something like a co-operative's reserve funds.

There was one area of business, however, that Club Motor Insurance could not offer at affordable member rates, third party insurance. As the number of vehicles was rapidly increasing, but driver skills and road design remained fairly poor, accidents resulting in serious life-long injuries and disabilities were becoming too common. The State was being left to pay these rising costs for health care as premiums for third party insurance were beyond the means of most drivers. The RAC, against opposition from the insurance industry, lobbied for a State third party insurance scheme with bills introduced to State Parliament in 1938 and 1941 before the *Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act 1943* came into effect in 1944. Club Motor Insurance was an approved insurer under the Scheme, and the RAC also began to reorganise its insurance businesses.

RAC Insurance was registered as a new business in 1947. It was completely owned by the RAC, and Club Motor Insurance was deregistered. Although its legal structure was completely separate from the RAC club, many management staff were shared which led to some inconsistencies until, in 1960, the management was formally separated, and RAC Insurance was housed in a separate section of the newly extended RAC building in Adelaide Terrace.

RAC Insurance became (and remains) a major insurance firm in Western Australia, and over the years its coverage and brands extended with, for instance, *Homeguard* home insurance introduced in 1970 and *Lifeguard* life insurance in 1973. RAC Finance Ltd was established in 1984, initially to provide personal loans to staff. These business entities, although heavily promoted to

RAC members, also provided services to non-members, and as early as 1965 the RAC had to publicly clarify that prospective new members did not have to hold any RAC insurances to qualify for RAC club membership.

The early arrangements with Lloyds, then Club Motor Insurance and the lobbying of the State to take on third party insurance were all consistent with providing services to the members and creating both economic and social capital. The establishment of RAC Insurance, although initially aimed at members, nevertheless established a business entity outside the mutual business framework that has since grown in accordance with commercial imperatives and within the evolving finance industry structures and changing government roles in the market and economic policy frameworks.

What is perhaps most notable about this is that, whereas mutual organisations such as Perth Building Society, once they had started along an analogous route chose to demutualise in order to continue their commercial evolution whereas the RAC's use of structurally independent investor-owned firms to undertake such activities has allowed that commercial evolution to continue without undermining the mutual ethos or structure of RAC inc.

FIFTH CRITICAL EVENT – INTRODUCING ROAD SAFETY TO WA DRIVERS, 1971

The RAC's focus on improving road safety for members, and so all drivers on WA roads, began as a response to the costs of insurance. The rationale was essentially to reduce insurance premium and payout costs by reducing or preventing deaths and injuries, and damage to vehicles and infrastructure. This would produce social benefits for members and economic benefits for the club.

Two significant events occurred in 1970. The first was the RAC adopting a policy of support for the compulsory wearing of seat belts, and the second was the peaking of road fatalities on Australian roads at 30.4 deaths per 100,000. The rate declined rapidly from 1971, which was attributed to compulsory seat belts and the introduction of seat belts as standard in new cars from 1970. The Club had shown some interest in safety before this. It published in *Road Patrol* the first list of Australian Standards Association-approved safety belts for Australian cars in 1962, and in 1956 had carried the earliest reports in Australia on the testing and use of seat belts in the United States. Even earlier, in 1946, the RAC initiated the formation of the National Safety Council of WA to advise the Police and other State agencies on road safety campaigns.

However, the successes attributed to seat belts after their introduction in reducing fatal crashes sparked a bigger interest in being able to achieve measurable advances in road safety. The RAC became a champion of road safety, usually pitched to its members as reducing risks to their personal safety and property and reducing the costs of insurance premiums. In 1974 the RAC announced it would support the preliminary breath-testing of drivers for alcohol. At the time this was a controversial stance, not unlike the Club's earlier support for seat belts, but it held its ground.

The next year the RAC succeeded in lobbying the State government to ban unapproved seat belts and child restraints, and the re-use of seat belts from crashed cars. In 1976 fitting retractable seat belts became compulsory in all new cars in Australia. In 1980 the RAC lobbied the Roads & Traffic Authority to include questions on drink driving in the driver licence test, and the next year

supported reducing the blood alcohol level from 0.08 to 0.05. In 1987 the RAC supported Random Breath Testing (RBT) of drivers.

This focus on seat belts and drink driving, despite some pushback within the community, led to marked reductions in road fatalities, falling to 9.7 per 100,000 by 1997. It also enhanced the RAC's social capital among members and within the broader community as a reliable and trusted source of information on road safety.

The Club was able to build upon this, and its focus shifted somewhat in the 1990s to driver training and school education programs, and the formation by the RAC and the other state and New Zealand automotive organisations in 1992 of the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) to performance test new vehicles and publicise safety findings. A comprehensive survey of RAC members in 1999 found road safety remained the top issue on which the RAC should focus its lobbying of governments.

Safety campaigns and lobbying efforts became more intense with an annual focus. These included:

- Bans on drivers holding mobile phones and introducing 50 km/h residential speed zones (2002).
- The Red Spot Program to identify traffic trouble spots (2003).
- The Written Off Vehicles Register (2004).
- Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) to rate roads according to safety (2005).
- The 'Risky Roads' campaign for member to nominate dangerous roads (2007).
- 'Safer Cars Safer Lives' program to encourage buyers to only purchase cars with an ANCAP rating of 4 or more stars, and
- 'Our Community Education' program for both school students and older drivers on road and personal safety (2007).

The RAC WA also advised Main Roads WA on the design of a new highway to Bunbury to achieve at least a 4-star AusRAP rating, and with the Road Safety Council launch a 'Towards Zero' strategy for safe road use, safe roads and roadsides, safe speeds and safe vehicles (2008). Additionally, it advocated better road design and building by looking to leading European road agencies rather than outdated US models (2009) and launched the 'RAC bstreetsmart' annual event to increase awareness among senior school students of the impacts and trauma of road crashes (2011).

Other initiatives included the 'Elephant in the Wheatbelt' campaign commenced to break the silence in rural communities around road crashes and road trauma (2014), the announcement that RAC would no longer insure new cars with less than a 4 star ANCAP rating (2015), and SLOMO, or Slow Down Move Over, laws introduced after RAC lobbying to require drivers to slow down to 40km/h when passing a stationary emergency vehicle with lights flashing (2018). These are all evidence of the RAC's concentrated prioritisation of the road safety field over 20 years.

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The most recent iteration of the prolonged road safety ‘event’ began in 2015 when the RAC initiated a public conversation about driverless or autonomous vehicles on public roads. Popular media at the time had a focus on failures and errors with the early autonomous vehicle trials in the United States, and the RAC’s social capital probably made it the only entity at the time that could promote a counter-discussion. The next year the RAC Intellibus®, an autonomous or driverless bus, fully electric-powered, began operating on public roads to demonstrate the potential of driverless vehicles. The public could ride on the bus and experience autonomous driving first-hand and gain some appreciation of the safety advantages of not relying on flawed human abilities and decision making. The RAC announced its support for ‘smart freeways’ in Perth that would establish the road infrastructure for driverless vehicles in 2020, on the eve of the Covid pandemic. Converting existing freeways to the smart freeways program continued, and by early 2025 over \$200 million had been invested by the State government.

The original objectives of prioritising road safety to reduce insurance costs in the 1960s fairly quickly gave way in the 1970s to participation in a national effort by all the State car associations to reduce road fatalities and save lives and then in the 1990s to influencing vehicle and road design to reduce and prevent traffic crashes. This continued into the first quarter of the 21st century with the addition of approaches to changing driver behaviours and then most recently to neutralising drive behaviours altogether through the development of autonomous vehicles. Although autonomous vehicles remain at an experimental stage, the smart freeway program continues to be unrolled.

The continuity of such programs and their public acceptance relies upon some fifty years of accumulated goodwill or, at the systems level, social capital and social co-operation, and at the member level, membership identity and commitment. Road safety, as a process composed of multiple or sequential events, has proven to be critical in maintaining the loyalty of the member-owner of the Club during periods of internal instability in the 1990s and external shocks (terrorism and economic boom/bust cycles) of the 2000s-2010s and Covid pandemic of 2020-2022, and in attracting new members with membership reaching one million in 2018, or half the adult-age population of Western Australia.

SIXTH CRITICAL EVENT – THE GRADUAL MOVE INTO ELECTRIC VEHICLES, 1978

Back in the 1890s, electricity was often considered to be the logical fuel for the future of the self-propelled vehicles then being developed, but the development of the internal combustion engine and its successful application to vehicles by Daimler in 1897 eventually eclipsed electric power. The ‘oil shocks’ of the 1970s revived interest in electric powered vehicles as an alternate power source to imported oil and petroleum products. The RAC participated in the first evaluation of an electric powered vehicle being developed by the State Energy Commission in 1978 and began to argue for developing alternatives to imported liquid fuels. This led the Club to participating in a working party to examine Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) as a replacement for petrol.

By the mid-1980s the oil crisis had passed but another crisis was coming into public consciousness, global warming driven by greenhouse gas emissions produced by the burning of fossil fuels such as petrol and oil. Now the drive to replace petroleum products took on a moral imperative, and social co-operation, government roles, industry structures and the physical environment would all feed into the Club’s evolving responses. In 1991 the RAC and other State

car organisations adopted a comprehensive environmental strategy to improve fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This linking of personal benefit (fuel efficiency) and community benefit (reduce emissions) would be a feature of the RAC's electric vehicle strategy. Two years later the first academic papers appeared on applying a carbon tax to petrol as a way to reduce emissions, with reporting in *Road Patrol*, and several other initiatives over the decade focused on reducing petrol usage, although sometimes the link with reducing emissions was obscured, such as a fuel watch scheme to report on daily petrol prices launched in 1996.

The 1999 comprehensive member survey referred to earlier found environmental problems especially air pollution featured in members' top three concerns, and an announcement that year that leaded fuels would be phased out to reduce air pollution was welcomed by the RAC. In 2000 the RAC joined the Perth Air Quality Management Plan Committee, and launched its first environmental campaign, 'Air Care', with an emphasis on reducing pollution of all sorts from vehicle emissions.

In the same year *Road Patrol* featured stories on the first prototypes of hybrid petrol-electric cars and hydrogen-cell powered cars being produced and forecast the demise of internal combustion engines by 2020. This revived the moves begun in the 1970s to move away from using fossil vehicle fuels altogether. In 2002 the RAC joined the Carbon Neutral Program operated by Men Of The Trees, a volunteer group dedicated to reforestation to control soil erosion, reverse salinity and absorb carbon pollution, as a way to offset emissions from its vehicle fleet through wheatbelt tree planting. This was an early global example of a carbon offsetting scheme developed under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

In 2004 the RAC celebrated Perth's first zero-emission fuel-cell powered buses commencing service. Four years later the RAC and the WA Sustainable Energy Association welcomed to Perth a solar-powered taxi. To this point the RAC's developing support for electric vehicles had drawn upon the extensive social capital it held among members and the general public to legitimise electrification and establish it as an authentic alternative to fossil fuels. The debates in federal parliament over 2009-2010 on the Rudd Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, especially in relation to motor fuels and emissions, coincided with the emergence of ideological scepticism of climate science and of organised opposition to measures to reduce carbon pollution.

The proposed CPPS scheme was withdrawn from parliamentary debate in 2010. A different scheme to achieve similar outcomes was legislated by the Gillard Labor government with the *Clean Energy Act 2011*, and the RAC launched its 'Less Emissions Mission' to help motorists reduce their carbon dioxide vehicle emissions. Upon the election of the Abbott Coalition government in 2013 the Clean Energy Act was repealed. The RAC adjusted its focus by returning to replacing fossil fuels with electrification rather than reducing emissions from fossil fuels *per se*.

From this point, electrification and road safety began to be issues with common ground for the RAC. Tactically, this allowed the RAC's social capital vested in its road safety campaigning to be attached (or re-attached) to its climate change responses. Climate change remained a high priority for members during this period. In 2015 the RAC launched its Electric Highway® with a series of fast electric vehicle charging stations on the Perth-Augusta highway to reduce carbon emissions and support safe, sustainable and accessible travel. The RAC Intellibus® project

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launched in 2016 was an autonomous vehicle trialled for public transport that was also fully electric-powered. By 2020, on the eve of the Covid pandemic, electric vehicle registrations in Western Australia were rising and electric vehicle charging stations were beginning to be built across the metropolitan area with plans for expansions along key country highways.

By 2025 the RAC's online RAC Electric Highway® map showed over 200 recharging stations across the whole State, and RAC Finance was offering a 0.05% p.a. discount on a car loan interest rate for buying an electric vehicle. Electric vehicle registrations across WA reached over 20,000 by March 2024, or one percent of all vehicle registrations, with licensing rates increasing by 16 percent each quarter (Department of Transport, 2024).

By the end of 2024, electric vehicle sales were continuing to rise and accounted for ten percent of new vehicle sales across Australia. Internal combustion engine vehicle sales continued to decline, accounting for 75 percent of sales, with the 15 percent different made up of hybrid vehicle sales (Australian Automobile Association, 2025). Uptake in Western Australia was third highest across Australia, bettered by the ACT and then New South Wales, then followed in order by Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory. This pattern does not correlate with population numbers, and it is reasonable to attribute the RAC's support for electrification in WA, still drawing upon its social capital and investment in physical networking, notably the Electric Highway®, to boosting sales and social acceptance of electric vehicles in the broader WA community.

Electrification, like road safety, is a process composed of multiple or sequential events. RAC's high levels of social capital in the community, and the continuing loyalty and commitment of members to the Club, has been critical in giving RAC the status and capacity to continue to pursue electrification of vehicles as a viable alternative, and eventual successor, to the internal combustion engine. This has continued, with some agility by the RAC in its support for developing road infrastructure for electric vehicles and the use of its magazine *Road Patrol*, later *Horizons*, to provide information largely accepted as objective and based on evidence, addressing concerns about range, reliability and maintenance costs. These issues echo the concerns of a century earlier around the spread of ICE motor vehicles, and the RAC's responses have their origins in the critical events already discussed, especially around roadside assistance. RAC's success in this area is clearly reflected, as noted earlier, in its membership reaching one million in 2018, or half the adult-age population of Western Australia.

SEVENTH CRITICAL EVENT – RESPONDING TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

During the Covid 19 pandemic the RAC was designated by the State an essential service. The Club provided some specific and targeted support for its members and the community, such as priority breakdown services for essential workers, and offering financial hardship packages to support members. Responses to the pandemic extended over several years and one lens for assessing RAC's response over that longer time frame is RAC Parks and Resorts. Formed in 2015, Parks and Resorts' initial focus was on providing affordable intra-state holiday destinations as mining boom-induced coastal land developments were pricing traditional low-key caravan parks out of reach for members. Beginning in Cervantes, a string of coastal caravan and camping parks were purchased by the RAC, with one of the objectives of the program being to encourage extended

regional touring rather than brief overnight stays that would also provide economic benefits to host communities.

The WA government's responses to the pandemic lead to the closure of the State borders on 24 March 2020, and by mid-April intra-state community transmission of the virus had been eliminated. WA was one of the very few places in the world to achieve this. Internal restrictions were incrementally eased over the next two and a half years, punctuated by lockdowns, until September 2022 when the State borders were re-opened although border crossings remained tightly controlled. Travel within the State was generally (apart from lockdowns) fairly open compared to other jurisdictions, and in June 2020 the 'Wander Out Yonder' campaign was launched by the State Tourism Minister to encourage Western Australians to travel and explore their home state.

RAC entered into a partnership with Tourism WA to promote the Wander Out Yonder campaign to encourage intrastate travel and holidaying at RAC parks and resorts. The program accorded with the RAC's policy of encouraging extended regional visitation. The campaign was heavily promoted through *Horizons*, with a special issue in September 2020 and numerous special holiday deals for members. Members planning a holiday were offered free vehicle safety checks and free 1½ hour caravan safety lessons. *Horizons* were at this time circulating to one-third of the WA population, and the RAC's social capital, invested in a trusted network of holiday destinations, materially contributed to the success of the State's pandemic responses.

The Wander Out Yonder program was a significant intervention by the State in the WA tourism economy to not only support regional economic development but also bolster morale and community spirit at a time of great uncertainty. Premier Mark McGowan, in launching \$1 million worth of \$100 vouchers for WA residents to redeem at any WA regional tourism business, cited Wander Out Yonder's aims to "mitigate the crushing blow that coronavirus has exacted on experience providers" and "help locals experience all of the wonderful things that WA has to offer" ("WA State Government", 2020). As RAC's General Manager of Tourism said,

"If you're able to, now is the time to book a WA getaway — travel somewhere in our State you've never been before and support your fellow Western Australians" (RAC, 2020).

RAC Parks and Resorts and the Wander Out Yonder campaign does not represent the total RAC response to the pandemic, but it illustrates the ability of a member-based entity to rapidly and creatively respond to a very large and urgent environmental disaster. 'Crushing blow', 'help locals', 'support your fellow Western Australians' – these phrases give shape to Co-operative Enterprise Level values of building member commitment through Service Quality (empathy, assurance), Perceived Value (emotional value, social value) Membership Identity (trust in co-operation) and Membership Commitment (pride in membership, non-financial rewards).

The pandemic was a contingent event that still resonates today. The RAC's partnership with the State Government and strategic use of its Parks and Resorts assets, enhanced by the emotional linking of Parks and Resorts with social and political needs for Western Australians to accept the restrictions of the pandemic response, meant the Club could both draw upon the RAC's long-established social capital as well as build or bank further social capital for the longer-term.

SYSTEMS LEVEL ANALYSIS – INPUT FACTORS

As the narrative history of the RAC WA suggests, the foundation of the enterprise was influenced by the four input factors, which continued to play a role in shaping its fortunes throughout its life.

SOCIAL COOPERATION

The creation of CMEs requires the existence within the community that form them of a sense of common or shared goals and values, as well as a sense of community that will facilitate mutual trust and respect. Further, for successful creation of a CME, the community must possess at least three things: i) resources (e. g. , time, capital, skills); ii) mobilisation (e. g. , mutual needs, common goals); and iii) motivations (e. g. , desire to cooperate and sustain collaborative effort) (Birchall & Simmons, 2004).

The decision to establish a club for the owners and drivers of automobiles in 1905 was a decision made autonomously by owners and drivers (they were not necessarily the same as many early owners employed chauffeurs). The owners at that time were from the wealthier social strata in Perth and had many other social, political and economic connections between them. Gaining vice-regal patronage from the beginning indicates the social status of this group. The early activities of the Club were often presented as social activities, but they also gathered data by measuring distances for road signs and maps, identified roads that needed repairs and facilitated learning how to drive. The founding and early members had the time and capital resources to find, purchase and import vehicles, the capacity to mobilise for a mutual need, and the motivations to advance their shared interests in driving cars and developing motor infrastructure. As motor vehicles became more affordable and widespread after the Great War the people to whom these shared goals and sense of community appealed also expanded, and social co-operation remains today a key input into the RAC's continuing existence.

In terms of **resources**, the foundation of the RAC was funded through annual membership subscriptions (at the time the equivalent of a skilled male worker's weekly wage) and the availability of premises for gatherings and meetings in leading member's business operations until 1926 when the Club purchased a building in Adelaide Terrace. A permanent address allowed the RAC to develop and expand new member services and commercial operations in, for example, travel and accommodation services and insurance, and provided a physical base for the roadside assistance scheme and inspections and servicing of member vehicles. The move to West Perth in 2005 and a larger site allowed these services to continue and grow as the landscape of the inner city, and routes for motor vehicles, underwent significant changes after the opening and then expansion of the freeway system from 1973 onwards. The business skills and connections of the early members assisting the Club in becoming established as a viable entity and enabled the selection and employment of a paid secretary from 1916. This position evolved into the current role of Chief Executive Officer. The establishment of Club Motor Insurance Agency in 1937 was accompanied by the creation of a manager role that until at least 1959 also acted as a training role for the salaried Club secretary, then general manager, position. Two external appointees stand out for bringing their experience and skills to the RAC, Oscar Zehnder MC, secretary 1924 to 1942, and Terry Agnew, CEO 1998 to 2018. The two-decade tenure of each is marked by both expansion and consolidation of member services, a strategic approach to management and the security of a 'steady hand' at the head of the organization.

The **mobilisation** of motor vehicle owners and drivers, and later motor support industries such as insurance and road safety, were instrumental in the RAC being able to harness their mutual needs to become a significant actor in the development of road networks designed for motor vehicles and all the associated infrastructure from signage and road design to ‘smart freeway’ technologies and electric vehicle charging stations. The RAC mobilised financial resources in the early-mid twentieth century to pay for the manufacturing, installation and maintenance of road signs across the State up to 1975, and for the creation, design and printing of road maps and atlases, while considerable intellectual and political resources were mobilised to influence public policy development in areas such as compulsory third party insurance and road safety campaigns for which there was some initial public resistance, such as compulsory seat belts. Without its capacity to mobilise its members and other resources around common goals such initiatives may never have come to fruition.

The **motivations** that lead to the RACs formation and early development were the desires of the individual members for better road transport infrastructure and a regulatory system for managing motor transport, to protect the significant financial investments they made in purchasing and importing motor vehicles. At first the State stood back from such areas, unsure whether motor transport would overtake animal-powered transport methods on land, especially in a mass sense, until the Great War fundamentally changed such perceptions. By the 1920s when the rapid transition to motor transport became evident, the RAC was the principal motoring body with the knowledge and experience to collaborate, advise and assist the State in adapting to this rapid change through, for example, lobbying for the establishment of the Main Roads Department in 1930. The Club was still, at that time, responding to similar member motivations for transport infrastructure and regulation.

The RAC move into motor vehicle insurance was motivated, at first, by the difficulties experienced by members in obtaining affordable insurance, but by the 1970s became intertwined with the development of ever-more sophisticated developments in road safety motivated by the need for members to be able to safely drive and use roads without fatal and disabling crashes and the need to contain and reduce insurance costs. Rac’s motivations have generally been driven by the needs of its members, while those of its commercial entities such as RAC Insurance have responded to these same motivations as well as the need to operate as viable and profitable entity in the insurance business.

From a **systems perspective** the degree of interaction between RAC members, the RAC organisation, motor vehicle industries, motoring infrastructure developers and the State with its legislative authority and administrative agencies is complex, although not to the degree experienced within some other CMEs (such as Co-operative Bulk Handling). This relates to the core purpose of the RAC being to represent and advocate for its members’ interests rather than be a competitor to State interests or commercial enterprises (see Purpose further below). These social factors have been outlined above in relation to common goals, resources, mobilisation and motivations. RACs role with the motor transport or mobility system is fairly clearly defined.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Governments play a crucial role in shaping the fate of CMEs. This can take the form of setting legal and regulatory frameworks that enable these enterprises to form, and operate with protections

for their members, and benefits such as tax concessions and protected trading environments. However, they can also negatively impact CMEs by introducing market deregulation leading to increased market competition. The RAC has proven to be adept at lobbying and influencing governments to create and operate regulatory frameworks that advance its members' interests.

Prior to the formation of the RAC there was no regulatory framework for motor vehicles in WA. The licensing of carts and wagons introduced in 1873 to fund local road maintenance did not extend to motor vehicles until 1906 in towns and 1911 in country districts, and then only as a road funding measure. The RAC lobbied for nearly a decade until the *Traffic Act 1919* and regulations came into force. This regulatory framework provided the foundation for all subsequent motor traffic regulation in WA. It also provided certainty for members in a number of protections. These included provisions such as criminalising motor vehicle theft, reckless driving and driving under the influence of alcohol. It also established a system of driver licensing (although not, at first, linked to any form of driver training), plus a system of vehicle licensing with distinct and traceable number plates, with license fees based upon vehicle engine power. Additionally, the legislation contained provisions for the transfer of licensing when cars were sold (which, in turn, facilitated the creation of a second-hand vehicle market), and required some basic safety measures such as brakes, external night lights and horns as conditions of vehicle licensing.

The Act devolved many traffic enforcement powers to local governments, especially in the countryside, which the RAC opposed in favour of single State-wide enforcement, and authorised local councils to impose speed limits, also against RAC recommendations and almost immediately rendered unenforceable for the rapidly increasing speeds available in motor vehicles and the glamorization of speed by well-publicised motor racing events and trials, often sponsored by the RAC. These last points indicate that, although the RAC was already influential among legislators after 14 years of existence, the State still had to balance other interests in its regulatory approaches such as the powerful 'country interest' (most Western Australians still lived in rural shires at this time) and the realities of the rapid development of motor vehicle technologies and mass production that reduced car prices and made them accessible to many more people.

Another key legislative victory for the RAC was the *Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act 1943*, while other State legislative areas in which RAC influence was significant include the *Main Roads Act 1930*, *Traffic Act Amendment Act 1971* (compulsory seat belts), *Control of Vehicles (Off-road Areas) Act 1978*, and the *Motor Vehicle (Catastrophic Injuries) Act 2016*. The RAC has also been engaged with developing and updating the WA Traffic Code since its first iteration was gazetted in 1931. At a Federal level, the RAC has responded to rather than shaped regulatory regimes such as the *Clean Energy Act 2011*. The point here is that this regulatory framework has been directed at protecting the interests of RAC members rather than the RAC as an institution (see Governance below).

The RAC initiated some legislative action, especially around the Traffic Act in 1919 and the Third Party Insurance legislation in 1943. At times the RAC has been at odds with the government when framing legislation and rules, but generally it has been able to call upon social and political connections to exercise enough influence to ensure regulation has been for the benefit of members rather than be an imposition upon them (although some members expressed dissatisfaction with RAC support for compulsory seat belts and Roadside Breath Testing). Perhaps

the outstanding example of a failure in the regulatory space was the petrol tax campaign between 1986 and 1992 (the period of the Hawke-Keating Labor governments) carried out by the AAA with the RAC's support. The 'Where Your Petrol Taxes Go' campaign sought to end the indexation of petrol excise and was aggressively pursued even when it contradicted other RAC approaches to reducing petrol consumption for environmental benefits. The campaign did not bear fruit, although nearly a decade later in 2001 the Howard Coalition government temporarily suspended indexation as an election promise. However, this failure of influence within legislative circles where the campaign was perceived as partisan was a marked departure from RAC's normally non-partisan approach to (usually) quiet lobbying and persuasion of legislators and regulators and has not been repeated since.

The influence of State and Federal regulation will remain important to RAC's future development with an increasing need for compliance with environmental and climate change regulation and developing regulatory and physical frameworks for driverless vehicles, and perhaps the long-term disposal or repurposing of vehicles and infrastructure designed around the needs of ICE (internal combustion engine) transport. RAC will continue to be shaped by, and in turn help to shape, its regulatory framework in order to continue advancing its members interests.

INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

Industry structure is influenced by five competitive forces that shape business strategy (Porter, 2008). These forces include the level of competitive rivalry in a market, the power of buyers and suppliers, and the threats posed by substitutes and new market entrants. CMEs can use collective efforts to challenge market distortions caused by monopolies, increasing bargaining power for buyers or suppliers. This model allows small producers or individual households to pool resources, compete with monopolists, or offer substitute services.

A characteristic of CMEs is their ability to use collective and co-operative effort to challenge any market distortions or failures caused by monopolistic conditions, thereby increasing the buyer or supplier bargaining power. This can be seen in the initial RAC membership, which included Percy Armstrong, who operated a chain of bicycle stores across much of the State and promoted the use of mechanised bikes and motor vehicles. In the absence of any industry regulation Armstrong in many ways created the market for motor vehicles by importing whole vehicles or usually vehicle bodies and parts and assembling them in Perth. This gave his enterprises an 'early adopter' advantage as his staff, through assembling the vehicles, gained the knowledge and skills needed to build and service motor vehicles as well as sell them. Armstrong had the first motor car showroom in Perth, and as a founding member of the RAC had a strong interest in developing motor-worthy roads and infrastructure, a regulatory environment, and a motor vehicle support 'ecosystem' of parts suppliers, mechanics and fuel merchants. Armstrong could have chosen to develop the industry in such a way that he created a monopoly over at least part of the motoring scene but instead chose to engage with the collective power of the RAC in ways that not only expanded his commercial interests but also assisted the growth of the motoring sector and market that was of benefit to all new and prospective motorists.

RAC has encountered some competitive behaviours itself and been accused of monopolistic practices by prospective competitors but it remains the preeminent motoring organisation in WA. Historically, the only substantial example of competitive rivalry between motoring bodies was in

New South Wales. The Australian National Roads Association (ANRA) formed in Sydney in 1920 in direct competition with Royal Automobile Club of Australia, a competition that was resolved in 1945 when the Royal Automobile Club of Australia relinquished all motoring operations in favour of ARMA (rebranded in 1924 as the National Roads and Motorists Association, or NRMA), except control of motor sport racing. By that time the RAC had also largely foregone its involvement with motor sports, and the NRMA had become its New South Wales equivalent.

The other example occurred in Tasmania in 1928 when the Automobile Club of Tasmania, the Royal Auto-car Club and the North West Automobile Club merged to form the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania. The New South Wales and Tasmanian examples of competing car clubs were resolved by either agreeing to operate in different areas of motoring or by merging, and they suggest that the size of the car-owning population (or prospective membership) could only really support a single club which has conferred a monopoly-like status on each of the State clubs although no viable substitute organisations have yet emerged. However, as each club operates as a not-for-profit incorporated association the classical definition of a monopoly may not be entirely appropriate (see Governance).

Some of the RAC's associated entities however have certainly experienced competitive rivalries, and nowhere is this more obvious than in insurance. Sixty-six insurance firms were authorised to provide insurance under the *Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act 1943* to motor vehicle owners, of which Club Motor Insurance Agency was one. All of these insurance firms except Club Motor Insurance Agency and two others were already approved insurers under the *Workers Compensation Act 1912*, and this illustrates the way in which this competition relates to the structures and practices of the insurance industry rather than the 'business' of representing motorists' interests. After Club Motor Insurance was disbanded and RAC Insurance Pty Ltd formed in 1947 RAC Insurance operated within the competitive environment of insurance provision and tried to attract as many RAC members as possible, but Club members were not obliged to use RAC Insurance and a monopoly situation did not arise.

During the early twenty-first century some commercial competitors developed for some aspects of RAC operations, such as a roadside assistance service operated by some insurance firms and car dealers, or commercial franchise and independent caravan parks competing with RAC Parks and Resorts, but only the RAC provides such services within the framework of motoring advocacy. The RAC's constitution provides, in its winding up provisions, for the transfer of any surplus property to an organisation with similar objectives but what such an organisation would be in WA is a moot point.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The relatively flat topography of the Swan Coastal Plain around Perth facilitated early motoring, with deviations from 'flatness' such hilly regions with views in the Darling Ranges, and forested areas in the South West, encouraging the development of motor touring. Flatness is a strong factor in the RAC's Parks and Resorts program, with a focus on touring to and staying in coastal and forested resorts. The development of the Stephenson freeway system from the 1960s onwards, including tunnels and bridges on a notional grid plan, was a response to the relative flatness of the Swan Coastal Plain.

Stephenson's prioritisation of private motor transport over public transport changed the east-west riverside alignment of suburban Perth to a north-south coastal plain alignment that facilitated expansive post-war suburbanisation. The RAC roadside assistance services developed because member-drivers made extensive use of the sprawling road networks, which was already evident by the 1920s with widely spaced urban development facilitated by flat topography. Another geographical factor is the physical isolation of WA from the east coast, which was a major factor in the RAC's mid-twentieth century lobbying of governments to build a trans-Nullarbor highway for motor vehicle transport. The Eyre Highway today is major monument to the ability of the RAC to persuade governments to overcome geographical barriers to the motoring interests of its members.

Responding to weather conditions for motor travellers was a reason for the RAC's early twentieth century lobbying to have brakes, windscreen wipers, external lights and similar 'accessories' made standard elements of car design and construction. Some of these were reflected in the RAC's successful lobbying to have some such provisions included in the new *Traffic Act 1919*. In the mid-later twentieth century benign weather conditions facilitated the promotion of utilities and off-road vehicles for recreational uses, with the RAC reporting to members through *Road Patrol* on the latest models, and on environments, mainly coastal sand dunes and inland desert regions, suitable for off-road driving. The RAC's interest in climate change led it to actively encourage research into, and members' adoption of, means to reduce the contribution of vehicle emissions to greenhouse emissions. They encouraged the development of LPG and then electric vehicles, and by the early twenty-first century the RAC was lobbying the State for more and better public transport services to provide alternatives to private vehicles.

Road safety, as a measure of public health, became a major RAC priority from the 1970s onwards, as seen in its strong lobbying of government for compulsory safety belts, support for random breath testing and other means to deter drink driving, speed limits on country roads, road safety campaigns targeting groups such as high school students, and so on. The RAC's responses to the Covid pandemic included assisting the government's strategies to contain and eliminate the disease through, for example, strongly encouraging intra-state holiday road travel as a morale-boosting measure during the closed borders period.

The motor vehicle, or more specifically, the infrastructure required for motoring, such as roads and road signs, incrementally but thoroughly altered many urban and rural landscapes. The development of motor garages and service stations brought with them new forms of pollution from vehicle emissions (atmospheric) and disposing of products such as motor oils, tyres and car parts and bodies. The RAC promoted early attempts in the 1970s and 80s to recycle some of these materials. More recently the RAC has sought, through a promotional emphasis on electric vehicles, to reduce some of these pollutants (although disposing of electric vehicle materials is likely to be a future issue with pollutants). The source of electricity for electric vehicles is also a pollution issue, although State policies to transition from fossil to renewable fuels for electricity production supports the RAC's promotions to members of the benefits of electric vehicles.

ENTERPRISE LEVEL ANALYSIS – ASSESSING THE BUSINESS MODEL

The main elements of the enterprise level analysis are the purpose and member value proposition (MVP), governance, share structure, profit formula, key processes, and key resources (Mazzarol et al., 2018).

PURPOSE

Rod Slocombe, RAC Group CEO, launched a new Purpose, Vision and Mission for the RAC in September 2020, at which he said

“At RAC our ‘why’ is ‘To be the driving force for a better WA’ ... Our ‘why’ is critical because to truly have a purpose for the future, our organisation must reconnect with our values, our history, and our heritage – because they are unique to us and to Western Australia.”

In this statement Slocombe articulates the RAC’s purpose, or as he puts it, it’s ‘why’. The slogan ‘To be the driving force for a better WA’ sought to encapsulate a purpose that had evolved over 115 years, but which retained key continuities.

The purpose stated in 1905 had been expressed more prosaically, focused on securing a rational regulatory framework, improving road and transport infrastructure, protecting the interests of motor vehicle owners, recording data and information about motor vehicle uses, and operating a social club. These objectives, perhaps with the exception of being a social club, have remained constant over the years, although at various times they have needed to be restated and reaffirmed.

In 2019, Group CEO Terry Agnew, as part of a strategic review of the organisation, argued that within an environment of constant change induced by rapidly changing technologies there were four emerging ‘mobility trends’, electric, connected, automated and shared. Mobility was the key theme that linked these trends and the RAC’s purpose, and a mobility agenda for the coming decade would encompass safety, accessibility and sustainability. This mobility agenda was given voice in the ‘driving force for a better WA’ slogan.

The Club’s objectives, as stated in its current constitution (adopted 22 November 2022) are very similar to those adopted in 1905, although expressed in more contemporary language. The 2020 Purpose, Vision and Mission statement builds upon these objectives to chart a course over the decade to 2030. The RAC’s purpose has remained constant since 1905, and although it has sometimes strayed in focus, renewed leadership has invariably brought the Club back to its purpose. This continuity of purpose is a key reason for the RACs longevity and social standing.

MEMBER VALUE PROPOSITION

To develop an effective MVP, a Co-operative must assess how its members perceive its value and how this value is generated within the organisation, considering both economic and social benefits. When the goals of the Co-operative and its members are aligned, it operates more efficiently than an investor-owned firm (Candemir et al., 2021).

The Patronage role

With respect to the patronage role, the role of a member as a patron of the Club is perhaps best expressed in repeated renewal of their annual membership through payment of the annual membership subscription. If a member chooses not to renew, they have in effect stopped

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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patronising the Club. Repeated membership renewal may also be connected with demonstrated commitment to the RAC 'brand', such as receiving the RAC's magazine *Horizons* and making use of its special offers of discounts and other benefits for members with private suppliers of goods and services or using their membership card to received discounts at nominated suppliers such as service stations.

The Investor role

In relation to the member's role as an investor, RAC members are only required to financially 'invest' into the Club their annual membership subscription. The subscription does not buy a member a distinct share of the Club, but rather a right to participate in common with other members. No dividend or other income is paid to a member. The investor role of a member really takes the form of an emotional and intellectual commitment to the Club and its objectives. Satisfaction with their investment may, as such, be expressed in perceptions of intangible values such as the quality of functions and services received, and the social and emotional support perceived as 'value for money' (i.e. that the membership subscription is worth paying).

The Owner role

The owner role of members all RAC members, as members, own the Club equally and in common regardless of their membership category. No member owns more or less of the Club, or any defined or distinct portion of the Club. All members have a right to vote at general meetings of the Club, and to stand for election and to elect the members of the governing body, the RAC Council, although there is a qualification of five years continuous membership for eligibility to stand for election.

None of the Club's property or income can be paid or distributed to members, and should the RAC be wound up, members and former members are disqualified from receiving any surplus property or assets from the winding up. Members, as owners, have the right and obligation to participate in the affairs of the Club, but are prohibited from personally benefitting from the demise of the Club, should that occur, or otherwise using the Club or its resources to advance personal interests. Ownership, in the context of a not-for-profit incorporated association, may be conceptualized as a form of stewardship rather than possession.

The Member of a community of purpose role

Members of a community of purpose through RAC membership can be demonstrated through participation in RAC affairs such as serving on the Council or committees or voting in council elections. The RAC has advocated for its members interests as members of the RAC community, and it has also led its members in changing behaviours such as wearing seat belts, avoiding drink driving, accepting the switch to unleaded fuels, and being willing to consider changing preferences towards electric vehicles. This has been achievable because of the social capital built up by the RAC among its members as a trusted and reliable source of information and of support services (such as roadside assistance). That members trust the RAC will actively work towards its Purpose, Vision and Mission statement and continue to implement its objectives is demonstrated by the continuing upward trajectory in its membership numbers.

GOVERNANCE

The governance of any CME focuses on the composition, quality, and character of the directors of the Board. In the case of the RAC, governance also needs to consider its characteristics as a not-for-profit incorporated association, and whether given those characteristics it can be considered a monopoly.

Like a non-distributing co-operative, RAC does not distribute any dividend to its members, but in RAC's case this is because of its structure as an incorporated association. Also, like a co-operative, the RAC's income is invested back into developing and maintaining services for its members, but unlike a co-operative no portion of that income can be distributed to any member other than as a service available to all members. As the RAC constitution explicitly states,

The property and income of the Club are to be applied solely towards the promotion of the Objects and no part of that property or income may be paid or otherwise distributed, directly or indirectly, to Members, except in good faith in promotion of the Objects (clause 4).

This clause is typical of rules for incorporated associations, and with minor variations is embedded in the Model Rules provided under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015*. The 'good faith' exception allows for members to be reimbursed for authorised expenditure on behalf of the Club, including for serving on the Council (which is a much less common use of the exception).

The incorporated association structure was adopted in 1916 and has proven to be enduring and resilient. The Council, styled as the RAC Committee until 1964, has undergone periodic reviews with numbers enlarged or reduced at different times, terms of office varied, and styles of office bearers altered as considered desirable at the time, but its core function as the supreme governing body of the Club has remain intact. Clause 16 of the constitution specifically states

The Council, and not the Members, are vested with the management of the Club's affairs.

Even the appointment of paid executive officers, which could have subtly changed this supremacy, has been contained to a degree with the RAC constitution including a specific clause requiring the chief executive (who is appointed by the council) to report to the president (clause 17). This structure has proven to be very stable, with some 55 people serving as President since 1905, generally having risen through subordinate roles such as vice-president to that position.

At the same time, at least 180 members have served on the Committee/Council, including several knights, one dame, several king's/queen's counsels, and a number of recipients of appointments to the Order of Australia as well as several parliamentarians and local councillors (although clause 14 of the current RAC constitution now provides for election to a parliament or a local council as an automatic disqualification from continuing RAC Council membership).

Generally, membership of the RAC's governing council has not reflected particular expertise or skills in motor mechanics or the economics of the motor vehicle industries. That expertise tends to be located within the staff employed by the Club, while council members have bought knowledge and skills relating to the law and politics, their social connections and networks, and residence in the metropolitan area.

The RAC's legal status as an incorporated association has not bought it any protections against potential competitor associations or positioned it in any sense as a single provider of any goods or services. The potential to see the RAC as monopolistic relates to its history as the advocate on behalf of its members since the very beginning of motor transport in WA, and its consequent development over a century of members services such as Roadside Assistance, and establishment of subsidiaries such as RAC Parks & Resorts and RAC Insurance. These services and subsidiaries have all at various times been subject to competition, but the RAC Club itself has not.

PROFIT FORMULA

Profit formula refers to the ways in which an entity makes money and distributes returns to shareholders. As an incorporated association the terminology differs. RAC is a not-for-profit and as such does not generate profits. Instead, it can generate surpluses that are invested back into providing member services. However, the RAC's subsidiaries do generate profits, and these are rendered as a dividend to RAC Club that is used to fund member services. Revenue, cost structures and margin models are key determinants of their profit formula, but not for the RAC club.

The other key difference is that members of an incorporated association are always referred to as members, not shareholders. The impacts of RAC operations on the member, as an integral element in the association's business model, are similar to those of other CMEs in that the RAC operational impacts on members need to be understood, not just their impacts on cost-profit-volume attributes of the RAC entities.

RESOURCES AND PROCESSES

The resources and processes used within CMEs vary depending on the type of enterprise and its purpose. Key resources usually mean financial, personnel, systems and business resources, and processes usually refers to the operational and management practices of the organization, or how it uses its resources to deliver to its members.

Key resources for the RAC initially focused on personnel, in the sense of knowledgeable members such as Percy Armstrong, before the engagement of a salaried secretary in 1916 bought a need to focus on financial resources for the secretary's salary and rental of office space. Maintaining an office brought attention to systems resources, manifested in some tensions around appropriate roles for the secretary and the president that was resolved with the appointment of Oscar Zehnder in 1924 as secretary with a clear role in the Club's administration and promotion. The purchase of the RAC's own premises in Adelaide Terrace in 1926 increased the need for more sophisticated management systems, especially in property management but also accommodating members' needs such as a Ladies Lounge.

The development of Club Motor Insurance Agency required even more sophisticated office systems to track and maintain the records of member-premium holders and transactions, which further increased in 1947 with the launch of RAC Insurance Pty Ltd. As more staff were employed and services expanded, the Adelaide Terrace building incrementally grew to accommodate not only these office functions but also a depot for motor vehicle examinations and garaging. In 1949 another building was purchased in Hay Street to increase the size of headquarters, and in 1956 the role of secretary was upgraded to General Manager.

The separation of the administrations of the RAC club and RAC Insurance in 1960 created parallel office structures, while the headquarters buildings continued to expand. Efficiencies with the introduction of computers began in 1977, and the branch network was developed across the metropolitan area and larger provincial towns. Electronic payment systems commenced in 1985. In 1986 the General Manager position was upgraded to a Chief Executive Officer, and planning began for a new purpose-built headquarters. By the mid-1990s the RAC had launched its first website and restructured into three distinct divisions: Club Services, Group Services (including RAC Travel and RAC Finance) and RAC Insurance.

The impacts of electronic and then internet forms of communication saw increases in electronic payments and gradual reductions in branch offices during the early 2000s, and in 2005 the RAC moved into its first purpose-built, multi-level home in Wellington Street, West Perth.

As RAC operations grew over time, so the resources for growth and the processes needed to deliver services to members have become increasingly more sophisticated. In addition, the RAC has played a key role in the formation of CAAO in 1925, which became the AAA in 1929, which provided the Club with a strategic alliance network to influence Federal regulation of the motor industries, a focus reinforced by the AAA's relocation from Sydney to Canberra in 1971. One outcome from this was the formation through the AAA of the ANCAP program in 1992, which is now linked with the safety ratings of vehicles for which RAC Insurance will provide cover.

SYSTEMS LEVEL ANALYSIS – OUTPUT FACTORS

The two main outputs from CMEs are their ability to generate economic and social capital.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

Mazzarol et al. (2014) state that economic capital is measured by assets, jobs, and wealth creation. As indicated in this case study, the creation of economic capital within the broader WA community relates not so much to RAC itself or its members, but to RAC's crucial role in fostering and supporting the development and growth of the whole motor vehicle or mobility 'ecosystem'.

For RAC members, wealth has been created in the form of savings on purchases either through RAC member discounts and savings with partner entities which may or may not be related to motoring. Free or discounted motor vehicle and boat safety checks, and discounts on petrol from selected service station chains are an example of the former; discounts through member benefit schemes on products as diverse as mobility scooters (gophers), garage roller doors, pest inspections and hearing aids, as well as discounts schemes with retail chains such as Retravisation, OPSM, Rottneat Express and Windstar Cruises (all advertised in the February 2024 issue of *Horizons*) are examples of the latter.

The RAC employs its own staff but its impact on job creation is more noticeable when its role as an 'incubator' of the early motor support industries is considered. The RAC motor mechanic training and accreditation schemes laid the foundations for employment in a wide range of motor vehicle support industries. Similarly, its ongoing support for motor tourism since the 1920s created and supported numerous areas of employment in hotels and resorts, caravan and camping parks, and caravan and trailer manufacturing.

Motoring infrastructure, such as urban and rural roads and highways, directional and other roadside signage, service stations, motor vehicle dealer yards and showrooms and the infrastructure and technologies of smart freeways have all been facilitated by the RAC, either directly such as in early road signs or indirectly as in lobbying government for regulatory regimes for second hand car dealer premises to comply with town planning schemes (1964) or design standards for caravan and camping parks (1995) or assisting and advising the State on smart freeway design.

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

The measurement of a co-operative's contribution to the development of social capital is always difficult due to the indirect and informal nature of how social capital is formed. This typically involves individuals meeting and interacting within the context of shared social norms, values, beliefs, trust, friendships, obligations, networks, and memberships (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009).

Co-operatives, particularly producer co-operatives, require members to collaborate, pool their resources, and share ownership in the business in order to address problems that they cannot solve alone. As a result, the dynamics of a well-managed co-operative are characterised by its ability to unite the members into a common purpose and focus as much on enhancing their social connections as their businesses' economic benefits.

One key area in which the RAC has contributed to creating social capital has been its capacity to act as a broker that can connect members with information about motor vehicle products and services to which they may otherwise not have access. From the first issue of the *Motorguide & Directory* in 1915 to its descendant *Horizons* magazine today, the RAC has provided members with technical information on makes and models of car, on the performance of vehicles and their component parts, on vehicle and driver safety and numerous other aspects of motoring. RAC magazines and publications, including online, have bridged the gap between members' information needs and the products and services that could meet those needs.

RAC has been able to play this role because members have perceived the information provided by the RAC as reflecting the skills and abilities of RAC employees, the RAC's ability to adhere to standards of knowledge about motor vehicles and motoring that are acceptable to the member, and a belief by the member that the RAC is providing information that is in the members' best interests rather than any self-interested corporate interest of the RAC. These are characteristics of the trust that is central to the formation of social capital

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CO-OP YORK CASE

In many ways the history of the RAC is the history of the motor vehicle, motoring and driving 'ecosystem' in Western Australia. But, at the same time, RAC's story is focused on the needs and wants of a discrete part of that ecosystem, the owners and drivers of motor vehicles. The purpose and MVP for the RAC are, therefore, key considerations in understanding its long-term survival and capacity to thrive in Western Australia.

For RAC members the MVP is essentially focused on social benefits for members rather than the economic outcomes for the RAC as such. The four hats model reveals some of these benefits such as discounts on a wide variety of goods and services, not all offered directly by the RAC,

satisfaction that the emotional investment made in membership represents value for money, the democratic value of equal membership by each member of the Club, and the strong trust of members in the RAC that has allowed the Club to persuade members to voluntarily change habits and behaviours for a greater good, such as wearing seat belts and accepting the end of leaded petrol.

As a business entity or enterprise RAC WA has had a clear and consistent purpose since its foundation in 1905, which has been to represent its members' interests in having a functioning and safe motoring environment. This has included advising on and being a bridge for members to motor vehicle design and manufacture, constantly changing motoring and mobility technologies, better road design and safety and the evolution in vehicle fuels from fossil to renewable sources.

To achieve its purposes the RAC has had a continuous and stable governance model with boards (committee, later council) democratically elected by all members, respected chairpersons and other leaders that have marshaled the Club's resources and processes with prudence and diligence and supported by a skilled and loyal staff. The Club has ensured members receive, and perceive they are receiving, good governance and wise use of communal resources.

In the broader systems environment in which the RAC operates, the RAC has been adept at working with and influencing governments to create and operate regulatory regimes largely supportive of motorists and motoring interests, supported and facilitated the development of automotive support industries from service stations and fuels to mechanical repairs to second-hand car sales to road and sign construction and maintenance.

No competitive motoring organisation has arisen to challenge the RAC role within WA, and the RAC has maintained good fraternal relationships with interstate and overseas motoring organisations. The RAC has played its role in changing the physical environment for the benefit of motorists and in recent decades a key role in the transformation of motoring to reduce and contain carbon pollution emissions from vehicles as a contribution to larger responses to climate change.

Economically, the RAC has created or facilitated the creation of public assets such as a roadworthy highway and freeway networks, employment across the entire motoring industry that did not exist before the RAC, and helped members share in the wealth created by these activities through member discount schemes and through informed purchasing of safer and more reliable vehicles and vehicle accessories. The social capital created by the RAC has been enormous.

It is effectively without challenge in the community as the most trusted source of information on all motoring matters due to perceptions of its integrity and competence, and the networks of motorists created through communications such as *Horizons* magazine and its predecessors, and member support schemes such as Roadside Assistance. Having an RAC badge fixed to a car is a source of pride for many members and signals a reciprocal or shared membership to other members as well as advertising to non-members the desirability of become part of the RAC network.



CONCLUSIONS

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia has been a significant player in the CME sector in Western Australia. Its structure as a not-for-profit incorporated association, with several for-profit subsidiary entities, is not typical of the larger CMEs in the State but as its continuity and development of 120 years demonstrates, it has been the model best suited to the original market failure that prompted its formation: the lack of any motor industry or motoring infrastructure in the State for the earliest importers and owners of motor vehicles.

The RAC's ability to create social capital and spend or invest that capital prudently is key to understanding its success. At the heart of that success has been a clarity of purpose in both objectives and in ensuring that members continue to value their membership because of both individual benefits and the benefits the Club brings to the wider WA community. Sometimes that clarity was obscured, such as during the early years of the Great War and in the last decade of the twentieth century, but key leaders within the Club were able to bring a renewed focus on the RAC's purpose and its members to restore any diminished social capital. The RAC's combination of clear purpose and a members-first focus has been and continues to be its great strength.

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Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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FIGURES AND IMAGES

Figure 1: 1899 newspaper decal for ‘The Scorcher’ Source: Sunday Times, 17 September 1899.

Figure 2: Bonnet badge of the RAC (GB&I), pictured in 1917, Sources: Graces Guide, [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Figure 3: Armstrong’s motor tandem 1900. Source: Western Mail, 14 April 1900, p. 29.

Figure 4: An Armstrong advertisement from 1905. Source: Kookynie Press 12 August 1905.

Figure 5: The inaugural run of the Automobile Club of Western Australia 1905. Source: Western Mail 8 July 1905: 44 and RAC Archives.

Figure 6: The original club badge design with a black swan. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 7: The ACWA Ravensthorpe directional sign, circa 1910s. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 8: Wolseley military ambulances in London, funded by ACWA members and public fund raising. Source: RAC Archives

Figure 9: WA motor driver’s license from 1936. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 10: Reliability trial, circa 1926, between Manjimup and Nornalup. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 11: Erecting signs in the country required some ingenuity. Source: (Sunday Times, 21 October 1923: 11).

Figure 12: The original road patrolmen on their first day, May 1926. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 13: An example of the local maps provided by the RAC Touring Department. Source: (Daily News, 2 October 1928: 9).

Figure 14: RAC’s metropolitan road patrol fleet, circa 1932. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 15: The first contract service station, Rural Motors in Bunbury. Source: (South Western Times, 14 May 1932: 4).

Figure 16: Drivers, members and well-wishers gather in the RAC yard in Adelaide Terrace to farewell the trans-Nullarbor Melbourne Centenary Tour in 1934. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 17: A petrol ration ticket. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 18: Plaque presented to Hollywood Military Hospital upon opening the RAC Operating Theatre. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 19: First insurance claim logged with RAC Insurance, June 1947. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 20: The official launch of the new roadside signs program, Northam-Perth Road 1940. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 21: RAC Patrolmen photographed with four new Austin A.40 vans in 1950. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 22: An example of the standard international signs for ‘Danger’ under the 1949 protocol, with the standard equilateral triangle shape and standard red border. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 23: The New Sign Posting Unit outside the Adelaide Terrace headquarters. Source: (Road Patrol cover, April 1956).

Figure 24: Coloured images of the new route numbering signs, and a city centre map depicting how the signs would be shown on monotone maps. Source: Road Patrol, April May 1986, p. 44).

Figure 25: The last sign posters standing with their vans, once a familiar sight on country roads. Source: (The Road Patrol, April 1975, p. 5).

Figure 26: Metric Petrol. Source: (Road Patrol, October 1975).

Figure 27: RAC arch and royal visit slogan across St Georges Terrace in 1954, Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 28: RAC patrolmen preparing for 'Operation Eyre highway' in 1962. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 29: An internal page from the AAA's Eyre Highway Guide 1962. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 30: Rigby cartoon linking road safety and seat belts with futuristic space travel. Source: (The Road Patrol, February 1962).

Figure 31: A member straps her baby into an RAC approved car-seat, c1975. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 32: the price of drink driving - the new Breathalyser machine. Source: (Road Patrol, August 1978, p. 1).

Figure 33: RAC Insurance office in Adelaide Terrace 1970s. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 34: RAC's experimental electric van and its battery pack c1979. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 35: The new RAC Head Office building, circa 1980. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 36: RAC mapping vehicle on the road between Lake King and Norseman, 1974. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 37: Aerial photograph of the Old Swan Brewery site, 1988. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 38: The first 4WD featured on a Road Patrol cover confirmed a new way of motoring. Source: (Road Patrol August-October 1983).

Figure 39: Anti-petrol tax advertisement 1980s. Source: (Road Patrol, June July 1989, p. 55).

Figure 40: Kwinana Freeway northbound, circa 1990s. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 41: Kalgoorlie Branch Office, late 1980s the second branch established in 1930. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 42: Chart from the summit showing declining road fatalities since 1970. Source: (Road Patrol, December January 1998/1999, p. 19).

Figure 43: An artist's impression of the first purpose-built RAC head office, as first shown to members. Source: (Road Patrol, December January 2003-2004, p. 23).

Figure 44: The RAC Rescue helicopter quickly became a sponsorship valued by members. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 45: Eye-catching graphics and design in the new Horizons magazine got the attention of drivers and their families. Source: (*Horizons*, December January 2014, p. 41).

Figure 46: The launch of the RAC Electric Highway® in 2015 opened up a whole new world in mobility. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 47: "My Family, the Elephant and Me" picture book. Source: RAC Archives.

Figure 48: The arrival of a trial autonomous vehicle was announced in 2016. Source: (*Horizons*, April May 2016, p. 17).

Figure 49: The RAC Virtuous Circle.

APPENDIX A: RAC WA WITHIN THE CME RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Influencing Factors	Application to RAC WA
<i>Systems-level inputs</i>	
Social co-operation	From its inception social co-operation between members has been mobilised to create motoring infrastructure and lobbying and networking to influence public policy in areas such as vehicle safety.
Role of government	RAC encouraged the development of a regulatory environment for motor vehicles and drivers, and associated support services. It has been influential in lobbying government to maintain a supportive regulatory structure.
Industry structure	RAC contributed to the creation of a motor support industries in WA and is itself representative of the interests of motor vehicle owners and drivers.
Natural environment	RAC has helped adapt WA's physical environment to motoring infrastructure and plays a central role in adapting motoring to the need to reduce fossil fuel-based carbon pollution in response to climate change.
<i>Enterprise-level factors</i>	
Purpose	RAC's purpose was defined in 1905 and has remained consistent since then with updating to reflect contemporary language.
Profit formula	RAC is a not-for-profit body. It receives dividend, as the sole shareholder from the profits if its associated entities such as RAC Insurance, to invest into member services.
Processes	RAC processes have kept up with technological changes in knowledge creation and distribution through, for instance, computerisation that have mirrored similar changes in measuring and dissemination knowledge about road safety.
Resources	RAC has amassed considerable resources, some tangible such as knowledgeable technical staff, some intangible such as knowledge about vehicles and motoring, to assist its members.
Share structure	Membership provides equal access to membership benefits, but no dividend or other direct payment is made to members because of their membership.

Influencing Factors	Application to RAC WA
Governance	RAC governance has remained stable and consistent over its 120 years and remained democratically controlled by its members.
Member Value Proposition	The MVP is a stable and clear purpose and good governance in exchange for benefits such as member discounts and access to reliable advice and knowledge on motoring matters.
<i>Member-level factors</i>	
Patron	Member investment is emotional rather than financial, with some benefits available in form of discounts on services provided by the RAC and partner firms.
Investor	Member patronage takes the form of a single, annually renewable membership subscription.
Owner	The member, as an owner, owns the RAC in common with all other members, and no personal benefit is available to a member if the Club winds-up.
Community member	Members participate in the RAC through voting and participating in governance, and by trusting in the reliability and competence of advice and guidance from the Club.
<i>Systems-level outputs</i>	
Economic capital	RAC has been a significant incubator of the whole motoring/ mobility 'ecosystem' in WA that has produced public assets such as road networks and employment across myriad motor support and tourism industries.
Social capital	RAC has generated and accumulated immense social capital through several means, notably as a trusted broker between members and information about motor vehicles, driving, driving rules and training, and holidaying and touring with motor vehicles.

APPENDIX B: RAC WA PATRONS, PRESIDENTS, COUNCILLORS AND EXECUTIVES

RAC WA Patrons

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1905-1908	HE Admiral Sir Frederick Bedford KCB	1974-1975	HE Sir Hughie Edwards, VC, KCMG, CB, DSO, OBE, DFC
1907	Sir John Forrest GCMG ¹	1975-1980	HE Air Chief Marshal Sir Wallace Kyle, GCB KCVO CBE DSO DFC KStJ
1909-1912	HE Sir Gerald Strickland KCMG	1980-1984	HE Rear Admiral Sir Richard Trowbridge, KCVO KStJ
1913-1916	HE Sir Harry Barron KCMG CVO	1985-1989	HE Prof Gordon Reid AC
1917-1919	HE The Rt Hon Sir William Ellison-Macartney KCMG	1990-1993	HE The Hon Sir Francis Burt, AC KCMG QC
1920-1923	HE Sir Francis Newdegate GCMG	1993-2000	HE Major General Michael Jeffery AC MC
1924-1930	HE Colonel Sir William Champion KCMG DSO TD	2000-2006	HE Lieutenant General John Sanderson AC
1931-1947	Mr Robert O Law	2006-2011	HE Dr Ken Michael AC
1948-1951	HE Sir James Mitchell, GCMG	2011-2014	HE Mr Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC
1951-1963	HE Lieutenant General Sir Charles Gairdner GBE, KCMG, KCVO, CB	2015-2018	HE The Hon Kerry Sanderson AC CVO
1963-1973	HE Sir Douglas Kendrew KCMG, CB, CBE, DSO	2019-present	HE The Hon Kim Beazley AC

¹ Co-patron with Sir Frederick Bedford for one year.

RAC WA Presidents

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1905	Dr Arthur Baddock, Provisional Chairman	1963-1965	Mr LJ Kiernan
1905-1910	Mr Alfred E Morgans	1965-1967	Mr DR Campbell
1910-1912	Mr Richard T Robinson	1967-1969	Mr Wallace V Fyfe



<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1913-1914	Mr Richard Strelitz	1969-1971	Mr John Dewan
1914-1915	Mr Richard T Robinson KC	1971-1973	Mr Horace C Stewart
1915-1916	Mr Cecil Dent	1973-1975	Mr Kenneth G Bott
1916-1918	Mr Joseph RW Gardam	1975-1977	Mr Lewis A Jones
1918-1921	Mr Robert O Law	1977-1979	Mr Rodney M Evans
1921-1929	Mr Lewis R Butt JP	1979-1981	Mr John AS Warwick
1929-1931	Mr Thomas H Wilson	1981-1983	Mr Rolfe A Lindsey
1931-1933	Mr William R Campbell	1983-1985	Mr Donald M Hutchison
1933-1935	Mr Joseph RW Gardam	1985-1987	Mr Kenneth G Bott
1935-1937	Mr HM Manning	1987-1989	Mr Jack AS Warwick
1937-1939	Mr W Hayes	1989-1991	Mr Peter Woodward
1939-1941	Mr Frank C Edmondson	1991-1993	Mr Peter Arney
1941-1943	Mr HM Henderson	1993-1995	Mr P Brian Rakich
1943-1945	Mr W Hayes	1995-1997	Judge L Alton Jackson QC
1945-1947	Sir Thomas Meagher Kt	1997-1999	Mr Colin O'Sullivan
1947-1949	Mr CE Rankin	1999-2001	Mr Dennis Banks
1949-1950	Mr AJ McLaren	2001-2003	Mr John Hanley
1950-1952	Mr TH Wilson	2003-2005	Mr Rod Slater
1952-1954	Mr W Hayes	2005-2007	Ms Freda Crucitti
1954-1956	Sir Harry Howard KBE	2007-2010	Mr Alden Halse
1956-1957	Mr AJ McLaren	2010-2013	Mr Tim Shanahan
1957-1959	Mr DR Campbell	2013-2016	Ms Esme Bowen
1959-1961	Mr DM Cullity	2016-2019	Mr Tony Evans
1961-1963	Mr NH Baird	2019-present	Ms Jacqueline Ronchi

RAC WA Senior Vice Presidents

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1956-1956	Mr DR Campbell, inaugural Senior Vice President	1985-1986	Mr KG Bott
1957-1959	Mr DM Cullity	1986-1988	Mr Jack AS Warwick
1959-1961	Mr Neil H Baird	1988-1990	Mr Peter Woodard
1961-1963	Mr Laurence J Kiernan	1990-1992	Mr Peter Arney
1963-1965	Mr DR Campbell	1992-1994	Mr P Brian Rakich
1965-1967	Mr Wallace V Fyfe	1994-1995	Judge LA Jackson QC
1967-1970	Mr John O Dewan	1995-1998	Mr Colin P O'Sullivan
1970-1971	Mr William AM Green, CMG	1998-2000	Mr Dennis Banks
1971-1973	Mr RG Clark	2000-2002	Mr John J Hanley
1973-1974	Mr KC Bott	2002-2004	Mr R Slater
1974-1975	Mr Lewis A Jones	2004-2006	Freda Crucitti
1975-1977	Mr RM Evans	2006-2008	Alden Halse
1977-1978	Mr Frank Edmondson	2008-2011	Tim Shanahan
1978-1979	Mr JAS Warwick	2011-2014	Esme Bowen
1979-1981	Mr WL Brine	2014-2017	Tony Evans
1981-1984	Mr DM Hutchison	2017-2020	Jacqueline Ronchi
1984-1985	Mr DAW Maloney	2020-present	Prof Ross Dowling AM

Note: Before 1956, one of the vice presidents was usually also appointed honorary treasurer and informally considered to have a more senior role.

RAC WA Vice Presidents

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1905-1908	Burkitt, Dr Ormsby	1946-1949	Wilson, Mr TH
1905-1911	Strelitz, Mr Richard	1947-1949	Hayes, Mr W
1907-1908	Cairns Hill, Mr F	1949-1953	Howard, Mr HR



<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1908-1914	Robinson, Mr Richard T, KC	1950-1951	Hayes, Mr W
1909-1911	Stewart, Dr JMY	1951-1954	Knapp, Mr Karl
1910-1911	Hampton, Mr HG	1952-1955	Wade, Mr J
1913-1914	Dent, Mr Cecil	1955	Campbell, Mr DR
1913-1915	Vincent, Mr WM	1955-1956	Cullity, Mr DM
1914-1916	Eden, Mr SD	1955	McLaren, Mr AJ
1915-1916	Gardam, Mr Joseph RW	1956-1958	Baird, Mr NH
1916-1917	Law, Mr Robert O	1957-1960	Yeates, Mr FA
1916	Loton, Mr AT	1959-1964	Stewart, Mr Horace C
1917-1919	Dent, Mr Cecil	1961-1964	Fyfe, Mr Wallace V
1917-1919	Robinson, Mr Richard T, MLA KC	1965-1966	Dewan, Mr John O
1919-1920	Gardam, Mr Joseph RW	1965-1973	Horton, Mr JAF
1920	Butt, Cr Lewis R	1967-1968	Dewar, Mr JSC
1921-1922	Brook, Mr Byron	1970	Stewart, Mr Horace C
1921	Law, Mr Robert O	1971-1972	Bott, Mr Kenneth C
1921-1927	Sewell, Mr FD 1	1973	Jones, Mr Lewis A
1922-1923	Mead, Mr JH	1974-1976	Edmondson, Mr Frank C
1923	Anderson, Dr Jno Theo	1976-1977	Warwick, Mr Jack AS
1924-1925	Barnard, Mr HL	1978	Brine, Mr WL
1924-1927	Mackay, Mr CA	1978-1980	Lindsey, Mr Rolfe A
1925	Knapp, Mr August	1980	Hutchison, Mr Don M
1926-1928	Wilson, Mr TH	1981-1983	Maloney, Mr DAW
1928-1931	Campbell, Mr William R	1981-1987	Woodward, Mr P
1928-1929	Gardam, Mr Joseph RW	1984	Bott, Mr Kenneth C
1929	Sewell, Mr FD 2	1985	Warwick, Mr Jack AS

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1930-1932	Butt, Mr Lewis R	1986-1989	Arney, Mr Peter
1930-1934	Manning, Mr MH	1988-1991	Rakich, Mr Brian
1930-1934	Wilson, Mr TH	1992-1993	Jackson Judge LA QC
1933-1934	Campbell, Mr William R	1994	O'Sullivan, Mr Colin P
1934-1936	McLaren, Mr AJ	1996-1997	Banks, Mr D
1934	Sewell, Mr FD 3	1998-1999	Hanley, Mr John J
1935-1936	Gardam, Mr Joseph RW	2000-2001	Slater, Mr Rod
1937-1938	Brumby, Mr LA	2002-2003	Crucitti, Ms Freda
1937-1939	Edmondson, Mr Frank C	2004	Halse, Mr Alden
1937	Manning, Mr MH	2005	Crucitti, Ms Freda
1938-1939	Mortimer, Mr Sam	2007	Shanahan, Mr Tim
1940-1942	Hayes, Mr W	2008-2010	Bowen, Ms Esme
1940-1941	Henderson, Mr HM	2011-2013	Evans, Mr Tony
1942-1944	Meagher, Dr Thomas W	2014-2016	Ronchi, Ms Jacqueline
1942-1944	Rankin, Mr CE	2017-2019	Dowling AM, Prof Ross
1946-1948	McLaren, Mr AJ	2020	Driscoll, John

Notes: From 1906 to 1956 there were usually three vice-presidents elected for one-year terms, reduced to two vice-presidents in 1956 when the office of senior vice-president was created, and reduced to one vice-president in 1989. Several vice presidents have served more than one non-consecutive term.

RAC WA Honorary Treasurers

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1905-1906	Mr Hessay Mosey	1954-1956	Mr AJ McLaren
1907-1908	Mr Cecil Dent	1956-1971	Mr Horace C Stewart
1908-1909	Mr Alfred WB Mather	1971-1974	Mr AH Davies
1909-1910	Mr Frank England	1974-1977	Mr RM Evans
1910-1919	Mr August Knapp	1977-1979	Mr JAS Warwick

1919-1921	Mr Byron Brook	1979-1981	Mr Rolfe A Lindsey
1921-1923	Mr CF Deakin	1981-1983	Mr JAS Warwick
1923-1925	Mr EW King	1983-1984	Mr Don M Hutchison
1925-1929	Mr CF Deakin	1984-1991	Mr Rolfe A Lindsey
1929-1937	Mr W Hayes	1991-1998	Mr John B Morrison
1937-1939	Mr WR Campbell	1998-1999	Mr Terry J Prindiville
1939-1948	Mr JRW Gardam	1999-2000	Mr John J Hanley
1948-1952	Mr W Hayes	2000-2001	Mr Alden Halse
1952-1954	Mr TH Wilson	2001-2006	Mr Alden Halse ¹

¹ Continued to use title Honorary Treasurer until 2003, Office discontinued from 2006.

RAC WA Honorary & Salaried Secretaries

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1905	Mr JM Speed	1916-1918	Mr EW Hale ¹
1905-1907	Mr Alfred WB Mather	1918-1924	Mr James W Patterson ²
1908-1910	Mr Cecil Dent	1924-1942	Mr Oscar C Zehnder MC ³
1911-1913	Mr SH Eden	1942	Mr E Menmuir, (Acting) ⁴
1913	Mr Cecil Dent	1942	Miss MH Williams, (Acting) ⁵
1914	Mr SH Eden	1945-1956	Mr Sam Mortimer
1914-1915	Mr EW Hale		

¹ Salaries paid from 1916, continued to use title Honorary Treasurer until 2003, Office dissolved 2006.

² Assisted Mr EW Hale during 1918.

³ Appointed August 1924 full time, from Asst Sec, New Settlers League; moved to RACA in Sydney.

⁴ Manager, Club Motor Insurance Agency, seconded.

⁵ Assistant Secretary, first female executive in RAC WA.

RAC WA Executive Officers

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Job title</i>
1956-1959	Mr Sam Mortimer	General Manager of Club and of RAC Insurance
1959-1969	Mr William H Minors	Assistant GM
1970-1986	Mr William J Solloway, FAIM FIDA	Assistant GM
1986-1996	Mr David L West, BE BCom MIE (Aust)	Group CEO (former consultant)
1996-1998	Mr Roy Caldwell, ACII FAICD FCIS FCIM	Group CEO (former Head, RAC Insurance)
1998-2018	Mr Terry Agnew, BE MSc MBA	Group CEO (former MD, SGIC Holdings, Adelaide)
2018-present	Mr Rob Slocombe, BBus MBus MScTech FAIM	Group CEO (former RAC Chief Operating Officer)

RAC WA Honorary Auditors

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Job title</i>
1913-1914	Mr JH Platt	Honorary Auditor
1914-1925	Mr Sinclair J McGibbon, FCPA	Honorary Auditor
1926-1944	SJ McGibbon & Cox	Honorary Auditor
1945-1964	King, Lissiman & Co	Honorary Auditor

Notes: Appointment of honorary auditor discontinued 1964.

RAC WA Committee Members

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1905-1907	Anderson, Dr Thomas L	1919-1925	Lough, Mr PR
1905-1907	Blaxland, Dr Walter	1919-1920	Sewell, Mr FD
1905-1907	Drake, Mr FD	1920	James, Mr
1905-1907	Lotz, Dr Henry J	1920-1922	King, Mr CR
1905-1907	Lovekin, Mr Arthur	1921-1922	Anderson, Dr Jno Theo
1905-1907	Speed, Mr JM	1921-1923	Boas, Mr Harold



<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1905-1907	Tratman, Dr Frank	1921-1925	Knapp, Mr August
1907	Couch, Dr James Kynaston	1921	Mead, Mr JH
1907	De Lisle, Mr William H	1922-1923	McKay, Mr GS
1907	Dyer, Mr H	1922-1927	Wilson, Mr TH
1907-1908	England Mr Frank	1923	Anderson, Mr A
1907-1909	Hampton, Mr HG	1923	Burkett, Mr JF
1907-1910	Harper, Mr Nathaniel W	1925-1927	Arnold, Mr RM
1907	Haynes, Dr EJ Arthur	1925-1957	Hayes, Mr WR
1907-1908	Stewart, Dr Jonathon MY	1925-1927	Mackay, Mr GA
1907-1910	Wigglesworth, Mr James	1925-1926	Sawell, Dr Frank LP
1908-1909	Broadbent, Mr H	1925	Yeates, Mr GF
1908-1914	Caris, Mr JH	1926-1943	Campbell, Mr William R
1908-1909	Knapp, Mr August	1926-1927	Moar, Mr H
1908-1911	Randell, Dr Allen E	1926-1929	Nairn, Mr William MLA
1908-1911	Seed, Dr William Pope	1927-1931	Coultas, Mr TW
1909-1911	Badock, Dr Arthur	1927	Deakin, Mr
1909-1911	Sanderson, Mr A	1927-1951	Johnson, Mr CW
1909-1910	Teague, Dr Harold O	1927-1936	Sewell, Mr FD
1910-1913	Harwood, Mr D	1928-1963	Manning, Mr HM
1910-1911	Vincent, Mr HW	1929-1935	Knapp, Mr August
1911-1916	Dent, Mr Cecil	1930-1936	Skinner, Mr JJ
1911	Hocking, Mr EW	1930	Oates, Mr W
1911	Strelitz, Mr Paul	1930-1951	Proudfoot, Mr George A
1913-1914	Anderson, Dr Jno Theo	1930-1931	Taylor, Mr TV
1913-1914	Barber, Dr George W	1930-1941	Wilson, Mr TH



<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1913-1914	Deakin, Dr Jonathon E	1931-1933	Bickford, Mr HS
1913-1939	Gardam, Mr Joseph RW	1931-1945	Brown, Mr HT
1913	Gosse, Mr JH	1932-1935	Deans, Mr GT
1913-1914	Law, Mr Robert O	1933-1936	McLaren, Mr AJ
1913	Stuart, Mr CHA	1934-1955	Edmondson, Mr Frank C
1913-1914	Tymms, Dr Herbert G	1935-1963	Knapp, Mr Karl
1914	De Bernales, Mr Claude	1936-1938	Brumby, Mr LA
1914	Montgomery, Mr	1937-1963	Henderson, Mr Hugh M
1914	Wisdom, Major Evan	1937-1938	Mortimer, Mr Sam A
1915-1922	Atkins, Mr LF	1937-1944	Vivian, Mr James W
1915-1916	Boas, Mr Harold	1939-1944	Meagher, Dr Thomas
1915-1917	Crawcour, Mr L	1939-1947	Rankin, Mr CE
1915	Holland, Dr Jonathon J	1942-1943	McLaren, Mr AJ
1915	Lavan, Mr	1945-1963	Campbell, Mr S
1915	Murray, Mr	1945-1949	Howard, Mr Harry R
1915-1918	Nathan, Mr Charles S	1945-1961	McLaren, Mr AJ
1915-1918	Robinson, Mr Robert T, KC	1946-1963	Meagher, Sir Thomas, Kt
1915	Sampson, Mr	1946-1953	Wilson, Mr TH
1915	Simpson, Mr AG	1946-1951	Zeffert, Mr MR
1916-1930	Butt, Mr Lewis R	1949-1951	Wade, Mr J
1916-1917	McCallum Smith, Mr James	1950-1954	Rankin, Mr CE
1916	Ogilvie, Mr	1953-1955	Baird, Mr Neil H
1916	Rea, Mr Frank R	1953-1963	Campbell, Mr DR
1916-1917	Robinson, Mr PG	1953-1963	Cullity, Mr Denis M
1917-1919	Eden, Mr S	1954-1960	Miller, Mr RH



<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1917	Mayor, Mr A	1955	Stewart, Mr Horace C
1917	Pitchford, Mr GF	1955-1961	Yeates, Mr FA
1918	Couch, Dr James Kynaston	1956-1960	Fyfe, Mr Wallace V
1918	Jacoby, Mr AW	1956-1963	Howard, Sir Harry KBE
1918	Simpson, Mr AG	1959-1960	Kiernan, Mr Laurence AF
1919-1920	Bailey, Mr	1961-1963	Dewan, Mr JO
1919	Deakin, Mr CF	1961-1963	Horton, Mr JAF
1919-1937	Joubert, Mr Louis E	1963	Wickham, Mr John LC

RAC WA Council Members

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1961-1968	Kiernan, Mr LJ	1988-2000	Wood, Mr Anthony B
1964-1985	Baird, Mr Neil H	1989-1990	Bramley, Ms Claire C
1964-1966	Campbell, Mr S	1990-1991	Warwick, Mr Jack AS
1964-1965	Cullity, Mr Denis M	1991-1998	Beasley, Mr JC
1964-1979	Dewan, Mr John O	1991-1995	Brockwell, Mr MJ
1964-1966	Dewar, Mr JSC	1991-1997	Prindiville, Mr Terry J
1964-1966	Dunn, Mr PA	1992-1994	Allen, Miss Verity
1964-1983	Horton, Mr John AF	1992-1993	Hanley, Mr John J
1964-1969	Howard, Sir Harry, KBE	1992-1995	Woodward, Mr P
1964-1975	Knapp, Mr Karl	1993-1995	Lawrence, Mr Craig
1964-1978	Meagher, Sir Thomas, Kt	1995-2005	Hanley, Mr John J
1964-1968	Wickham, Mr John LC, QC	1996-2000	Clarke, Mr EG
1966-1969	Green, Mr William, AM CMG	1996-2004	Costello, Mr DJ
1967-1970	Campbell, Mr DR	1996-2020	Crucitti, Ms Freda



<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1967-1970	Clark, Mr RG	1996-2002	Petrossian, Mr Sarkis V
1967-1970	Davies, Mr Arthur H	1996-2001	Rodgers, Mrs ME
1969-1987	Bott, Mr Kenneth G	1998-199	Slater, Mr Rodney
1969-1973	Edmondson, Mr Frank C	1998-2020	Wadley, Ms Julie Ann
1970-1973	Fyfe, Mr Wallace V	1999-2020	Gooding, Mr Dalton
1970-1989	Jones, Mr Lewis A	1999-2020	Halse, Mr Alden
1971-1973	Kiernan, Mr LJ	1999	Jones, Mr AH
1972-1977	Brine, Mr WL	2000-2001	Coombes, Mrs DE
1972-2007	Evans, Mr Rodney M	2001-2020	Darby, Ms Jill
1973	Clark, Mr RG	2001-2019	Shanahan, Mr Tim
1973-1975	Davies, Mr Arthur H	2002-2003	Dowling, Dr Ross
1973-1987	Stewart, Mr Horace C, MBE	2002-2004	New, Mrs ME (formerly Mrs ME Rodgers)
1974-1985	Richardson, Mr RW	2003-2013	Ronchi, Ms Jacqueline
1974-1979	Robinson, Mr Bruce W	2004-2020	Dowling, Prof Ross
1974-1981	Warwick, Mr Jack AS	2005-2010	Caldwell, Mr W Roy
1976-1997	Hutchison, Mr Donald M, OAM	2006-2019	Bowen, Ms Esme
1976-1990	Lindsey, Mr Rolfe A	2006-2011	Re, Ms Elizabeth
1978	Tolcon, Mr N	2007-2020	Evans, Mr Tony
1979-1984	Kiernan, Mr LJ	2008-2016	Blagaich, Mr Allan
1979-1980	Maloney, Mr DAW	2011-2013	Klomp, Mr Stephen
1980-1989	Prindiville, Mr Bernard F, AO CMG	2013-2017	Re, Ms Elizabeth
1981-1995	Arney, Mr Peter	2014-2020	Richardson, Mr Emmerson
1983-1987	Warwick, Mr Jack AS	2015-2017	Proud, Ms Stephanie
1984-1987	Rakich, Mr P Brian	2017-2019	Lampard, Prof Murray



<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1985-1998	Jackson, Mr L Alton, QC	2018-2020	Blagaich, Mr Allan
1985-2014	O'Sullivan, Mr Colin P	2018-2019	Turner, Mr Christopher
1985-1986	Roe, Dame Raigh, DBE	2019-2019	Driscoll, Mr John
1986-2018	Banks, Mr Dennis	2020	Bishop, Ms Leanne
1987-1988	Lawrence, Mr Craig	2020	Hanson, Mr Brian
1987-1990	Morrison, Mr JB	2020	Walker, Mr Jim

Notes: Councillors and committee members holding office other than as an ordinary councillor or committee member are also recorded on the roll for that office. Some councillors or committee members served non-consecutive terms, indicated by repeated names.

Councillors with a start date of 1964_c have continued in office from the former RAC Committee – see Committee roll for earlier service. Councillors were titled ‘Council Officers’ from 1999 to 2003.

Apparent discrepancies in start or finish years arise with the resignation, retirement or death of a member part-way through a year and their replacement by a member appointed to fill the casual vacancy.

Titles and post-nominals recorded here are those used by each councillor or committee member at the time they held office – there may be different or additional or no titles and post-nominals recorded at different times.

RAC WA Female Council Members

<i>Name</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>End date</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Committees</i>
Dame Raigh Roe DBE	Elected 21 April 1986	Resigned 17 August 1987	Died 2014	First women elected to RAC Council
Ms Constance Claire Bramley	Elected 24 July 1989	Retired August 1991	Married name Penberthy	
Miss Diana Newman	Elected 26 November 1990	Retired August 1991	Resigned due to conflict of interest – appointed to the board of SGIC	
Ms Verity Allan	Elected June 1992	Resigned December 1994		
Ms Freda Crucitti	Elected 30 November 1995	Still on Council (as at July 2020)	Vice President 2001-03 Senior Vice President 2003-05	President of Australian Automobile Association (2008-2010); first female Vice



<i>Name</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>End date</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Committees</i>
			President 2005-08	President, first female President
Ms Marylyn E Rodgers	Elected 24 June 1996	Resigned 20 December 2004	Married name New	
Ms Julie Wadley	Elected 27 November 1997	Still on Council (as at July 2020)		
Ms Dianna E Coombes	Elected November 1999	Resigned 23 April 2002		
Ms Jill Darby	Appointed 28 May 2001	Still on Council (as at July 2020)		Road User Representative to the Road Safety Council (2007 - current)
Ms Jacqueline Ronchi	Elected 28 November 2002	Still on Council (as at July 2020)	Vice President 2013-16 Senior Vice President 2016-2019 President 2019 - current	
Ms Esme Bowen	Elected April 2005	Resigned March 2020	Vice President 2007-10 Senior Vice President 2010-13 President 2013-16	
Ms Elizabeth Re	Elected November 2005	Resigned Nov 2017		
Ms Stephanie Proud	Elected 25 November 2014	Resigned Nov 2017		
Leanne Bishop	Elected Nov 2019	Still on Council		

APPENDIX C: RAC WA - HISTORICAL TIMELINE 1895-2020

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
Pre-establishment	<p>1895 – Automobile Club de France formed in Paris. American Motor League formed in Chicago. Self-Propelled Traffic Association formed in London, merged with ACGBI in 1898.</p> <p>1896 – First newspaper reports in WA about motor vehicles and ‘automobilism’.</p> <p>1897 – Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland (ACGBI) formed in London.</p> <p>1898 – A motorised tricycle imported into WA by Monsieur A Bargigli and Mademoiselle Serpolette, with the intention of driving to Kalgoorlie.</p> <p>1899 – A ‘motor carriage’ imported into WA by Mr Brookman, but it was not successfully driven. Deutsche Automobilclub (DAC) formed in Berlin.</p> <p>1900 – Percy Armstrong imported into WA a ‘motor pacer’ (an engine-powered tandem bicycle) with a 1-cylinder 2¼ horsepower petrol motor by De Dion & Buton and Dunlop tyres – the first successful motor-powered or self-propelled vehicle in WA.</p> <p>1901 – Percy Armstrong imported into WA an 8 horsepower, 1 cylinder De Dion – the earliest ‘motor car’ in the state. Irish Automobile Club formed in Dublin.</p> <p>1902 – American Automobile Association formed in Chicago.</p> <p>1903 – Percy Armstrong imported into WA a De Dion 8 horsepower petrol car that could carry 6 people, in which he had just spent a year touring automobile manufacturing plants in Europe. Automobile Club of Victoria formed in Melbourne. Automobile Club of ‘Australia’ (i.e. New South Wales) formed in Sydney. Automobile and Cycling Club of South Australia formed in Adelaide. Automobile clubs formed in Auckland (NZ) and Canterbury (NZ).</p> <p>1904 – Potential military uses for motor vehicles start to be envisaged. American Motor Association formed by merger of American Motor League and American Automobile Association. Automobile Club of Ceylon formed.</p>
1905-1913	<p>1905 – Automobile Club of Western Australia (ACWA) formed at a meeting in Cottesloe, with its first club room in Weld Chambers in Perth. Automobile Club of Queensland formed in Brisbane. First ACWA ‘run’, from Government House via Kings Park to Cottesloe and back, with the club colours of red and white used as its first emblem. First reported motor accident, in Kings Park.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
	<p>1906 – First reported accident between a motor car and a tram, in Fremantle.</p> <p>1907 – Royal prefix conferred on the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland, re-named the Royal Automobile Club (RAC). Goldfields Automobile Club formed in Kalgoorlie. Singapore Automobile Club formed.</p> <p>1908 – ACWA affiliated with the RAC, with reciprocal membership benefits. ACWA commenced installing road signs on the Fremantle Road (now Stirling Highway). ACWA Roads & Touring Committee formed to design district road maps.</p> <p>1909 – Goldfields Automobile Club moves to focus on motorcycle racing.</p> <p>1910 – ACWA membership 103, quadrupled since 1905. ACWA badge, modelled on the RAC badge, adopted with a black swan as its centrepiece. ACWA focus on lobbying WA government for improvements in country roads and tarring urban streets, developing tourist drives around Perth, and working with roads boards to erect directional and distance signs on principal country highways to Albany, Busselton and Northam.</p> <p>1911 – Automobile Association of South Australia formed (succeeded 1903 club). Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club e.V (General German Automobile Club) formed in Stuttgart, succeeding several earlier clubs.</p> <p>1912 – First ACWA road map produced, of the South West, with information gleaned from various runs by members and the secretary August Knapp.</p> <p>1913 – Canadian Automobile Association (Association canadienne des automobilistes) formed in Ottawa – a federation of provincial motor clubs. A Traffic Bill was drafted but then laid aside because of the commencement of the War.</p>
1914-1918	<p>1914 – Outbreak of World War One.</p> <p>1915 – ACWA road signs program installs first enamelled road signs at Armadale and Midland Junction, and the 1912 road map was updated. ACWA members raise funds to purchase two field ambulances for use by the Imperial forces in France.</p> <p>Convoy of ACWA members, driving their own cars, meet and convey first returning wounded soldiers from Fremantle Harbour to No 8 General Hospital in South Fremantle. ACWA begins producing an annual Motorguide & Directory.</p> <p>1916 – Appointment of a salaried Secretary, title ‘Honorary Secretary’ abolished. ACWA commenced a rating system for roadside accommodation based upon an English example. Number plate codes for each local</p>

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
	<p>government were finalised under ACWA guidance. Royal prefix conferred on Automobile Club of Victoria.</p> <p>1917 – Soldier transport system extended by allowing distant members to donate the cost of ACWA hiring motor taxis to make more cars available. ACWA Constitution amended to be meet requirements of an Incorporated Association, also to allow ‘enemy aliens’ to be removed from membership.</p> <p>1918 – World War One ends with armistice of 11 November. Hong Kong Automobile Association formed.</p>
1919-1929	<p>1919 – ACWA published an honour roll listing its 29 members who had served in the Great War, fortunately with no casualties. Traffic Bill introduced to WA Parliament and passed at end of the year. Royal prefix conferred on Automobile Club of Australia (Sydney).</p> <p>1920 – Traffic Act 1919 came into effect, the first traffic legislation in WA. ACWA begins lobbying for the creation of a national park in the karri forest between Nannup and Warren. New ACWA Constitution adopted, included provision for country members to form branches. Australian National Roads Association formed in Sydney in competition with Royal Automobile Club of Australia.</p> <p>1921 – ACWA begins lobbying for better roads to tourist attractions such as the Yanchep Caves. Royal prefix conferred on Automobile Club of Queensland.</p> <p>1922 – Royal prefix conferred on Automobile Club of Western Australia. Royal prefix conferred on Irish Automobile Club. ACWA commences producing the annual Yearbook & Roadguide, superseding the Motorguide & Directory.</p> <p>1923 – Automobile Club of Tasmania formed. Royal Automobile Club of Canada formed.</p> <p>1924 – National Roads & Motorists Association (NRMA) succeeded the Australian National Roads Association.</p> <p>1925 – RAC supplied over 400 road signs across the state in 1925, including 39 in the Group Settlements in the South West. RAC lobbies for, and achieves, installation of first public telephone on a highway at The Lakes on the York Road. Commonwealth Association of Automobile Organisations (CAAO) formed in Adelaide. RAC enters into arrangement with Lloyds Underwriters to provide car insurance and third-party insurance for members.</p> <p>1926 – RAC Road Patrol formed, with first patrols on Perth-Kalamunda and Perth-Upper Swan-Bullsbrook roads. 254 motorists assisted in their first year.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
	<p>RAC Road Patrol formed, with first patrols on Perth-Kalamunda and Perth-Upper Swan-Bullsbrook roads, 254 motorists assisted in their first year.</p> <p>228 Adelaide Terrace property purchased from Frank Craig JP and adapted as first permanent home of the RAC. RAC Touring & Information Bureau established, with responsibility for mapping, road signs, accommodation ratings and tour itineraries.</p> <p>1927 – Automobile Club d'Italia formed by amalgamating regional clubs. RAC Constitution amended, with committee members to serve three-year terms, with five retiring each year but eligible for re-election. RAC Ladies Committee formed, with Mrs Trouchet president – first women’s group within the RAC.</p> <p>1928 – Royal prefix conferred on Automobile Association of South Australia. Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania formed by merger of the Automobile Club of Tasmania, the Royal Auto-car Club and the North West Automobile Club.</p> <p>1929 – CAAO re-named the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) at its annual conference in Perth. Great Depression commences.</p>
1930-1939	<p>1930 – RAC commences producing <i>The Road Patrol</i> newspaper-style bi-monthly journal, superseding the annual <i>Yearbook & Roadguide</i>. Automobile Association of South Africa formed. Main Roads Department established under the <i>Main Roads Act 1930</i>.</p> <p>1931 – Effects of Great Depression reach their greatest impact, with the value of car imports into WA decreasing by 92 per cent, and petrol imports by 93 per cent since 1929.</p> <p>1932 – RAC Contract Service Stations network established with 6 stations. Automobile Association of Malaya formed by a merger of the motor associations in the Federated States of Malaya.</p> <p>1934 – RAC sponsors trans-Nullarbor motor rally to mark Melbourne’s centenary.</p> <p>1935 – 61 contract service stations in operation across WA.</p> <p>1936 – Standards Association of Australia issued an Australian Standard Road Signs Code.</p> <p>1937 – RAC forms Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd to provide competitive motor insurance for members and terminated the Lloyds arrangements.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
	<p>1938 – RAC testing of motor mechanics superseded by an Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers Scheme. Third Party Insurance Bill introduced into WA Parliament but failed.</p> <p>1939 – Australian Standard Road Signs Code adopted by all states. First railway level crossing electric flashing signals installed by the Railways Department, at RAC instigation, on the Napier Street Crossing in Cottesloe. On eve of World War Two, RAC called on the Commonwealth Government to build a trans-Nullarbor highway for strategic reasons. Outbreak of World War Two.</p>
1940-1949	<p>1940 – RAC begins installing new road signs designed to the new Road Signs Code standards, on the Perth-Northam Road. Petrol rationing commenced, with the RAC the principal non-government issuer of petrol ration coupons.</p> <p>1941 – Third Party Insurance Bill introduced into WA Parliament. Outbreak of war in the Indo Pacific.</p> <p>1942 – All road signs, including all signs installed by the RAC, within 34 kilometres of the coast removed for fear of enemy invasion. Road sign removals extended to a ‘security belt’ within 160 kilometres of the coast. The RAC named the building of a trans-Nullarbor or East-West Highway a ‘great objective’ to be achieved after the war.</p> <p>Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies stopped majority of petrol imports into WA, and greatly increased petrol shortages. RAC sponsored the construction of an operating theatre at the new Hollywood military hospital for £1,150, named the RAC Operating Theatre.</p> <p>1943 – As fear of invasion receded, some local governments began reinstalling RAC road signs. Third Party Insurance Act passed.</p> <p>1944 – <i>Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act 1943</i> came into effect, with Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd an approved insurer under the Act. AAA reconstituted as a Limited Liability Company, to operate in the Federal sphere only.</p> <p>1945 – World War Two ends with armistice of 14 August. With the end of the war, the trans-Nullarbor route had four proposed names – the East-West Highway, the Forrest Highway, the Eyre Highway and the Curtin Highway, but no work had begun on actual road construction.</p> <p>Royal Automobile Club of Australia in Sydney relinquished all motoring operations in favour of NRMA, except control of motor sport racing. <i>The Road Patrol</i> format changed from newspaper to magazine style.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
	<p>1946 – Local governments asked to take on a greater share of the work in installing and maintaining road signs. National Safety Council of WA formed, supported by RAC.</p> <p>1947 – RAC Insurance Pty Ltd formed as an RAC-owned insurance company, which replaced Club Motor Insurance Agency Pty Ltd.</p> <p>1948 – 135 contract service stations in operation across WA.</p> <p>1949 – RAC membership subscriptions increased for first time since 1916 to keep pace with inflation. Head office expanded with purchase of 349 Hay Street. RAC ‘initials’ badge adopted.</p>
1950-1959	<p>1950 – Petrol rationing, introduced in 1940, ends. Driver licence renewals ‘staggered’ across whole year rather than all being due on 30th June, after RAC lobbying.</p> <p>1951 – Staff super fund established (male members only). <i>Road Patrol</i> suspended.</p> <p>1952 – Automobile Association of Singapore formed (replaced 1907 Club).</p> <p>1953 – <i>Road Patrol</i> re-commences publication.</p> <p>1954 – Royal visit by Queen Elizabeth II marked by RAC with a road safety campaign called “Let Courtesy Reign on the Queens Highway”. Club super scheme opened to female staff. Head office expanded.</p> <p>1955 – UN Convention On Road Traffic came into effect in Australia, and the RAC became the issuing authority in WA for international driver licences and international touring plates (AUS for Australia). New UN standards for road signs came into effect, with the RAC adapting its road sign designs to then new standards.</p> <p>1956 – RAC returns to full-time installation of road signs, with a new Signposting & Road Survey Unit formed to manage the program. RAC first reports on use and testing of seat belts in the US. Constitution amended - number of vice-presidents reduced from 3 to 2, and office of Senior Vice President created. Constitution amended – Committee given power to appoint and remunerate a General Manager.</p> <p>1957 – Head office expanded. Geraldton residence and office acquired.</p> <p>1958 – Internal reorganisation of Club.</p> <p>1959 – RAC Travel Department established.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
1960-1969	<p>1960 – Management of the RAC Club and RAC Insurance formally separated. Head office expanded. RAC travel began operating as a travel agency.</p> <p>1962 – RAC published its first list of safety belts approved by the Australian Standards Association. Commonwealth Games held in Perth, marked by RAC and other state motoring bodies with ‘Operation Eyre Highway’, a common patrol service operating across the Nullarbor during the Games.</p> <p>UK Government announces all Commonwealth citizens, including Australians, would need a visa to visit the UK, which begins the decline in Australians taking vehicles to Britain and reciprocal rights with the UK RAC. UK announces its intention to join the European Common Market, leading to concerns that Australia would need to switch from left to right hand driving.</p> <p>WA Government announces it will seal the Eyre Highway to the SA border by 1970. Bunbury property purchased. Albany office opened – first country office. Fleet membership introduced.</p> <p>1963 – Automobile Association of the Northern Territory formed.</p> <p>1964 – RAC’s 100,000th member welcomed with a picnic hamper and a set of seat belts. Kalgoorlie Office opened. Staff spouses given honorary membership. RAC Committee re-named RAC Council.</p> <p>1965 – RAC clarified for intending members that they did not need to be an RAC Insurance policy holder to be eligible for Club membership. New offices opened, Diamond Jubilee. WA introduces maximum speed limit outside built-up areas of 65 mph (104 km/h).</p> <p>1966 – Route numbering system introduced in WA, after much lobbying by the RAC, based on US and UK systems, with the first route number sign for Route 94 erected beside Midland Junction Town Hall, but the system not really developed until 1986. Australian pounds, shillings and pence currency replaced on 14 February by decimal currency of Australian dollars and cents.</p> <p>1969 – Eyre Highway sealed to SA border, opened by Premier Sir David Brand. RAC adopts policy to support compulsory wearing of seat belts.</p>
1970-1979	<p>1970 – RAC Insurance expands beyond motor insurance with Homeguard house insurance. Road fatalities peak on Australian roads at 30.4 deaths per 100,000.</p> <p>1971 – Main Roads Department assumed control of main road verges and road signs on main roads. AAA moves its headquarters from Sydney to Canberra to more effectively lobby the Commonwealth government.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
	<p><i>Road Patrol</i> format changes from quarto magazine to tabloid newspaper size. WA Traffic Code amended to make it compulsory to wear seat belts in vehicles fitting with seat belts.</p> <p>1972 – Metrication begins to replace imperial measurements.</p> <p>1973 – Last RAC map produced with distances in imperial measurements. RAC Insurance expands into life insurance under the brand name Lifeguard.</p> <p>1974 – RAC supports preliminary breath testing of drivers for alcohol. Strike by Road Patrols. Fremantle Office opened – first metropolitan branch.</p> <p>Metric Motoring Day, 1 July, marked by changes to road speed limit signs from imperial to metric over a four-day period. Commonwealth government announces it will introduce controls on vehicle emissions to reduce air pollution.</p> <p>1975 – Unapproved seat belts and child restraints, and re-using seat belts from crashed cars, banned in WA after RAC lobbying. RAC Travel accredited by IATA. RAC road sign program discontinued as from 30 June; responsibility passed to local governments.</p> <p>Petrol bowsers change to dispensing fuel in litres rather than gallons from October. Commonwealth government announces it will reduce the lead content in petrol for health and environmental reasons.</p> <p>1976 –RAC lobbied Main Roads Department to install more speed limit signs to make drivers aware of local limits. RAC produces first road map of the ‘desert route’ between Perth and Alice Springs.</p> <p>Fitting retractable seat belts became compulsory in all new cars across Australia. Eyre Highway sealed in SA to the WA border. RAC Vehicle Shipping Service closed after decline in demand due to visa restrictions on visiting the UK and the sealing of the Eyre Highway.</p> <p>1977 – Computerisation of RAC office begins.</p> <p>1978 – RAC participates in the first evaluation of an electric powered vehicle being developed by the State Energy Commission. RAC Travel moved to operate nationally as Auto Travel Service – fails. The Commonwealth’s National Energy Advisory Committee reported on measures to reduce dependence on imported oil and increase energy efficiency due to deteriorating world energy supplies.</p> <p>1979 – RAC argued for the conservation of fuel and the development of alternative liquid fuels in response to fuel shortages.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
1980-1989	<p>1980 – RAC lobbies the Roads & Traffic Authority to include questions on drink driving in the driver licence test. RAC participated in a working party examining the feasibility of LPG as a replacement for petrol. Head office expanded, original building demolished. Staff magazine commenced. RAC Badge registered as a trademark.</p> <p>Commonwealth government introduced ‘parity pricing’, making the cost of Australian-produced oil the same as imported oil, to conserve supplies. Membership promotion committee established to arrest declining membership.</p> <p>1981 – RAC supports policy of reducing blood alcohol level from 0.08 to 0.05.</p> <p>1984 – RAC Finance Ltd established, initially to provide staff loans. Balcatta office opened. RAC Touring Department established.</p> <p>1985 – RAC Traffic & Safety Department established. RAC and RAC Insurance begin accepting electronic payments by Visa Card and Bankcard. All new cars made in Australia required to be able to run on lead-free petrol. Dame Raigh Roe elected to RAC Council, first female councillor.</p> <p>1986 – Route-numbering system re-introduced, again after RAC Lobbying, with comprehensive system of continental, national, state and tourist routes and coloured symbols. AGM resolved to change title of General Manager to Chief Executive Officer. RAC General Manager titled changed to Chief Executive Officer. RAC Travel and RAC Touring merged as RAC Travel Services.</p> <p>1987 – RAC announced its support for Random Breath Testing (RBT) of drivers. Dame Raigh Roe resigned from RAC Council.</p> <p>1988 – RAC Driver Training School commenced.</p> <p>1999 – RAC School Safety Program commenced in metropolitan schools. RAC Constitution amended to make language gender-neutral and introduce compulsory Council member retirement at age 72. Number of vice-presidents reduced from two to one, plus one senior vice-president.</p>
1990-1999	<p>1991 – RAC and other state motor bodies adopted a comprehensive environmental strategy to improve fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Black Spot Program funded by fuel excise introduced by Commonwealth government, after RAC lobbying, to fix poor roads.</p> <p>New Zealand Automobile Association formed from amalgamation of 17 district associations. ARC Transistence service company formed, owned by the 8 major European national motorist’s associations, to provide roadside assistance in Europe.</p>

Dates	Summary of events
	<p>RAC Constitution amended to disqualify bankrupts and criminals from council membership and require councillors not to make improper use or gain personal benefits from their position.</p> <p>1992 – Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) formed by RAC and other state motor bodies.</p> <p>1993 – Air bags became compulsory in all new cars. First academic policy papers produced on applying a carbon tax to petrol.</p> <p>1995 – RAC restructure, creating 3 divisions: Club Services, Group Services (including RAC Travel and RAC Finance) and RAC Insurance.</p> <p>1996 – RAC commenced a fuel watch scheme reported on daily petrol prices. RAC website launched.</p> <p>1997 – RAC School Safety Program extended to country schools.</p> <p>1998 – RAC participates in National Road Safety Summit to develop new road safety strategies. RAC branches in metro area reviewed. Terry Agnew appointed CEO.</p> <p>1999 – Comprehensive survey of RAC members reveals road safety, traffic crime and the environment, especially air pollution, were the top three issues on which the RAC should focus its lobbying of authorities. Commonwealth government announced lead fuels would be phased out to reduce air pollution, which was welcomed by RAC.</p>
2000-2009	<p>2000 – Increasing use of phone and online payments by members and a central call centre sees number of RAC branches begin to decline and services such as mobile inspections and generally taking services to members begin to grow.</p> <p>RAC joins the Perth Air Quality Management Plan Committee, and launches its first environmental campaign, 'Air Care'. First prototypes of hybrid petrol-electric cars, and hydrogen-cell powered cars, produced and demise of internal combustion engines predicted by 2020. Restructure of branch network, and replacement with shop fronts commences.</p> <p>2001 – New Enterprise Bargaining Agreement negotiated with RAC staff; work bans limit Roadside Assistance patrols. Annual indexation of petrol excise temporarily stopped after years of RAC lobbying. RAC Constitution amended to remunerate councillors, title of Honorary Treasurer changed to Treasurer.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
	<p>Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, known as 9/11, leads to a return to domestic car-based travel and holidaying within WA.</p> <p>2002 – 50km/h residential area speed zones, and ban on drivers holding mobile phones, introduced after RAC lobbying. RAC joins the Carbon Neutral Program operated by Men Of The Trees to offset emissions from its vehicle fleet through wheatbelt tree planting. New RAC Call Centre established.</p> <p>Bali Bombings and SARS pandemic accentuate growth in local car-based travel within WA.</p> <p>2003 – Plans announced for a new RAC head office in West Perth to mark the Club’s centenary in 2005. RAC begins more active sponsorship of local and state-wide community events and activities, such as the Christmas Pageant in Perth. Red Spot Program launched for members to nominate traffic trouble spots for which the RAC could then lobby for their remediation.</p> <p>Ethanol capped at 10 per cent in motor fuels, a move welcomed by RAC due to impacts on vehicle components. RAC works with State government to develop a strategy for reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels. RAC begins sponsorship of the Fire & Emergency Services Authority’s (FESA) new helicopter rescue service, which was painted in RAC colours and named RAC Rescue 1</p> <p>2004 – Written Off Vehicles Register commenced, after RAC lobbying. Perth’s first zero-emission fuel-cell powered buses commenced service. Perth’s first zero-emission fuel-cell powered buses commenced service.</p> <p>2005 – RAC celebrates its centenary. RAC moves from Adelaide Terrace to its new 4-green star energy rated building in Wellington Street, West Perth where the Motoring Walk of Fame was created as a centenary event.</p> <p>RAC establishes a Foundation to accept donations in support of RAC Rescue 1. RAC Travel launches an online Journey Planner on the RAC website, allowing holidays to be planned from home. Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) launched by RAC and other state motor bodies to rate roads according to safety.</p> <p>2006 – RAC initiates public debate on smoking in cars. New RAC website launched. RAC launches the ‘Risky Roads’ campaign for member to nominate dangerous roads. Combined with AusRAP ratings, these enable the RAC to fine-tune its lobbying of governments for road improvements.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
	<p>2007 – A mining boom commences in WA with rising numbers of heavy vehicles on roads and a emphasis on better road design. <i>Road Patrol</i> magazine re-named <i>Horizons</i> but retains magazine format.</p> <p>RAC launches ‘Safer Cars Safer Lives’ program to encourage buyers to only purchase cars with an ANCAP rating of 4 or more stars. RAC launches ‘Our Community Education’ program that engaged with both school students and older drivers on road and personal safety. RAC Call Centre provides options for callers.</p> <p>2007-2009 – Global Financial Crisis, and ongoing post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan lead to renewed interest in car-based travel and holidaying within WA.</p> <p>2008 – RAC and the WA Sustainable Energy Association welcomed to Perth a solar-powered taxi. Mining boom leading to rapidly rising population and demands for lower emission transport and housing.</p> <p>RAC advised Main Roads WA on design of new highway to Bunbury to achieve at least a 4-star AusRAP rating. RAC and the Road Safety Council launch a ‘Towards Zero’ strategy for safe road use, safe roads and roadsides, safe speeds and safe vehicles.</p> <p>2009 – RAC explores pros and cons of proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme on motor fuels and emissions being considered by the Rudd Federal government, but the scheme was withdrawn in 2010. ARC Europe formed, succeeded ARC Transistence. RAC advocates better road design and building by looking to leading European road agencies rather than outdated US models.</p>
2010-2019	<p>2011 – RAC, FESA, St John Ambulance, WA Police and Royal Perth Hospital launch ‘RAC bstreetsmart’ annual event to increase awareness among senior school students of the impacts and trauma of road crashes.</p> <p>2013 – RAC argues for increasing focus on rail, public transport, cycling, walking and other alternatives in response to mining boom-induced congestion on Perth’s motorways. RAC badge replaced by a logo. RAC ‘Less Emissions Mission’ campaign launched, to help motorists reduce their carbon dioxide vehicle emissions, in response to the Gillard Federal government’s Clean Energy Act that came into effect in 2012.</p> <p>2014 – RAC funds trial of new traffic light timing technology that cleared traffic faster and reduced journey times. ‘RAC bstreetsmart’ moved permanently to the Perth Arena in Wellington Street. RAC becomes a founding partner of Perth Arena, which is re-named RAC Arena in 2018.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
	<p>'Elephant in the Wheatbelt' campaign commenced to break the silence in rural communities around road crashes and road trauma. RAC purchased a caravan park in Cervantes to provide good quality, affordable holidays in key tourist destinations and provide members with opportunities to holiday in their own backyard.</p> <p>2015 – RAC Insurance announced it will no longer insure new cars with less than a 4-star ANCAP rating. RAC makes a significant submission to the WA Government supporting no-fault compulsory insurance. RAC initiates public debate in WA on accommodating driverless vehicles in WA roads.</p> <p>RAC Electric Highway® launched with a series of fast electric vehicle charging stations on the Perth-Augusta highway to reduce carbon emissions and support safe, sustainable and accessible travel. The mining boom comes to a halt.</p> <p>RAC Parks & Resorts formed, and more existing facilities were purchased and transformed along the WA coast to encourage extended regional touring rather than brief overnight stays. RAC and WA Department of Parks & Wildlife partnership provides 50 per cent discounts for members on park passes that fund park visitor facilities.</p> <p>2016 – RAC Intellibus®, an autonomous or driverless bus, fully electric-powered, began operating on public roads to demonstrate the potential of driverless vehicles. RAC Rescue 2 added a second helicopter to the RAC's sponsored emergency rescue helicopter fleet; this being based in Bunbury.</p> <p>2018 – SLOMO, or Slow Down Move Over, laws introduced after RAC lobbying to require drivers to slow down to 40km/h when passing a stationary emergency vehicle with lights flashing. 1,000,000th member joined the RAC, equivalent to 51 per cent of WA's population aged over 20.</p> <p>2019 – CEO Terry Agnew retired after 20 years, succeeded by Rob Slocombe.</p>
2020-2024	<p>2020 – RAC supports the commencement of 'smart freeways' in Perth that establish the road infrastructure for driverless vehicles. Electric vehicle registrations doubled across Australia, compared to 2019.</p> <p>Covid 19 global pandemic breaks out, with the first death in WA occurring on 1 March. RAC operations significantly affected by COVID 19, with RAC designated an essential service, and access to its offices restricted from 23 March. RAC COVID 19 responses include providing a priority breakdown service for essential workers and a hardship package to financially support members. RAC begins looking to a post-Covid future, identifying likely trends in more locally based work and reduced demand for public transport.</p>



APPENDIX D: CURRENCY AND MEASUREMENTS

MEASUREMENTS

Metrication began in Australia in 1971, before which imperial and specialist measurement systems were used. All measurements are given in metric, unless within a quote, in which case the metric equivalent is given, either in brackets or in an endnote.

CURRENCY

Historical currency references are retained in their original form, with a calculation of their value expressed in 2019 Australian dollars to help readers understand their original purchasing power. Calculations have been made using the Reserve Bank's online inflation calculation tools (<https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>).

Australian currency was decimalised on 14 February 1966 in the new form of dollars (\$) and cents (c). Before decimalisation, currency was more elaborate and complex. It took the form of pounds (£), shillings (s) and pence (d). One pound was made up of 20 shillings, one shilling was made up of 12 pence, so that one pound was equal to 240 pence. A penny was divisible into half-penny (ha'penny) and quarter-penny (farthing) units.

Figure 47: Currency examples

Left: Five pence and two shillings and three pence postage stamps (1962). **Right:** A ten-shilling banknote (1954-1966) – the ½ in each corner signifies that this equals half a pound.



A price or value of five pounds eight shillings and six pence would be written as £5/8/6, and spoken as five pounds eight and six, a value of two shillings and six pennies written as 2/6, spoken as two and six, a value of five shillings was written as 5/-, spoken as five shillings, a value of 8 pennies written as 8d, spoken as eightp'nce, and a value of four and a half pennies was written as 4½d, and pronounced fourp'nce ha'penny. There were also numerous slang terms for bank notes, coins and common prices.

One guinea, equivalent to 21 shillings, was also used for specialised pricing such as professional fees, prize-animal auctions and luxury goods in which payment was usually made through accounts rendered rather than cash. Wholesale trade and banking was traditionally conducted in gold (guineas), retail in silver (pounds sterling). The price difference provided a commission.

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia – A Driving Force for a better WA, 1905-2020

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APPENDIX E: NOTES ON METHODS AND ARCHIVES

ON METHODOLOGIES

An aspect of the RAC's uniqueness, and the context for its uniqueness, can be revealed through the theoretical and methodological approaches chosen to study the organisation. Not-for-profit organisations such as the RAC have several distinctive characteristics. One is that they operate within a particular legal framework, in the RAC's case the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015* (WA), and increasingly the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (Cth).⁴⁸

Another is that they are formed and continue to operate where there is a social need that is unmet by either a for-profit firm or a government agency. People join to enjoy services that would not be provided, or are under-provided, by a market such as, in the founding period of the RAC, directional and warning signs on roads, that were 'consumed' by all members of the public, not just RAC members.

The work of Professor Tim Mazzarol of the University of Western Australia and others on member-owned businesses indicates that another response to such a market failure is the formation of co-operatives and other mutual enterprises, which suggests there may be an overlap within the ways the RAC operates between being a not-for-profit association and a co-operative enterprise. Mazzarol and other researchers have identified the 'uncomfortable fit' of co-operative enterprises as too socially focused for mainstream business, and too economically focused for the not-for-profit or 'third sector' (Mazzarol et al., 2011, p. 5).

Some Australian writers such as Mark Lyons have included not-for-profits and co-operatives within the third sector on the basis that they produce both member-benefit and community service and are neither within the private nor public sector (Lyons, 2001). In a British and European context, the term 'third sector' includes co-operatives and mutual aid societies, whereas in a North American context an emphasis on the non-distribution of surpluses to members leads to the exclusion of co-operatives from the 'third sector' (Evers & Laville, 2004). Kim Weinert has summarised the main concepts and models for not-for-profits in Australia, especially those in the form of incorporated associations. These tend to have charitable purposes and, by definition, exclude co-operatives which typically must meet a definition within State or Territory legislation to use the name 'co-operative'.

Mazzarol's work has developed a more nuanced approach that disentangles the co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs), from the not-for-profit sector. He suggests the term 'fourth sector', which has become commonly used in Europe and the United States, to describe the domain of CMEs that may be either 'distributing' (for-profit), or 'non-distributing' (not-for-profit) enterprises (Mazzarol et al., 2011). Further, many CMEs (including co-operatives) are not-for-profit, registered charities. This 'fourth sector' concept encompasses investor-owned firms (IOFs), not-for-profit firms (NFPs), state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and then the CMEs.

⁴⁸ The current associations legislation can be traced back to the *Associations Incorporation Act 1895*, the third such Australasian Act after South Australia in 1858 and New Zealand in 1895, which was not followed in another jurisdiction until an ACT ordinance in 1953.

There are similarities and differences between all four types of entity. However, the main factors that distinguish the CME from the other three are relating to purpose, ownership, and governance. While IOFs focus primarily on maximisation of shareholder returns, and NFPs and SOEs tend to have more social and community objectives, the CMEs are typically driven by a purpose that has both economic and social goals for its members. This has led these entities to be described as ‘hybrid’ organisations.

Where the IOF is owned by its shareholders, who might be a single owner, and SOEs are owned by government, the CMEs are owned in mutual by their members. Under Australian legislation a co-operative can issue shares and distribute profits and raise capital via Co-operative Capital Units (CCUs). However, it can also be a non-distributing entity that can become a registered charity. Mutual entities can be companies limited by guarantee, limited by shares, or limited by guarantee and shares. They can also raise capital via Mutual Capital Instruments (MCI). Yet, to be defined as a ‘mutual’ entity they must be registered with the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) and have a constitutional structure that requires a one-member-one-vote system of governance, rather than one-share-one-vote model common to investor-owned firms (IOFs). This is the same governance model found in co-operatives.

If these characteristics are applied to the RAC, it is organised, autonomous, non-government, voluntary, educative and provides community benefits. All of the surpluses generated by its activities, including income the Club receives as a dividend from RAC Holdings Pty Ltd, is devoted to pursuing the Club’s objectives.⁴⁹ Surpluses are not distributed directly to members, however they are indirectly available to members through discounts on the costs of various services that are only available to members, sponsorships and grants to community organisations to which a member may also incidentally belong, and councillors are directly remunerated for their services. Each of these is consistent with the Club’s objectives and rules.

The RAC membership consists of several classes, for which there are variable membership subscriptions and voting entitlements, and the Club, in its rules, has a power to “affiliate and work in conjunction with kindred organisations”. The key difference between the RAC as a not-for-profit incorporated association and a co-operative or mutual enterprise is the destination of profits. In a co-operative these take the form of a dividend paid to each member, whereas in a not-for-profit association these take the form of services provided to members (and in some cases non-members of the public) either directly, such as the RAC roadside breakdown service, or indirectly such as discounts on fuel at participating service stations or at RAC facilities such as its Parks and Resorts. The RAC is not a registered charity, although it did operate a charity foundation between 2004 and 2017 to raise funds for the helicopter rescue service (ACNC, n.d.; ABN Lookup, n.d.).

Australia’s Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM), which is the peak industry body, recognises the RAC and all the other car clubs in the country as CMEs. This is based on their member-based ownership and dual economic and social purpose. In return the RAC has been an

⁴⁹ RAC Constitution, Rule 3.3(g), confers on the Club the power to “form or take part in the formation of companies, associations, partnerships, joint ventures, trusts or other arrangements”, such as RAC Holdings Pty Ltd.

active founder member of the BCCM and former RAC CEO Terry Agnew was Chair of that entity in 2020.

The RAC has six objects in its constitution, of which four are social in intent: to benefit motorists, motoring, and mobility in general, to provide members and others with a range of services, products, and assistance, to provide facilities for the benefit of members and others, and to promote the improvement of road conditions and road safety. These four objects benefit not only members but the broader community, especially those relating to mobility, road conditions and road safety.

These objects have common ground with the co-operative principles established in the *Co-operatives Act 2009* (WA), especially Principle 7 'Concern for Community', or co-operatives working for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members. The Geraldton Fishermen's Co-operative, or GFC (established 1950) is a registered co-operative under the *Co-operatives Act 2009*. One of its values that gives voice to this principle is that relating to quality: "We produce the best products, services, and support for our members and clients. We value a strong and sustainable fishery and industry. The health and vigour of our lobster is maintained at all times" ("Corporate", n.d.).

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Western Australia Ltd, or RSPCA WA (established 1892, incorporated 1914) is now a registered charity that was an incorporated association before becoming in 2018 a company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth). One of its objects is "to promote animal welfare and kindness to animals", and one of the 'activities' that implements this objective is "to conduct, manage, operate, or encourage clinics, hospitals, homes or shelters for the care, treatment, maintenance, and protection of animals" (RAC WA, n.d.; RSPCA WA, 2018/19).

A comparison between RSPCA, RAC and GFC, each founded in and based in Western Australia, each with some corporate longevity (being founded in 1892, 1905 and 1950 respectively), each responding to a certain market failure, and each serving distinct communities within Western Australia will indicate diversity in legal and corporate structures, and dissimilarities in the destination of surpluses or profits, but close similarities between some of their objectives as indicated, in the case above, objectives concerning the provision of services and public benefits.

These are benefits that build social capital (shared problem solving through membership of social networks) within each organisation, and which in turn feed back into the development and maintenance of civil society. These are the third and fourth sectors discussed previously that are rooted in concepts of autonomy and self-governance, education of both members and the community, and voluntary membership. These characteristics accord with the BCCM's inclusion of RAC WA within the CME sector.

These commonalities, however, do not undermine Slocombe's attribution of uniqueness to the RAC, but suggest that diversity rather than uniformity in objectives and structures are a defining characteristic of the third and fourth sectors, although still with certain parameters. There is also a certain pragmatism in the functioning of geographically isolated societies with a colonial history, like Western Australia, that means such organisations will inherently resist any perfect fit to a particular model.

The particularities or idiosyncrasies of Western Australian society, as mutable as they are, need to be considered when analysing such organisations.⁵⁰ That combination of uniqueness, pragmatism and geographical isolation is evident in the RAC's central role in the development of internationally leading AV technologies in Western Australia, and its shaping of a far-reaching mobility strategy.

This history has not been written or structured to consciously test certain theoretical or methodological models, but is a narrative drawn from surviving archives, mostly of the RAC, and organised within a generally chronological framework. Certain events or things have happened at certain times and not others, and these are explained by placing them within the broader social, legal, cultural, environmental, or economic contexts of those times.

Characters such as Richard Strelitz, Oscar Zehnder and Terry Agnew have been significant in their times, although they have not been overly emphasised to retain a focus on the RAC as a whole. The methodological issues outlined in this discussion allow the organisation to be conceptualised within larger frameworks for study, but it has first been historicised to render it as a historical actor and place it within historical contexts. This now allows it to be compared with other, ostensibly similar, or dissimilar organisations, especially in third and fourth sectors, to begin to come to an understanding of its (and their) social, political, and economic significance.

ON THE RAC ARCHIVES

There have been several histories of the RAC prepared over the years, mostly to mark anniversaries, and published in short form articles or stories in *The Road Patrol*. Historical timelines have been similarly prepared and published on the RAC website and other publications and used to inform anniversaries and exhibitions of historical artefacts in the RAC head office building. There are also historical reminiscences and interviews with retiring staff and council members in *The Road Patrol* that provide historical insights from over the years. There is a manuscript historical chronology prepared c1992. However, no history of the RAC has previously been professionally prepared and published.

Although there is clearly a corporate memory within the RAC, among staff and members, the importance of the archival holdings and collections in the RAC cannot be underestimated for current and future researchers. The RAC archives are a resource of undoubted State-level significance, and probably national and possibly international significance, and consideration could be given to more formally establishing the archives as a collecting and research institution within the RAC.

An associated research program, with university linkages, to stimulate scholarship in several fields with which the RAC has been historically associated, would greatly enhance the reputation of the archives and the RAC more generally. One obvious area, but not limited to it, is research in the historical development of the not-for-profit and the co-operative and mutual enterprise sectors, especially within a Western Australian context.

⁵⁰ See for example, Gilchrist, D. J. (2017). *Imperial Theory and Colonial Pragmatism: Charles Harper, economic development and agricultural co-operation in Australia*. Palgrave Studies in the History of Economic Thought. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

DIGITISATION OF RAC MAGAZINE COLLECTION

The RAC's collection of the *Yearbook*, *Road Patrol* and *Horizons* magazines are a unique documentation of the historical evolution of all forms of 'self-propelled' transport, especially the private car, in Western Australia, from the perspectives of drivers and the organisation created to represent their interests. They provide insights into significant events such as the Great War, the Great Depression, World War Two, the environmental, energy and oil crises of the late 20th century, technological developments in vehicle and road design and construction, and most recently the COVID-19 Pandemic. They are also potentially a key resource for the study of co-operatives and mutual enterprises, and of incorporated not-for-profit organisations, with a uniquely Westralian perspective, and could be a resource to encourage critical reading of the way in which business knowledge is constructed and conveyed to audiences.

The series of magazines from 1915 to the present day are a unique collection with a high level of cultural significance, as are the minutes and annual reports of the Club. However, they are not readily accessible to the public or to researchers generally. The State Library of Western Australia's holdings of *Road Patrol* are extensive, but incomplete in the earlier years.

The COVID pandemic has made clear just how important online digital access to archival materials is for researchers in numerous fields. One outcome of this history project that would have a lasting impact would be for the RAC to have the whole collection of magazines and at least annual reports digitised and made publicly accessible online through the National Library of Australia's Trove aggregator.

About the authors

Tim Mazzarol is an Emeritus Professor and Senior Honorary Research Fellow in Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Marketing and Strategy at the University of Western Australia and an affiliate Professor with the Burgundy School of Business, Groupe ESC Dijon, Bourgogne, France. He is also the Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurial Management and Innovation (CEMI), an independent initiative designed to enhance awareness of entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business management. He is also the founder Director of the Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU), a special research entity for the study of co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) at the University of Western Australia. In addition, he is a founder Director and Company Secretary of the Commercialisation Studies Centre (CSC) Ltd. , a not-for-profit mutual enterprise focused on advancing best practice knowledge of commercialisation. Tim is also a Qualified Practising Researcher (QPR) as recognised by the Australian Research Society (ARS). He has around 20 years of experience of working with small entrepreneurial firms as well as large corporations and government agencies. He is the author of several books on entrepreneurship, small business management and innovation. He holds a PhD in Management and an MBA with distinction from Curtin University of Technology, and a Bachelor of Arts with Honours from Murdoch University, Western Australia.

Amber van Aurich is a Research Assistant at the University of Western Australia where she is engaged in the UWA Business School supporting the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant project investigating the economic and social contribution of the co-operative and mutual enterprise (CME) sector to Western Australia. She holds a Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours from Edith Cowan University (ECU) majoring in History, Politics, and International Relations. She is currently a PhD Candidate at UWA School of Humanities where she is conducting a mixed methods study on identity-based spaces. Amber is experienced in qualitative research skills, including oral and local history, editing, and feminist theory, as well as skills in publicity, communications strategy, and event management for non-for-profit organisations.

Dr Bruce Baskerville is an APDI Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia (UWA) where he is engaged with CERU via the UWA Business School, and the UWA Centre for Western Australian History. A public historian, Bruce grew up on Western Australia's Batavia Coast amid stories of Dutch shipwrecks and convict ruins, and the windswept awe of the Dongara sandplains and Abrolhos Islands. For many years he has researched the ways in which old institutions are adapted and naturalised in new places, from the Crown to building styles, shared histories to commonage systems. This has given him an abiding interest in communal and co-operative models of self-governance and their historical roots.